Research Data Management Policy

1   Introduction/Context

The effective management of research data is becoming increasingly important. Research Councils UK (RCUK) has affirmed that making research data available to users is a core part of its remit. RCUK's Common Principles on Data Policy[1] states that 'Publicly funded research data are a public good, produced in the public interest, which should be made openly available with as few restrictions as possible in a timely and responsible manner that does not harm intellectual property.'

Northumbria University recognises that data from its research should be well-managed to benefit the researcher, the University and the wider community. As such, there is an obligation to record, store and archive research data appropriately, which is proportionate in terms of security and retention, and allows for sharing of data to contribute to the impact of the research. It is recognised that types of data used, collected and generated will vary between different disciplines. The approach taken in this policy is to be sensitive to these differences while ensuring that good practice is promoted and funder requirements are met. This policy should be read in conjunction with other University policies, notably the Records Management Policy Framework[2], the Research Ethics and Governance Handbook[3], and the Data Storage Policy[4].

2   Scope

The policy applies to all research conducted by staff and postgraduate research students at the University, regardless of whether it is funded or unfunded.   The policy does not normally apply to activities such as surveys used to improve service provision, conducted by Students' Union or Service Departments, or to undergraduate work, unless it is included in scholarly publications.

3   Definition of Research

Research in the context of this policy is based on the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Research Excellence Framework (REF) definition, contained in Annex C of the 'Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions'[5], which defines research as 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.' It **includes** work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It **excludes**

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[1] http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/datapolicy/
[2] https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/media/2863016/recmanfra.pdf
[3] https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/5007/research/reghandbook.pdf?view=Standard
[4] https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/5007/respdf/data-prot_secure_storage.pdf
[5] http://www.ref.ac.uk/pubs/2011-02/

routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also **excludes** the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.

4   Definition of Research Data

For the purposes of this policy, research data refer to any material collected, observed or created for the purpose of analysis and on which research conclusions are based. Research data may be numerical, descriptive or visual, and can be digital, paper-based or in other forms.

5   Definition of Researcher

For the purposes of this policy, researchers are defined as members of the University, including all staff and PGR students, and those conducting research on University premises or using University facilities.

The policy excludes Postgraduate Taught and Undergraduate students, unless their research findings are included in scholarly publications.

6   Governance

   i)   The policy is approved by Research and Innovation Committee, and monitored through the Research Data Management Working Group.

   ii)   The policy will be reviewed every six months.

7   Principles

   i)   Research data will be managed throughout the research data lifecycle[6] in accordance with the University's policies, guidelines and standards, and funder, legislative and ethical requirements.

   ii)   Data management plans should be written for all new research projects, regardless of whether submission of such plans is required when applying for research funding. The plan must address how the data will be captured, managed, retained, shared, published, and how any confidentiality issues will be addressed.[7] See also Section 10.

   iii)   Data should be made available for access and re-use where legally, ethically and commercially appropriate.

   iv)   Researchers must provide sufficient metadata and explanatory documentation about their research data to ensure that data are discoverable, understandable and re-useable. Such metadata will be published by the University, normally within 12 months of the data being generated. If access to data is restricted, the metadata should outline the reasons for this and the conditions which need to be met for access to be granted.

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[6] http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/curation-lifecycle-model
[7] Plans should be developed at bidding stage to ensure that potential costs of data management are included in the bid.

v) Data must be retained in an appropriate format for a period of at least 1 year from the end of the project for low risk projects, 3 years for moderate risk projects and 7 years for high risk projects, in accordance with the University's Research Records Retention Schedule[8], unless other funder regulations apply (for example, EPSRC stipulates a retention period of 10 years, plus an additional 10 from the last date at which access to the data was requested by a third party). Where possible and applicable, research data that is not in a digital format will be digitised to facilitate access.

vi) Where possible, or if mandated by the funder, retained data must be submitted to an appropriate archive or database for long-term preservation. Researchers should avoid retaining data using methods that might not persist for 10 years, such as project websites.

vii) All data which are created as part of research at Northumbria University must be registered with the University, even if the data are hosted elsewhere. All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that research data are not stored in a jurisdiction that offers lower levels of protection than are available in the UK.

viii) Published papers should include a statement describing how, and on what terms, supporting research data may be accessed.

8   Data Management Responsibilities

i) The most senior Northumbria researcher associated with a research project (whether funded or unfunded) is the Data Lead for that project and is ultimately responsible for research data management.

ii) For funded projects, the Data Lead will normally be the Principal Investigator.

iii) For Postgraduate Research Students, the Data Lead will normally be the Principal Supervisor.

iv) The Data Lead is responsible for ensuring that all research staff and students working on a project are aware of the University's data management policy and supporting guidelines and procedures, and for reviewing data management plans annually. The Data Lead may assign specific data management responsibilities to other researchers on a project.

v) In the absence of the Data Lead, responsibility for research data management devolves to the department Research and Innovation Lead.

vi) Stakeholders and Services across the University will work together to create a robust infrastructure for the research data lifecycle.

9   Implementation and Communication

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[8] https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/leadership-governance/vice-chancellors-office/legal-services-team/records-management/records-retention-schedule/

i)   The University will provide training, support, advice and guidance regarding research data management through the researcher development training programme (including the PGR training programme) and web-based guidance.

ii)   The University will provide mechanisms and services for storage, backup, registration and retention of research data during a research project and after its completion.

10   Further Guidance

Further guidance on producing Data Management Plans is available through the Digital Curation Centre:
https://dmponline.dcc.ac.uk/

Information on RCUK individual funder policies is available through:
http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/policy-and-legal/funders-data-policies

Approved by Research and Innovation Committee on 13 May 2015. In light of the changing landscape around RDM the Policy is subject to six-monthly review.