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Research Data Management Policy

Introduction and Purpose

1.1.   The purpose of this policy is to: (i) create model research data management practices for all Researchers (defined below) at the University of Southampton (the University); (ii) foster responsibility for research data management through the development of research data management plans; and (iii) ensure that research data which is significant (as determined by the Researcher with guidance from the Faculty) is stored, retained, accessible and disposed of securely in accordance with all legal, statutory, ethical, contractual and funding.

A robust Research Data Management Policy is required to demonstrate and ensure:

a)   good research practice and procedures;

b)   protection of intellectual property rights (IPR);

c)   proper recording, maintenance, storage and security of Research Data;

d)   compliance with relevant legislation and regulations; and

e)   appropriate access to Research Data is maintained.

This policy aims to address the dual objectives of making research data accessible to the public or wider academic community where possible whilst recognising that there are circumstances when access to research data must be restricted, either to achieve the highest standards for secure research data management or to fulfil commercial objectives.

1.   Definitions

In this Policy, unless otherwise indicated:

1.2.   "Principal Investigator (PI)" means the University employee primarily tasked with delivering a programme of research on behalf of the University, whether or not he/she is referred to as such in a research grant.

1.3.   "Researcher" means any person undertaking research or involved in collecting, generating or creating Research Data, for or on behalf of the University which shall include but not be limited to employees, workers, visiting researchers, postgraduate research students and the PI.

1.4.   "Research Data" means information in digital, computer-readable format or paper-based that:

1.4.1.   is contained or presented in various ways including notes, facts, figures, tables, images (still and moving), audio or visual recordings; and

1.4.2.   which is collected, generated or obtained during the course of or as a result of undertaking research (which includes but is not limited to conducting field or laboratory experiments, conducting trials, surveys, interviews, focus groups or analysis of data); and

1.4.3.   which is subsequently used by the Researcher as a basis for making calculations or drawing conclusions to develop, support or revise theories, practices and findings.

1.5.   "Repository" means the repository or repositories which the University owns or controls and makes available to Researchers for the storage of Research Data.

2. Responsibilities

In this Policy, unless otherwise indicated:

2.1.   On behalf of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor will delegate responsibility for the application of this Policy to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, the Deans and their senior staff.

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

2.2.   All Researchers must adhere to their obligations under this Policy

2.3.   It is recommended that the PI ensure the data management plan or the research proposal itself address the matters set out in sections 3 to 7 of this Policy and takes into account the requirements of collaborating parties.

2.4.   All Researchers must be aware of the data management plan submitted as part of the research bid (where applicable) and adhere to the contractual obligations governing research data (as defined in the relevant research contract), and the application of this Policy.

2.5.   The Dean of each Faculty shall:

   2.5.1.   nominate people to undertake the tasks in 6.3; and

   2.5.2.   establish procedures to ensure that prior to leaving the University, Researchers store all significant Research Data in accordance with clause 4.

3. Ownership and IPR

3.1.   Where intellectual property rights exist (for non-registrable rights) or could exist (for registrable rights) over Research Data which is collected, created or generated by Researchers, then the first owner of the intellectual property right(s) (as between the University and the Researcher) will be determined in accordance with the University's Intellectual Property Regulations.

3.2.   Subject to clause 3.1 or if no intellectual property rights exist in the Research Data or subset thereof, the University is the owner (as between the University and the Researcher) of all legal rights in relation to the Research Data which is collected, created or generated by Researchers. Accordingly the University shall be entitled to enter into agreements governing amongst other things the sale, supply, transfer, access to or use of the Research Data in question. These agreements will be subject to the intellectual property rights of third parties (if any) and the contractual obligations of the University.

3.3.   Where research involves external funding and/or collaboration with other institutions or external parties, intellectual property rights ownership and rights of use should be dealt with in the relevant contract prior to commencement of the project and adhered to by the Researchers. It is recommended that where possible, the contract identify a process for research data management which is consistent with the broad objectives of this Policy.All Researchers must be aware of the data management plan submitted as part of the research bid (where applicable) and adhere to the contractual obligations governing research data (as defined in the relevant research contract), and the application of this Policy.

3.4.   Where a research project involves usage of data (which may include Research Data) owned or controlled by a third party (who is not a collaborating party), each Researcher must abide by the terms of contract governing the use of that data and ensure that the use of this data will not place the University in breach of its contractual or funding obligations arising under clause 3.3.

3.5.   Further useful guidance with regard to the University's IPR and research related policies can be found through *Research & Innovation Services*.

4. Storage and Management

4.1.   All Researchers must ensure that all significant Research Data in digital and computer-readable form:

   4.1.1.   is stored securely in a durable format appropriate for the type of Research Data in question;

   4.1.2.   is stored with adequate metadata and/or documentation to facilitate identification and support effective reuse of Research Data where this is appropriate;

   4.1.3.   is backed-up regularly in accordance with best practice in the relevant field of research;

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

4.1.4. subject to clause 7.2, deposited in the Repository or a national or international repository where it is more appropriate to do so. Where Research Data is stored in another repository, an entry must be made in the Repository indicating where the Research Data has been stored.

4.2. Non-digital Research Data unsuitable for digitisation but which is significant should be:

4.2.1. stored securely;

4.2.2. labelled, indexed or categorised appropriately in order to identify the Research Data in question and support effective reuse of Research Data where this is appropriate; and

4.2.3. subject to clause 7.2, an entry must be made in the Repository identifying that the Research Data in question is held by the University.

4.3. Please consult the University's current guidelines on *Storage Options*.

5. Retention

5.1. Subject Subject to clause 6.3 and 6.4, the disposal and destruction of Research Data must be undertaken in accordance with the University's *Recommended Practices for Destruction of Data*.

5.2. Research Data shall be retained for longer than 10 years:

5.2.1. where an increased retention period is required to meet the University's statutory obligations, contractual obligations or the guidelines of the body funding the relevant research project;

5.2.2. where the results of the research have resulted in a patent application;

5.2.3. where the results of the research become contentious or subject to challenge at any time during the initial 10 year retention period, in which case Research Data should be retained pending review and not destroyed or otherwise disposed of until the matter is fully resolved.

5.3. Research Data may be retained for longer than 10 years where the research has a public interest or heritage value.

5.4. Please consult *Guidance on Retention Periods* for a summary of the current retention periods from funding bodies.

6. Disposal and Destruction

6.1. Subject to clause 6.3 and 6.4, the disposal and destruction of Research Data must be undertaken in accordance with the University's *Recommended Practices for Destruction of Data*.

6.2. The agreed processes for the timing, manner and recording of Research Data disposal and destruction should be included in data planning and stored with other project information and documentation.

6.3. Prior to any scheduled disposal and destruction, the relevant Research Data records which have been stored and retained in accordance with section 4 and 5 of this policy should:

6.3.1. be reviewed with a view to their suitability for destruction by the appropriate University Faculty; and

6.3.2. where found to be suitable for destruction and disposal, the process shall be managed in line with any regulatory and contractual obligations, and in accordance with the sensitivity of the data in question;

6.4. A record of the disposal or deletion of Research Data originally stored and retained in accordance with section 4 and 5 of this policy, should be logged in the Repository which should include the reason for deletion.

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

7. Access

7.1.   Subject to clause 7.2, the University recognises the benefits of making Research Data accessible to the public or wider academic community.

7.2.   Before sharing Research Data during or after a project it is essential to consider whether this is permissible in light of IPR ownership, ethical, privacy, confidentiality requirements or any legal, regulatory or funding restrictions. In addition, Researchers must consider whether Research Data has commercial potential and in consultation with the University's Research & Innovation Services consider if it is suitable for protection and/or transfer under the University's Intellectual Property Regulations.

7.3.   Access to Research Data during the course of a research project should be restricted to the collaborators on the research project in the first instance and only made available to other parties if none of the issues in clause 7.2 are present and with the permission of the research collaborators.

7.4.   To assist in complying with the University's obligations set out in Clause 7.2, access to Research Data which is deposited in the Repository may be restricted or embargoed by technical means.

7.5.   Researchers who deposit Research Data in a national or international repository must only do so if the matters set out in clause 7.2 have been addressed and there are no restrictions in place governing the sharing of data.

7.6.   Please consult the document *Restricting Access to Research Data* for guidance in meeting the University's obligations under clause 7.2.

7.7.   Researchers who receive requests for access to Research Data should forward these requests to *Legal Services*.

8.   Guidance Documents

Storage Options

Guidance on Retention Periods

Recommended Practices for Destruction of Data

Restricting Access to Research Data

9.   Related Regulations and Policies

Intellectual Property Regulations

Procedures for Investigating Cases of Alleged Misconduct in Research

Policy for Registration of DOIs via DataCite

Approved by Senate 29th day of February 2012
Reviewed in July 2014; no changes made
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