



Research Data Governance & Materials Handling Policy

Handling Policy

Purpose

The UNSW *Research Data Governance & Materials Handling Policy* covers principles related to maintaining the integrity, security, quality, and proper usage of research data and materials (**‘research data’**) at UNSW. The UNSW *Research Data Governance & Materials Handling Policy* covers principles related to maintaining the integrity, security, quality, and proper usage of research data and materials (**“research data”**) at UNSW.

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Outline the requirements and roles and responsibilities associated with access, retrieval, storage, disposal, and backup of UNSW research data and materials
- Provide best practice measures to enable compliance with the requirements
- Ensure that UNSW complies with applicable laws, regulations, and operational standards.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- All UNSW researchers (including visiting and conjoint appointees), research trainees, staff, contractors, consultants, and external parties engaged in research activities associated or affiliated with UNSW
- All research data and materials used or generated at UNSW or during UNSW affiliated research
- Research data and materials in any form, including but not limited to, print, electronic, audio visual, backup and archived data.

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Introduction

Research data are a strategic asset of UNSW, making the appropriate governance regarding management and use of research data critical to our operations. Lack of governance could expose the University to unwanted risks and may lead to improper management of UNSW assets.

Research data and material allow research findings to be validated and have long-term value as a potential resource for future research and teaching. Good practice in research data governance and materials handling benefits the wider research community by enabling future researchers to publish, share, cite and reuse the research data and material by reducing the risk of loss and corruption.

'Good data management is good research' articulates our approach to managing research data and material at UNSW. This policy has been developed in response to the specific needs of the research community. Additionally, an overarching UNSW Research Data Governance Framework (RDGF) has been developed. Responsibilities and roles relating to this policy and procedure are provided in [Appendix 1](#).

Research data and materials

Research data and materials are the original sources that have been created, generated or collated in the conduct of research. They can be digital or non-digital ([examples](#) are provided in definitions).

The following data and materials are not considered to be research data and materials, unless the use of such data and materials is for research purposes, and they are outside the scope of the policy:

- Administrative data such as payroll, student enrolments, research administration
- Learning and teaching data (consisting of data relating to students who are studying at UNSW and their progress in their courses)
- Library management systems such as UNSW Research Outputs System (ROS) and UNSWorks
- Research management systems such as Info Ed, MyEthics, GRIS, BORIS
- Research publications.

Principles and objectives

Principles and minimum standards for handling research data and materials are applicable to all individuals fitting the scope of this policy. Everyone responsible for research projects at UNSW must ensure appropriate research data standards are followed to uphold the quality and integrity of the data they create, access, manage and destroy.

1. Keep research data and material records up-to-date throughout every stage of the research project and in an auditable and traceable manner.
2. Maintain a catalogue of all research data and materials in an accessible form that can be traced back to their source.
3. Record data underpinning research conducted at UNSW (including electronic data) in a durable and appropriately referenced form.
4. Make research data and material related to research outputs available for discussion with other researchers (unless confidentiality provisions apply).
5. Ensure research data and materials remain the property of UNSW, unless subject to a third-party agreement.
6. Restrict the collection of research data and materials to legitimate uses, to optimise research outcomes and to add value to the University.
7. Produce a written agreement between all relevant parties when research is carried out at multiple organisations, which clearly specifies the principles of storage, destruction and retention of research data and materials within each organisation.
8. Ensure any confidential data and material, including data and materials held in computing systems, are kept appropriately secure according to any applicable privacy laws as well as the UNSW *Privacy Policy* that includes the UNSW Privacy Management Plan which have been created to comply with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW).

Handling Research Material & Data Procedure

1. Research data storage, retention and disposal

- 1.1. Everyone responsible for research at UNSW must ensure that research data and materials, as well as registers of these data and materials, must be kept in a format, and for a period, that conforms to the requirements of the State Records Act 1998 (NSW), funding agency or publisher guidelines, or in accordance with discipline norms, whichever is the longer period. A table outlining minimum retention periods for the various classes of research data is at: <https://www.unsw.edu.au/planning-assurance/records-archives/recordkeeping/destroying-records> .
- 1.2. Research materials are stored and used in an appropriate Biosecurity Containment (BC) or Physical Containment (PC) facility as required by the relevant Commonwealth and NSW Biosecurity Acts, as well as UNSW Health and Safety policies and procedures.
- 1.3. Wherever relevant, research data and materials storage and handling adhere to the conditions of human research ethics approvals.
- 1.4. Wherever possible, original research data and materials (and, where relevant, materials or samples) are retained in the school or research unit in which they are generated. If required, individual researchers can hold copies of the data for their own use in the school or research unit in which they are generated. Retention solely by the individual researcher is not permitted, as it may not protect the researcher or UNSW in the event that the veracity of the data is questioned.
 - 1.4.1. If the original data are retained by the researcher, the Head of School or Research Centre Director must be formally advised of its location and have the ability to access the data.
 - 1.4.2. Researchers should also give consideration as to whether specimens or samples should be retained in research repositories such as a specified Museum or the UNSW Herbarium.
 - 1.4.3. Where research material is not kept within the School, a written record of the location of data must be retained by the researcher and School.
- 1.5. At the end of any research project hosted by UNSW, research data and materials remain the property of UNSW, unless subject to a third-party agreement.
- 1.6. Where a researcher moves from UNSW, original data and materials remain at UNSW unless a written agreement has been reached with the researcher's new organisation covering ownership, use, storage and disposal of research data and materials.
- 1.7. When research is carried out at multiple organisations, agreement must be reached in writing and these must clearly specify the principles of storage and retention of research data within each organisation.
- 1.8. When the data are obtained from limited access databases (or an external database), or via a contractual arrangement, written indication of the location of the original data, or key information regarding the database from which it was collected, must be retained by the researcher or School.
- 1.9. When the specified period of retention has finished, researchers have a responsibility to dispose of research data and materials in a secure and safe manner and in accordance with the UNSW Recordkeeping Policy. Advice on proper disposal is available at: <https://www.unsw.edu.au/planning-assurance/records-archives/recordkeeping/destroying-records>.

2. Data accessibility

- 2.1. Researchers must make available any research data and materials related to publications for discussion with other researchers. Where confidentiality provisions apply (for example, where the researchers or the institution have given undertakings to third parties, such as the subjects of the research), researchers must keep data in a way that allows necessary third parties to reference the information without breaching such confidentiality.

3. Classification and security

- 3.1. People working on UNSW Research Projects must refer to the Data Classification Standard [Data Handling Guidelines](#) for information on classification and security requirements. To comply with these requirements, they must:
- Always use appropriate research data security measures (see the UNSW Data Classification Standard [UNSW Data Handling Guidelines](#)) to ensure the safety, quality and integrity of UNSW's research data and materials.
 - Store research data in an electronic format that is protected by appropriate electronic safeguards and/or physical access controls that restrict access only to authorised user(s), including research data in any UNSW or external data repository (databases etc.).
 - Ensure research data and materials are always accessible and available during the life of a research project unless subject to confidentiality/security provisions. This policy applies to data in all formats (see [definitions](#) for examples of research data and materials).
 - If research is undertaken in collaboration with other institutions, government agencies, or any third party, ensure that a written agreement is in place to cover research data and materials ownership, sharing, storage, accessibility, retention, and disposal.

4. Import and export of research material

- 4.1. People working on UNSW research projects must obtain relevant permits before shipping any research materials that have import/export restrictions in Australia. An importation permit, together with the appropriate packaging and labelling, will expedite the clearance of such packages through the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) and release by Australian Customs. Researchers must ensure that they meet the relevant Customs and AQIS or other requirements for the import and/or export of research material (for more details, see [RECS Export Controls](#)).

5. Compliance with this policy

- 5.1. This policy applies the [UNSW Code of Conduct and Values](#) and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.
- 5.2. The Director, UNSW Conduct & Integrity may determine that non-compliance with any of the requirements of the policy or procedure may be dealt with as a breach of the [Code of Conduct and Values](#) or the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research in accordance with the [Complaints Management and Investigations Policy](#) and procedure.

6. Further assistance

- 6.1. Any staff member who requires assistance in understanding this policy and procedure should first consult their nominated supervisor who is responsible for the implementation and operation of these arrangements in their work area. Should further assistance be needed, the staff member should contact the Policy Lead for clarification.

Version: 1.1

Effective: 17 July 2024

Responsible: Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise (DVCRE)

Lead: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure)

Appendix 1- Roles and responsibilities

1. Responsibilities

- 1.1. UNSW has formulated a [Privacy Policy](#) to comply with the NSW *Privacy and Personal Protection Act 1998*. Researchers are responsible for ensuring appropriate security for any confidential material.
- 1.2. Researchers are responsible for ensuring appropriate security for any confidential material, including that held in computing systems. Where computing systems are accessible through networks, particular attention to security of confidential data is required.
- 1.3. Heads of schools are responsible for maintaining a register of the establishment and ownership of databases containing confidential information within their school. Access to these databases must be restricted to researchers with approved involvement in a research project.
- 1.4. Researchers have a responsibility to keep full, accurate and legible records of research methods, research data and primary materials (including laboratory notebooks and electronic data) in a durable, organised and accessible manner.
- 1.5. Adequate records of the source of research material, experimental data and authorship must be maintained in a secure place after publication and must be recoverable should questions arise.

2. Roles

Roles involved in a research project include:

- 2.1. **Data Custodian:** UNSW, rather than any individual or organisational unit, is the custodian of the data and materials and any information derived from the data. Original research data and primary materials generated in the conduct of research at the University will be owned and retained by the University subject to any contractual, statutory, ethical, and/or funding body requirements.
- 2.2. **Chief Data & Insights Officer:** is responsible for the overall management of the University's Data and Information Governance.
- 2.3. **Data Governance Steering Committee:** is responsible for defining the overall vision and Data and Information Governance principles, and oversees initiatives designed to result in more effective and efficient use of data across UNSW.
- 2.4. **Research Data Management Committee:** is the committee delegated by the Data Governance Steering Committee for the governance of research data at UNSW.
- 2.5. **UNSW IT:** is responsible for establishing and maintaining secure locations to store research data.
- 2.6. **Research data owners:** are typically heads of schools, heads of research institutes, chief investigators or principal investigators and are accountable for ensuring effective local protocols are in place to guide the appropriate use of their data and materials. They (or delegated research data stewards) are responsible for ensuring that all legal, regulatory, and policy requirements are met in relation to the specific data and that the data and materials conform to legal, regulatory, exchange, and operational standards.
 - Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates are the data owner for their research data in respect of their HDR enrolment.
 - The research data owner must ensure that the process for the administration of data and material is in accordance with the Research Data Management Lifecycle (below).
 - Heads of schools (or chief investigators or principal investigators) are responsible for ensuring that the requirements outlined in the policy can be implemented prior to

approving a research project, including that there is sufficient space and resource to accommodate the research data and material.

- Heads of schools (or chief investigators or principal investigators) are responsible for maintaining a register of the establishment and ownership of databases containing confidential information within their school. Access to these databases must be restricted to researchers with approved involvement in specific research projects.
- Heads of schools (or chief investigators or principal investigators) are responsible for liaising with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure) to ensure staff are trained on security of data and documentation.

2.7. **Research data stewards:** are responsible for the quality, integrity, implementation and enforcement of data management within their research project. Every research dataset may have one or more data steward (refer [Appendix](#)).

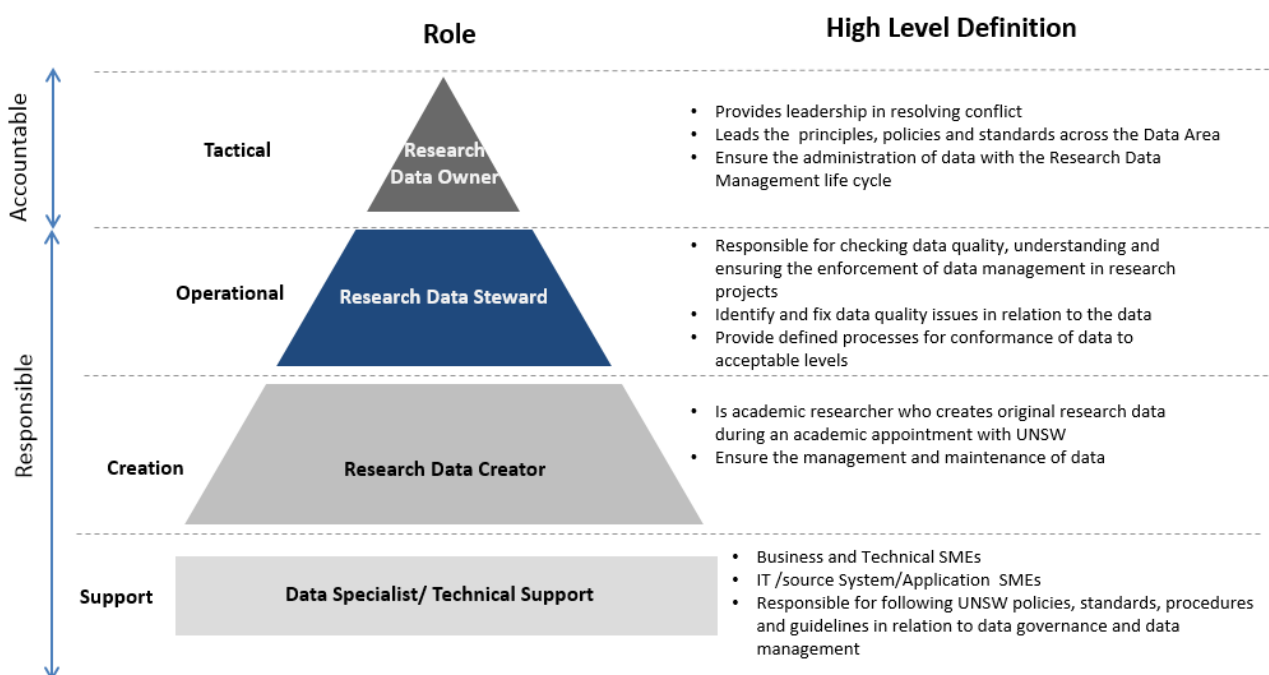
- The research data steward will classify and approve user access to the data and materials, under delegation from a research data owner, based upon the appropriateness of the User's role and the intended use. Where necessary, approval from the research data owner may be required prior to authorisation of access to other users.

2.8. **Research data creators:** are people who create original research data and materials during a research project at UNSW. This includes academics, professional and technical staff, students, collaborators at other institutions, contractors, and consultants who participate in a research project.

2.9. **Data specialists:** are subject matter experts in relation to the data, materials or information asset. They are specialists who are responsible for providing ongoing support in respect of research data and related systems.

2.10. **UNSW researchers and research trainees:** researchers have a responsibility to keep full, accurate and legible records of research methods, research data and primary materials (including laboratory notebooks and electronic data) in a durable, organised and accessible manner.

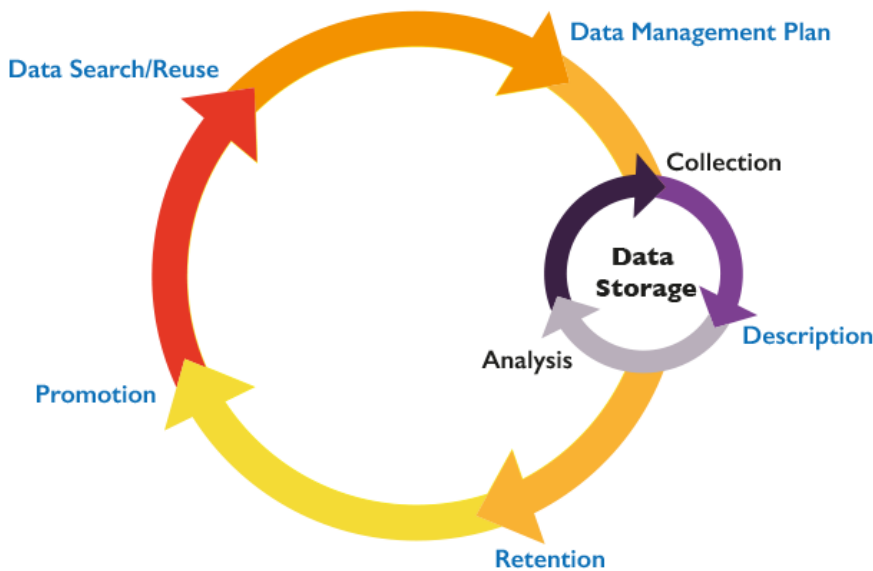
Research Data Governance Roles and Responsibilities



Research Data Management Lifecycle

The Research Data Management Lifecycle refers to the process for planning, creating, managing, storing, implementing, protecting, improving and disposing of all institutional research data of UNSW.

The Research Data Management Lifecycle



Legislative compliance

This Policy supports the University's compliance with the following legislation:

- State Records Act 1998 (NSW)

Related documents

- Code of Conduct and Values
- Complaints Management and Investigations Policy and Procedure
- Cyber Security Policy
- Cyber Security standards
- Data Governance Policy
- Data Classification Standard
- Privacy Policy and UNSW Privacy Management Plan
- Cold Storage Procedure
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure and Management Policy
- Information Security Management System
- Insider Trading Policy
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Paid Outside Work by Academic Staff Policy
- Radiation Research Safety Procedure
- Recordkeeping Policy
- Research Authorship and Publication Dispute Management Procedure
- Research Export Controls Procedure
- Risk and Compliance Policy
- Statement of Authorship and Location of Data Form
- UNSW Register of Delegations

Definitions and acronyms	
Please refer to the Data Cookbook and search for up-to-date definitions (Data Cookbook - University of New South Wales - Definitions).	
To establish operational definitions and facilitate ease of reference, the following terms are defined:	
Access	The right to read, copy, or query data.
Data set	A term use to denote a set of research data.
Institutional data	<p>The representation of facts, concepts or instructions in a formalised (consistent and agreed) manner suitable for communication, interpretation or processing by human or automatic means. Typically comprised of numbers, words or images. The format and presentation of data may vary with the context in which they are used.</p> <p>Data are not Information until used in a particular context for a particular purpose. (Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAI), 2013)</p> <p>Data are typically considered to be conceptually at the lowest level of abstraction.</p> <p>In the context of this Policy this term includes all institutional data including research, administrative, and learning and teaching artefacts.</p>
Research data and materials	<p>Research data and materials are the original sources or material that have been created, generated or collated in the conduct of research. They can be digital or non-digital. The response to a particular research question is based on the analysis of the research data and material.</p>
Examples of research data and materials	<p>Research data and material may include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any data that are generated in the conduct of research • clinical records of treatments and test results • annotated bibliographies and readings • records of interviews in the form of notes, audio or video recordings • audiotapes, videotapes • collection of digital objects acquired and generated during the process of research • contents of an application (e.g. input, output, logfiles for analysis software, simulation software, schemas) • curated data from other research projects • database contents (video, audio, text, images) • design portfolios, mock-ups • documentation of the research journey • documents (text, Word), spreadsheets • drafts of music scores • experimental results and the contents of laboratory notebooks, field notebooks, diaries • human/animal materials (e.g. slides, artefacts, specimens, samples) • images or visualisations • metadata • methodologies and workflows

Definitions and acronyms	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • models, algorithms, scripts • photographs, films • protein or genetic sequences • questionnaires, transcripts, codebooks • references stored in management software (e.g. Zotero, Mendeley, Endnote) • responses to surveys or questionnaires • numerical or graphic results obtained as the output of simulations, modelling or any other software or as the result of analysis of experimental results • plant materials, cell/bacterial/viral samples or specimens • spectra • standard operating procedures and protocols • survey and test responses • any other source or primary materials, in particular where these may be necessary to validate research results • trade secrets, commercial information, materials necessary to be held confidential by a researcher until they are published, or similar information that is protected under law • personnel and medical information and similar information the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, such as information that could be used to identify a particular person in a research study • any other recorded data that are of significance to research undertaken by the University's researchers.
Information Security Management System ISMS	The ISMS provides information security governance and sets out people, process and technology related controls to assure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of all UNSW data. The ISMS is a response to UNSW data classification and data handling requirements. Moreover, the deployment and measurement of ISMS controls provides input into the risk management process enabling informed business decisions.
Integrity or data integrity	Refers to the accuracy and consistency of data over their entire lifecycle.
University Leadership Team (ULT)	The senior executive team of the University.
Record	Any recorded information made or received by a staff member of the university in the course of undertaking their duties. Records are evidence or information about University activities. They exist in any format.
Research Data Management Lifecycle	Refers to the process for planning, creating, managing, storing, implementing, protecting, improving and disposing of all research data across the University.
Research Data User	Any staff member, contractor, consultant, third party or authorised agent who accesses, inputs, amends, deletes, extracts or analyses research data. Data Users are not generally involved in the governance process but are responsible for the quality assurance of data.

Definitions and acronyms	
Security	Refers to the safety of University data in relation to the following criteria: Access control; Authentication; Effective incident detection, reporting and solution; Physical and virtual security; and change management and version control.

Version history

- **Version 1.0** approved by President and Vice-Chancellor on 18 April 2019 effective 18 April 2019. New Policy.
- **Version 1.1** approved by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise on 17 July 2024 effective 17 July 2024. Administrative updates to document format, including grammar, structure and references. This version supersedes version 1.3 of Handling Research Data and Materials Procedure.

Archived document