



# Research Data Management Policy

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## 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

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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. It contains the following sections:

- Principles
- Responsibilities
- Ethical requirements
- Legal requirements
- Availability of research data
- Collaborative working

### Summary of significant changes since last version

There are no significant changes from the previous version of this policy (Version No. 0.7). Minor changes were noted in draft review version 0.8.

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### Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces the previous version of the Open University Research Data Policy [v.2.0 dated 01/12/2018].

## Scope

### 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.
- Open University staff who manage or support researchers, or supervise postgraduate research students.
- external supervisors of Open University directly supported postgraduate research students.
- 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.

### Who this policy does not apply to:

- those undertaking scholarship projects at or on behalf of The Open University unless the scholarship project in question is at the interface between scholarship and

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research, i.e. corresponds to the Frascati<sup>1</sup> definition of research. If you are undertaking a scholarship project, please refer to the scholarship guidance on the [Scholarship web pages](#).

- 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.
- This policy does not apply directly to supervisors of postgraduate research students based at Affiliated Research Centres. Nevertheless such supervisors are expected to support their students in their understanding of and adherence to this policy.

## 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 Intellectual Property Policy](#) (requires login)
- [Open University Research Code of Practice](#)

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

## Introduction

Research data is defined as the evidence base on which academic researchers build their analytic or other work. Such data may be in any form, but may include “digital information created directly from research activities such as experiments, analysis, surveys, measurements, instrumentation and observations; data resulting from automated or manual data reduction and analysis including the inputs and outputs of simulations and models”<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [Frascati Manual, 2015, OECD, p44 - 45](#)

<sup>2</sup> UKRI/RCUK *Common principles on data policy: Guidance on best practice in the management of research data, July 2015, date accessed 19/09/2018*  
[\[https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/documents/rcukcommonprinciplesondatapolicy-pdf/\]](https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/documents/rcukcommonprinciplesondatapolicy-pdf/).

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This policy defines the standards that govern the management of research data at the Open University.

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. There are benefits to the researcher, the University and the research community when research data is well managed, preserved and, where appropriate, made publicly available.

For specific guidance on how this policy may relate to your personal circumstances, please contact the Library Research Support team [library-research-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:library-research-support@open.ac.uk).

## Policy

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to identify the Open University's position with regard to the management of research data and to outline the responsibilities and requirements of the University and its researchers.

1.1. The objectives of this policy are:

1.1.1. To set out the University's requirements for research data management.

1.1.2. To inform all OU research staff and students, OU research support staff, those we work with, and the public of how research data is managed at the OU.

1.1.3. To provide OU researchers and support staff with references to guidance of how to manage research data.

### 2. Policy principles

- The Open University is committed to the UKRI/RCUK [Common Principles on Data Policy](#)<sup>3</sup> and the [FAIR Data Principles](#)<sup>4</sup> and believes that the open sharing of data, wherever possible, is a public good.

<sup>3</sup> UKRI/RCUK *Common principles on data policy: Guidance on best practice in the management of research data, July 2015, date accessed 19/09/2018*  
[\[https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/documents/rcukcommonprinciplesondatapolicy-pdf/\]](https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/documents/rcukcommonprinciplesondatapolicy-pdf/).

<sup>4</sup> 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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- In keeping with OU principles of openness, it is expected that research data will be open and accessible to other researchers, as soon as appropriate and verifiable, subject to the application of appropriate safeguards relating to the sensitivity of the data and legal and commercial requirements.
- Research data must be managed to the highest standards throughout their lifecycle in order to support excellence in research practice.

### 3. Responsibilities

#### 3.1 Researcher responsibilities

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.

Researchers are expected to write a Data Management Plan before data collection begins which sets out how research data will be managed, shared, and preserved.

Researchers are expected to share research data as openly as possible, where ethical, legal, or commercial considerations allow.

Where research data are shared in a repository, metadata should be assigned to ensure the data are findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable, in accordance with the [FAIR Data Principles](#).

It is the responsibility of the individual researcher to ensure that all research data that support and substantiate published research findings are offered to an appropriate repository for long term storage, discovery and public access, where permitted. This may be funder or discipline specific, or [Open Research Data Online \(ORDO\)](#), the OU's institutional research data repository.

Where supporting research data are physical, the researcher must create a research data catalogue record in ORDO so that other researchers may find and then request access to supporting research data.

#### 3.2 University responsibilities

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.

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.

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The 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.

The University will provide training, support and guidance on policies and best practice in research data management and preservation.

The Pro Vice Chancellor, Research Enterprise and Scholarship, the Research Committee, and Deans and Directors are responsible for the overall effective management of research data at the OU.

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#### **4. Ethical requirements**

The legitimate interests of human participants in research must be protected, according to the principles set out within the University [ethics policy](#) (requires login) and within the University's [Ethics Principles for Research Involving Human Participants](#).

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#### **5. Legal requirements**

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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#### **6. Availability of research data**

Researchers should ensure that their handling of OU information complies with the University's [Data Protection Code of Practice](#) (requires login) and [Information Security Policies](#) (requires login).

Data supporting published research must be made available no later than the first date of online publication. Published research papers must include clear and distinct statements on how, and on what terms, supporting data may be accessed. If there is no further supporting research data or data cannot be made available, the published paper should make that clear.

Supporting research data must be stored for as long as they continue to be valuable to the researcher and the wider research community, and at least as long as specified by external funders or institutional requirements. This period may be up to ten years, but may vary based on funder requirements.

The University accepts that access to research data may be subject to restrictions for a number of different reasons; in order to protect commercial interests or intellectual property rights, ethical approval requirements, legal or security issues, or other legitimate reason. Where restrictions occur researchers must explain the reasons for this within metadata descriptions, and the length of time the access restrictions will continue.

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Where researchers store research data within ORDO, they should comply with Open University curation policies, including specifying retention periods, nominating responsible individuals within their academic units to review the data, and defining the method of destruction of the data.

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## 7. Collaborative working

It is the responsibility of the individual researcher to ensure the security of collaboratively produced research data under the University's name, both during the active research phase and upon completion of the research.

## Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement

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.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:APG-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk).

## Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact the Library Research Support team [library-research-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:library-research-support@open.ac.uk)

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