Research data

Research is one of the key activities of the University. The records – of managing the research, creating the outputs and the raw data or results – of research need to be carefully managed.

The following, based on the principles of the University’s Records Management Policy, offers guidance on how the University and its academic staff should manage research records to ensure best practice and compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI), Environment Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) and Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA).

**Research projects produce different types of records**

A record is any information created or received and maintained as evidence of business by a person or organisation. These records can be paper-based or electronic. Research records typically fall into the following categories:

- **Records documenting the management of the research project**, such as applications for funding, invoices, staff records, correspondence
- **Records documenting research outcomes or products**, such as reports or monographs
- **Research data** in ‘raw’ and ‘analysed’ forms.

**Create a data management plan in advance**

Creating a data management plan before you undertake your research should help plan how to store your research data. It will also help you consider FOI and DPA issues around your data in advance. Links showing sample data management plans are included at the end of this document. If you require any advice on FOI, DPA or records management issues concerning your data management plan consult the University Records Manager.

**Research data can be disclosed under FOI, EIR or DPA**

Research data, like the other information we hold as a University, can be subject to a Freedom or Information (FOI) or Environment Information Regulations (EIR) request. Research data may also include individuals’ personal data, and therefore be subject to requests under the Data Protection Act (DPA).
Define roles and responsibilities

Responsibility for managing records in a research project should be clearly defined at the outset of the research project.

Use good records management practices around your research

Good records management can only improve the organisation of your research project. Complete and reliable records:

- Demonstrate good research practice
- Guard against allegations of research misconduct
- Demonstrate effective resource management to research sponsors and funding bodies
- Protect intellectual property rights
- Demonstrate compliance with legislation and regulations

Paper and electronic records should be stored safely and securely throughout the life of the project. It may be useful to keep an index of the nature, location and format of records produced throughout the research.

Plan how long research records should be kept after the project

Each research project is different and specific retention requirements will often be a condition of grants or funding. If no guidelines exist, a general principle for research records is recommended as follows:

- Records documenting the management of the research project, such as applications for funding, invoices, staff records should be reviewed five years after the close of the project and considered for secure destruction at that point
- Records documenting research outcomes or products, such as reports or monographs should be kept permanently
- Research data in ‘raw’ and ‘analysed’ forms should be reviewed ten years after the close of the project and assessed for its continued value. It can be considered for secure destruction at that point. Research records containing personal data – information or data that links to a living, identifiable individual – should be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and may need to be destroyed or anonymised at a specific point. If you require any advice on managing your research data in accordance with the DPA please consult the University Records Manager.

For information on where and how to store your research records after the project, please consult the University Records Manager.
Define who should have access to research records

Access to research records should be controlled to prevent unauthorised use, removal or destruction. Research records containing personal data – information or data that links to a living, identifiable individual – should be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA). If you require any advice on managing your research records in accordance with the DPA please consult the University Records Manager.

Read the JISC and ICO guidelines around research data

Much of this advice is based on the detailed guidance created specifically for researchers around the management of research records by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) has also released some guidance on Freedom of Information and research data.

- **HEI Records Management: Guidance on Managing Research Records**
  http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/partnerships/records-retention-he/managing-research-records

- **Freedom of Information and research data JISC**
  http://www.jisc.ac.uk/foiresearchdata

- **Freedom of Information and research data ICO**

- **Information on Data management plans including sample documents**
  http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/mrd/rdmp.aspx
  http://dmponline.dcc.ac.uk/documents

University of London Records management

- **Records**
  Records are the evidence of our actions and decisions as a University

- **Responsibility**
  Keeping accurate records is the responsibility of every member of staff

- **Risk**
  There are risks around records (loss, damage, unauthorised access) which need to be managed

- **Retention**
  We should keep our records only as long as they are relevant or as long as we are required to by law

- **Rights**
  The public has a right to access our records under legislation such as FOI and DPA

UoL website link: http://www.london.ac.uk/955.html
Staff intranet link: https://intranet.london.ac.uk/3632.html
Email: Records.management@london.ac.uk