

University of Aberdeen Research Data Management Policy

Supporting Researcher-Centred Data Management at the University of Aberdeen

As an organisation which creates and uses knowledge to make a difference, the University of Aberdeen wishes to make its research outputs (publications and the underlying research data) as freely available as possible, with the minimum of delay. At the same time, we ensure that we meet all legislative and ethical obligations to protect the rights and privacy of individuals and minimize the potential for harm. We comply with UKRI's Common Principles on Data Policy and the Concordat on Open Research Data.¹

Managing and sharing research data effectively is fundamental to facilitating high quality research practice, supporting our commitment to research excellence and good research governance.

The University outlines below the main principles of the policy for the appropriate management and sharing of all research data² that is generated as a result of University research activity, throughout the life of the project and beyond, to ensure that researchers comply with legislative, funding body, data owner, and internal policy and audit requirements, and that, where appropriate, the data remains discoverable, available and usable over time, for future validation, access and re-use.

The University aims to support the open research agenda for both data and publications to make data more accessible to researchers and to share resources across institutions in order to create impact, recognition, curation, and influence, and ensure longevity and visibility.

Scope

The policy applies to all staff that are authorised to use the University's name and services in the course of their research, including postgraduate students and visiting, honorary, and emeritus staff. It also applies to staff supervising student research projects. University use of NHS and clinical data is subject to additional governance.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for compliance with this and related policies, research data management practice³ deposition and publication, in accordance with relevant University policies, legislation, funder, and data owner terms and conditions. Where the research is externally funded, and the funders allow, the Principal Investigator is responsible for the recovery of costs of data storage and curation. Principal Investigators are also required to participate in relevant training offered by the University of Aberdeen.
2. All research data gathered by students during their study are the responsibility of the supervising staff member (PI/lead supervisor), to manage in accordance with the requirements of this policy and institutional guidance.

¹ Concordat on Open Research Data <https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/documents/concordatonopenresearchdata-pdf/>

² The University subscribes to the definition of Research Data as articulated in the Concordat on Open Research Data – “**Research data** are the evidence that underpins the answer to the research question, and can be used to validate findings regardless of its form (e.g. print, digital, or physical). These might be quantitative information or qualitative statements collected by researchers in the course of their work by experimentation, observation, modelling, interview or other methods, or information derived from existing evidence. Data may be raw or primary (e.g. direct from measurement or collection) or derived from primary data for subsequent analysis or interpretation (e.g. cleaned up or as an extract from a larger data set), or derived from existing sources where the rights may be held by others. Data may be defined as ‘relational’ or ‘functional’ components of research, thus signalling that their identification and value lies in whether and how researchers use them as evidence for claims. **They may include**, for example, statistics, collections of digital images, sound recordings, transcripts of interviews, survey data and fieldwork observations with appropriate annotations, an interpretation, an artwork, archives, found objects, published texts or a manuscript.”

³ Research data management concerns the organisation of data, from its entry to the research cycle through to the dissemination and archiving of valuable results. It aims to ensure reliable verification of results and permits new and innovative research built on existing information.” (Whyte, A., Tedds, J. (2011). ‘Making the Case for Research Data Management’. DCC Briefing Papers. Edinburgh: Digital Curation Centre. [Available online](#)).

3. Effective research data management practice⁴ is a shared responsibility between individual researchers, University management, and professional services.
4. The University will provide support, guidance, and information on appropriate research data management activities, including planning for funding applications, availability of internal and external data repositories, licensing of datasets, and allocation of persistent identifiers for data sets. Further guidance on the associated roles and responsibilities for this policy is available [here](#).

Deposit and Publication

5. All research data of potential current or future interest, or that which substantiates published research findings, should be assessed by the Principal Investigator for deposit in an appropriate data repository.
6. The Principal Investigator has a responsibility to assess which research data should be offered for deposit; to identify an appropriate repository; to specify appropriate levels of access to the data; and to consult relevant third parties (e.g. research participants; academic and non-academic partners) in making these decisions.
7. Research data should be published/made publicly accessible as soon as possible, and typically on publication of the results. Embargo periods are acceptable and should take account of funders' requirements, disciplinary practice, and commercial value. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator or successor data owner to adhere to funder requirements for data publishing and, where necessary, to negotiate an extension to restrictions on placing data in the public domain.
8. When a data set is published, the Principal Investigator or data owner is required to select an appropriate licence under which their data will be made available. The Principal Investigator or data owner will need to ensure that the licence permits sharing and re-use of data in accordance with funder requirements and the terms and conditions of this policy. Institutional support and guidance are available [here](#). Electronic data published in the institutional repository will be catalogued using structured metadata which includes details of licencing and a persistent digital object identifier (DOI).
9. The University of Aberdeen retains the right to re-use research data or make it openly available for others to re-use. Exclusive rights to re-use or publish research data should therefore not be handed over to commercial publishers or agents without retaining the rights to make the data openly available for re-use, unless this is a condition of funding or other agreed third-party rights.
10. A central record of known datasets deposited in public access repositories, including our institutional repositories, will be maintained in the institutional research information system. The deposit of a data set in an external publicly accessible repository should be notified to (opendata@abdn.ac.uk) to enable the cataloguing of metadata.

Data Management Practice

11. All personal data⁵ must be collected and managed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018, or successive legislation. Standards and procedures for processing personal data are set out in the University of Aberdeen Data Protection Policy.
12. Where required, research proposals should include a Data Management Plan⁶ (DMP), or equivalent protocol for the management of data, that addresses key elements of data management practice throughout the research project and for the longer term.

⁴ From a practical perspective, research data management practice includes planning, recording decisions (e.g. in a DMP), compliance, data generation, collection, analysis, verification, risk assessment, classification, development of metadata, managing access, storage, data sharing, dissemination, publication, archive, curation, deletion, destruction, facilitation of audit.

⁵ Personal Data: Any data relating to an identified or identifiable living person (*University of Aberdeen Data Protection Policy*)

⁶ DMP definition can be found at Digital Curation Centre: <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/data-management-plans>

13. Data retention, preservation, accessibility, and deletion will be managed in line with relevant legislation, policies, contractual obligations, funder requirements and, where appropriate, in line with consent obtained from research subjects.
- 13.1 Holding data for longitudinal studies or to enable data collection and aggregation over time, as defined by the project, can also be considered, but must take account of all the above.
- 13.2 In any case, data should be retained for a minimum of 5 years from project end date.
- 13.3 Data should not be kept any longer than is necessary without reasonable justification and appropriate authorisation/consent.
14. Where funders allow, all costs associated with data management practice should be recovered from funders.

Related policies

15. The Research Data Management Policy operates in conjunction with all other University policies, in particular:

15.1	Data Protection Policy	Sets out the principles, responsibilities and obligations for managing personal data within the University.
15.2	Information Security Policy and sub policies	Set out how information (including personal data) shall be secured to protect it against the consequences of breaches of confidentiality, failures of integrity, or interruptions to its availability.
15.3	Records Management Policy	Sets out how records (containing personal data) shall be managed and retained to support University functions and to comply with legal and accountability requirements.
15.4	Policy for Intellectual Property Exploitation and Revenue Sharing	Sets out how the University encourages and rewards commercialisation of intellectual property generated by its staff, and compliance with the confidentiality requirements of third-party agreements.

Revision History:

Version	Date	Reason for release/Status
1.0	4 March 2012	Published copy
2.0	3 April 2020	Revision of previous version

Title	Research Data Management Policy
Author / Creator	Gail Smillie & Dawn Foster
Owner	Elizabeth Rattray
Date published / approved	16 April 2020
Version	2
Date for Next Review	April 2022
Audience	Research staff and students
Related	
Subject / Description	University policy on Research Data Management, plus associated guidance note
Equality Impact Assessment	Not applicable (there are no equality issues arising from the application of this policy or guidance note)
Section	Research & Innovation
Theme	Research Data Management
Keywords	Research, research data, data management, data storage, data retention, retention period