

Research Data Management Policy

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Alternative format

If you require this Research Data Management Policy document in an alternative format, please contact the Library Research Support Team via library-research-support@open.ac.uk.

Summary of policy

This policy defines the standards that govern the management of research data at The Open University. It defines research data as the evidence base on which academic researchers build their analytic or other work and applies to all those engaged in research at the OU, most typically research staff and research students.

The policy covers the management of research data during and after the research process, including the preservation and sharing of datasets.

Scope

What this policy covers

- Research data, defined as any information that has been collected, observed, generated, or created to answer a research question, and which may be used to validate original research findings.
- Primary data or data derived from existing sources, in any form (e.g., physical, digital, or print).
- Original software required to view datasets, replicate analyses, or validate research findings.

Who this policy applies to

- All Open University staff, emeritus, honorary and visiting academics, independent contractors or consultants **conducting research at, or on behalf of The Open University**, regardless of location, whether working alone, or in collaboration, including in collaboration with researchers from third party organisations.
- Postgraduate research students registered with The Open University on a full-time or part-time basis, including those based at Affiliated Research Centres and other partner institutions.

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- OU staff undertaking scholarship projects at or on behalf of The Open University.
- External partners/collaborators working on projects where The Open University is the lead partner.

Who this policy does not apply to

- Students studying taught undergraduate modules and qualifications, or postgraduate students registered for taught qualifications, or studying modules that form part of a taught qualification. If you are undertaking a taught course dissertation module, please refer to your course materials and your tutor for further guidance on good research practice in the context of your project.

Introduction

This policy defines the standards that govern the management of research data at The Open University. In line with its mission, The Open University (OU) believes that the ideas and knowledge from its research should be made available and accessible to everyone. With our distinctive open mission, we should lead the way in fostering an open and engaging research culture.¹

Research data management (RDM) is a recognised part of the research process and scholarly communications. Formal requirements and expectations from funders, publishers, collaborators, and institutions (for example Data Management Plans and data sharing) exist and are likely to continue to evolve.

The Open University recognises that good RDM practices are vital for an efficient and effective research process. It ensures the sustainability and continued useability of research data and promotes the responsible handling of personal and sensitive data in compliance with all relevant ethical and legal requirements. The management and preservation of research data, whether it is shared or not, helps to ensure research integrity. Sharing research data ensures reproducibility of results, encourages innovation, and has broad benefits for The Open University by promoting the work of our researchers and creating opportunities for future collaboration.

¹ [The Open University Statement on Open and Engaging Research](#)

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Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to identify The Open University's position with regard to the management of research data and software and to outline the responsibilities and requirements of the University and its researchers.
- 1.2. The objectives of this policy are:
 - 1.2.1. To set out the University's requirements for research data management (RDM)
 - 1.2.2. To inform all OU staff and students, those we work with, and the public of how research data is managed at the OU.
 - 1.2.3. To provide OU researchers and support staff with references to guidance of how to manage research data.

2. Policy principles

- 2.1. The Open University is committed to the [Concordat on Open Research Data](#)², the [UKRI Common Principles on Research Data](#)³ and the [FAIR Data Principles](#)⁴ and believes that the open sharing of data, wherever possible, is a public good.
- 2.2. Research data must be managed to the highest standards throughout their lifecycle in order to support excellence in research practice.
- 2.3. In keeping with OU principles of openness, it is expected that research data will be shared as openly as possible, as soon as appropriate and verifiable, in a manner consistent with the FAIR Data Principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable).

² UKRI, Universities UK & Wellcome Trust (2016) *Concordat on Open Research Data*

³ UKRI Common Principles on Research Data

⁴ Wilkinson, M. D. et al (2016) *The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship*, Scientific Data 3, 160018: <https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18>

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3. Data Management

- 3.1. All those engaged in research at the OU, including those involved in collaborating with other institutions, must take personal responsibility for managing research data in accordance with University and funder requirements.
- 3.2. Researchers should ensure that their handling of research data complies with the University's [Data Protection Policy](#) and [Information Security Policies](#) (requires login).
- 3.3. All researchers are required to write a Data Management Plan (DMP) before data collection begins which sets out how research data will be managed, shared, and preserved. If any of the following applies, your DMP must be emailed to the Library Research Support Team for review (library-research-support@open.ac.uk):
- You are working with special category data
 - You need to share data with external collaborators during your project
 - You are conducting fieldwork to collect data
 - You are using data belonging to an external organisation (e.g., business/government/charity)
 - You are expecting to generate a large dataset (over 25GB)
- 3.4. Before data collection begins, DMPs should be uploaded to either [Open Research Data Online](#) (ORDO), the OU's institutional research data repository (for research projects) or to the [Open University Scholarship Exchange](#) (for scholarship projects). These should be published either openly or under embargo and should be reviewed and updated throughout the project.
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4. Archiving and sharing of research data

- 4.1. Researchers are required to archive research data in a trusted digital repository (one whose mission is to provide reliable, long-term access to managed digital resources⁵) with sufficient metadata to enable re-use, and to make that data openly available, where ethical, legal, or commercial considerations allow. This repository may be funder or discipline specific, ORDO (for research projects), or the OU Scholarship
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⁵ Definition from [Trusted Digital Repositories: Attributes and Responsibilities. An RLG-OCLC Report \(2002\), p5.](#)

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Exchange (for scholarship projects). The data should be assigned a licence to make terms of data re-use clear. The Open University has a preference for a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) licence, but other licences may be appropriate.

- 4.2. Where data have been archived in a repository other than ORDO or the OU Scholarship Exchange, a metadata-only record should be published on ORDO which describes the data and provides a persistent link (such as a DOI) to the data.
- 4.3. Research data and their associated metadata should be prepared for archive in a way that ensures the data are findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable, in accordance with the [FAIR data principles](#). ORCID iDs must be used when publishing research data, to unambiguously link data to specific researchers.
- 4.4. The University accepts that access to research data may be subject to restrictions for a number of different reasons (e.g., to protect commercial interests or intellectual property rights, participant privacy and confidentiality, ethical approval requirements, legal or security issues, or other legitimate reason). Where research data cannot be made openly available, metadata should be published in a trusted repository which describes the data and justifies the restrictions, stipulating any access requirements and the length of time the restrictions will continue.
- 4.5. Obtaining research data from human participants places ethical and legal obligations on researchers. The need to respect confidentiality and privacy can seem to conflict with expectations that data will be shared wherever possible, but with careful planning, it may be possible to share both quantitative and qualitative data from human participants. A combination of gaining consent for sharing, de-identifying or anonymising personal data, and controlling access, can ensure long term access to sensitive data. It is the responsibility of the researcher to process research data in a way that maintains confidentiality of any research participants where appropriate, prior to uploading to a repository. Guidance on best practice can be found on the [Library Research Support website](#).
- 4.6. Data supporting published research must be made available no later than the first date of online publication. Published research papers must include a data availability/access statement which describes how, and on what terms, supporting data may be accessed. If there is no supporting research data or data cannot be made available, the statement should make that clear.
- 4.7. Research data must be preserved in a trusted digital repository (one whose mission is to provide reliable, long-term access to managed digital resources⁵) for a minimum of ten years from date of last access. Some external funders may require a longer minimum retention period and some research data may need to be kept in perpetuity. Metadata records describing the dataset must be maintained in perpetuity, even where the data are no longer available.

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- 4.8. Where research data are in print format, they should be digitised and uploaded to a trusted repository wherever possible. Where supporting research data are physical, the researcher must create a metadata record in a suitable repository so that other researchers may find and request access to supporting research data.
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5. Ethical Requirements

- 5.1. The legitimate interests of human participants in research must be protected, according to the principles set out within the University's [Ethics Principles for Research Involving Human Participants](#).
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6. Legal Requirements

- 6.1. The legal obligations of individual researchers in relation to research data management are covered within the [Public interest disclosure](#) document (requires login), [Data Protection Code of Practice](#) (requires login) and [Intellectual Property Policy](#) (requires login).
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7. University Responsibilities

- 7.1. The University will engage with funders, policy makers and other stakeholders to ensure that research data management policies and services evolve in line with sector requirements.
- 7.2. It is the responsibility of Executive Deans or Directors of academic units to monitor research outputs and to ensure that the institution complies with its obligations to funders to manage associated research data and to disseminate the results of publicly funded research.
- 7.3. The Open University will provide access to services and facilities that meet sector and funder requirements for storage, access and curation of data produced in the course of research conducted in the University's name.
- 7.4. The University will provide training, support and guidance on policies and best practice in research data management and preservation.
- 7.5. The Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation, the Research Committee, Executive Deans and Directors and the Scholarship Steering Group are responsible for the overall effective management of research data at the OU.

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Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at The Open University

Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff and Open University postgraduate research students, regardless of age, care experience, caring status or dependency, civil status, disability, family status, gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or trades union membership status.

Safe Space Reporting

The Open University is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone feels safe and is treated with dignity and respect. Unlawful discrimination of any kind across The Open University will not be tolerated. Safe Space Reporting is available through [an online tool](#) through which staff, students, learners and visitors are encouraged to report incidents of assault, bullying, harassment, hate crime, or sexual harassment. It also provides information about what you can do if these incidents happen to you, or to someone you know, and where you can find support.

Related Documentation

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this document:

- [Ethics Principles for Research Involving Human Participants](#)
- [Public interest disclosure](#) (requires login)
- [Research Degrees Student Handbook](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- Open University's [Information Security Policies](#) (requires login)
- [Open Research Data Online \(ORDO\) Policy](#)
- [Open University Scholarship Exchange Policy](#) (requires login)
- [Open University Intellectual Property Policy](#) (requires login)
- [Open University Research Code of Practice](#)
- [Open University Digital Preservation Policy](#)
- [Open University Statement on Open and Engaging Research](#)
- [Open University Retention Schedule: Research](#)
- [Scholarship Plan 2024-2029](#)

Support for Research Data Management at The Open University can be found on the [Library Research Support website](#).

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Further clarification

If you have any queries around the content provided within this document and how to interpret it, please contact the Library Research Support team library-research-support@open.ac.uk

If you have any comments about this policy document and how it might be improved, please submit these to APG-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk.

Summary of significant changes since last version

There are a number of significant changes from the previous version of this policy (Version No. 3.0 dated 01/12/2021). These are:

- a) Includes a requirement to write a Data Management Plan (as opposed to a recommendation)
- b) Includes a requirement to generate a metadata-only record on ORDO for data preserved/shared elsewhere
- c) Includes a requirement to use an ORCID iD when publishing data, to unambiguously link data to specific researchers
- d) Policy to cover software in addition to research data
- e) Policy to cover scholarship in addition to research

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces the previous version of the Open University Research Data Policy [v.3.0 dated 01/12/2021].

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