

University of Westminster Research Data Management Policy

1. Introduction

The University of Westminster takes pride in a record of excellence in research that makes a difference, with the Westminster 2020 Strategy highlighting our commitment to research with impact¹. The University's Framework for Research Governance recognises that "all excellent research needs to be underpinned by the highest standards of practice, confidence in the integrity of its researchers and the institutional systems for ensuring these occur"² with its Code of Research Good Practice³ underpinned by the Universities UK concordat to support research integrity⁴.

In parallel, research funders have clear policies in place relating to Research Data Management (RDM), with an emphasis on making data open wherever practicable. Research Councils UK (RCUK)'s Common Principles on Data Policy⁵ (2011) states that "publicly funded research data are a public good, produced in the public interest, which should be made as openly available with as few restrictions as possible in a timely and responsible manner that does not harm intellectual property [while recognising] that there are legal, ethical and commercial constraints on release of research data."⁶ Subsequently other research funders such as, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)⁷, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)⁸ and the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme⁹ have strengthened their policies relating to the management and sharing of research data. There is recognition from most research funders (whether explicit or implicit) that researchers cannot meet expectations without support from their institution.

The University recognises the importance of encouraging our researchers to engage with RDM and plays a key role in facilitating this best practice.

The potential benefits of managing research data effectively include:

- increased visibility and integrity, potential for collaboration and re-use
- mitigating associated risks relating to data loss and accidental release of sensitive data
- ensuring the long-term preservation of and access to selected data sets
- enabling data arising in academic contexts to be shared as a public good.

This policy aims to:

1. Raise awareness of funder requirements relating to research data management and the associated implications for the University.
2. Highlight that responsibility for RDM falls within the remit of a range of stakeholders across the institution and that this group will need to work together (via appropriate mechanisms such as the Research Data Management working group) to build a cohesive support service that puts researchers at its centre.

1 Westminster 2020 strategy <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/file/8876/download?token=lvwY1zmp>

2 <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/research-framework>

3 <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/file/30721/download?token=zBClqnOB>

4 <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/research-concordat.aspx>

5 <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/datapolicy/>

6 RCUK Common Principles on data policy <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/datapolicy/>

7 EPSRC Policy Framework on research data <https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/about/standards/researchdata/>

8 ESRC Research Data Policy <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-grant-holders/research-data-policy/>

9 <https://www.openaire.eu/opendatapilot>

3. Enable researchers to manage their data effectively and share it safely.

3. Acknowledge that this is an aspirational policy and that a related RDM roadmap will detail a programme of work to enable this. This will mean regular review of the policy is necessary to take into account related developments.

4. Clarify the scope as well as responsibilities of both the institution and individual researchers.

2. Definitions

Research data management “concerns the organisation of data, from its entry to the research cycle through to the dissemination and archiving of valuable results. It aims to ensure reliable verification of results, and permits new and innovative research built on existing information.”¹⁰

Research data can be defined as any digital object created or collected during the course of research (which might include documents, still images, video and audio files, spreadsheets, software, computer code, databases or websites) in addition to physical objects such as sketchbooks, diaries, lab notebooks, portfolios, models, other artefacts and includes the documentation of practice based research.

Open data is that which is discoverable, can be accessed and re-used. There are degrees of openness which could include access to the dataset or simply the metadata record.

3. Scope

This policy applies to any member of University staff whose job requires them to conduct research and doctoral researchers. In the longer term it is expected that the policy will include any taught course students carrying out research however it is recognised that it will take time to reach this aspiration.

Good research data management practice is expected to be applied to all data collected. Where possible data, should be made openly available, however it is recognised that there may be valid reasons not to do so.

4. Researcher responsibilities

4.1 It is the responsibility of the individual researcher to ensure that research data is managed appropriately across its lifetime. This includes planning, design, collection and analysis, storage, description, and where appropriate, preservation and publication.’

4.2 Research data should be made as open as possible unless there are legal, ethical, commercial, intellectual property or other reasons not to do so. It is expected that regardless of restrictions good RDM practice will be applied. An appropriate licence should be applied to clarify the terms of data re-use.

4.3 The data creator (the individual researcher, doctoral researcher or PI in the case of a group project) is responsible for the day-to-day management of research data. In the case of doctoral researchers the supervisor will have responsibility for making sure that they have access to the necessary skills and infrastructure to manage their data appropriately.

4.4 Each researcher is responsible for familiarising themselves with their research funder, publisher and other relevant external stakeholder requirements.

4.5 All research proposals would benefit from addressing data capture, management, integrity, confidentiality, retention, sharing and publication within a data management plan. Where research funder expectations include a mandatory data management plan researchers will be expected to follow the stipulations of the funder although all researchers are strongly recommended to complete such a plan and at a minimum appreciate that data capture and management should have a role in research planning.

10 <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/briefing-papers/making-case-rdm>

4.6 Research data should go through an appropriate selection and appraisal process to identify data for preservation post project in an appropriate data repository or archive. This should be determined by any relevant ethics guidelines as well as research funder requirements.

4.7 All research data selected for long-term preservation should be registered in the Virtual Research Environment as soon as practicable after upload to an appropriate data repository or archive. Metadata should include any associated restrictions and conditions of access.

4.8 If a data creator (researcher or doctoral researcher) leaves the University then responsibility for curatorial decisions (such as those relating to the deletion or migration of data) passes to the line manager (in the case of doctoral researchers the Director of Studies), then onto to the Faculty Dean. Ultimate responsibility lies with the DVC Research & Knowledge Exchange.

5. Institutional responsibilities

The University acknowledges its responsibility in providing a programme of awareness-raising, training, development of systems and supporting guidance and access to appropriate expertise. This programme will be documented in the accompany RDM roadmap and will be co-ordinated by the Head of Research and Scholarly Communications (Libraries and Curriculum Support). It is recognised that responsibility for RDM falls within the remit of a range of stakeholders across the institution and that this group will need to work together (via appropriate mechanisms such as the Research Data Management working group) to build a cohesive support service that puts researchers at its centre.

1. Relevant guidance (such as institutional RDM web pages) will be developed and a programme of advocacy and training developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

2. A strategy will be developed alongside the policy to highlight priorities (and associated milestones) for the development of services

3. An associated RDM roadmap will chart steps to be taken to implement services

4. Engagement with all stakeholders will take place via formal mechanisms such as the Research Data Management Working Group and other channels as identified by an associated communications strategy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant copyright, data protection and FOI legislation and relevant institutional policies such as those relating to ethics, intellectual property and use and digital preservation. Relevant institutional policies and guidelines are listed at Appendix A.

6. Policy implementation and review

This policy should be reviewed in June 2018 to reflect development of the service and the associated roadmap to implementation.

Jenny Evans, Head of Research and Scholarly Communications, Libraries and Curriculum Support, May 2017

Appendix A – related University of Westminster policies, codes of practice and frameworks

Westminster 2020

Research Framework

Framework for Research Governance

Research Strategy 2015-2020

University Code of Research Good Practice 2015-16

University of Westminster Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research 2016-17

Academic Regulations for Research Degrees

Intellectual Property Policy

IT Security & Use Policy

University personal data protection policy

Policy on the Dissemination of Research and Scholarly Output / OA Policy

Records Management Policy

Digital Preservation Strategy

HR Excellence in Research Action Plan 2015-17