PL_AC_018 Research Data Management Policy

1. Context
Torrens University Australia (the University) is committed to the highest standards of ethical and responsible research and complies with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (the Code). Compliance with the Code is a requirement of the Australian Research Council (ARC) and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funding. This policy addresses the ownership of research materials and data, their storage, their retention beyond the end of the project, and appropriate access to them by the research community.

This policy sets out the requirements for the University and University researchers to ensure that all research data are managed according to the legal, statutory, ethical and funding bodies’ requirements (in accordance with Responsibilities of Institutions: R8 (Provide access to facilities for the safe and secure storage and management of research data, records and primary materials and, where possible and appropriate, allow access and reference). The University recognises that good management of research data and primary materials can increase the efficiency and maintain the integrity of research results.

2. Definitions
Collaborator: any person other than researchers who acquires, or has access to, primary materials or creates research data, while taking part in any research project or scholarly activity in conjunction with a University staff member or student.

Institutional resources: resources of the University which include premises, facilities, funds, services, equipment, paid leave, staff time and support staff.

Principal Investigator: the researcher with overall responsibility for the management of the research project.

Primary materials: objects, physical and/or virtual, acquired through a process of research from which research data may be derived, examples include biological material, survey questionnaires, recordings and images.

Research data: the data, records, files or other evidence, irrespective of their content or form, that comprise research observations, findings or outcomes, including primary materials and analysed data. Research data referred to in this policy relates to data generated in research projects and excludes those derived as part of the University’s operations.

Researchers: staff, visiting fellows and researchers, adjuncts, academic title holders and students of the
University who conduct research for the University.

3. Scope
This policy applies to:

- all University staff and researchers engaged in the collection, creation, curation, management and use of research data at the University irrespective of their work location, and
- all research data, regardless of format, but subject to the provisions of any relevant contracts or funding/collaboration agreements.

The University expects all researchers, academic units, the library, information technology, and administrative support units to work collaboratively to implement good research data management practice.

In cases where this policy conflicts with the legal requirements stipulated in research contracts (commercial or otherwise), the contract terms will take precedence over this policy. This does not cover the management of data derived as part of the University’s operations.

4. Principles
This policy reflects the following principles:

- the University ensures that research data required for validation of research results are managed according to the recommendations made in the Code and applicable legal, statutory, ethical and funding body requirements
- both the University and individuals engaged in research have a shared responsibility to manage research data and primary materials effectively, including ownership, storage, security, retention and access issues.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Torrens University Australia
The University is the research data custodian and is responsible for providing the facilities for the safe and secure storage of research data, maintaining records of where research data are stored and for the secure and safe disposal of research data and primary materials when the specified period of retention has finished.

5.2 Researchers (includes student researchers)
Researchers are responsible for adhering to the University’s policy and the Code on the secure management, storage and safe disposal of primary materials and research data. Researchers must:

- manage research data and primary materials according to ethical protocols and relevant legislation,
- create and maintain full and accurate records of the research data including sources and data collection methods,
- decide which data and materials should be retained taking into account professional standards, legal requirements and contractual arrangements, and
- retain research data and primary materials for sufficient time to allow reference to them by other researchers and interested parties.
5.3 Special Responsibilities

5.3.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
This policy must be administered in conjunction with the Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities (NHMRC 2018) and “Managing research: Use, storage and access. Principle 13: Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSI 2012).

5.3.2 Consumer and Community Participation in Research
It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to monitor data management and storage practices when there is consumer or community involvement in the research process. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Statement on Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research (Statement on consumer and community involvement in health and medical research 2016).

6. Storage of Research Data and Primary Materials
The University is responsible for provision of facilities for the safe and secure storage of primary materials and research data including protection against theft, misuse, damage or loss and, for maintaining records of where research data are stored. This includes both physical storage space where needed or electronic data capture facilities and a digital repository of data. The University must provide appropriate facilities for secure storage of research data and primary materials, and maintaining a register of research data for both current and completed projects in an accessible form.

While it may not be practical to keep all the primary materials, durable research data derived from the research process must be retained in secure institutional facilities and made accessible.

Institutional Repository enables the efficient storage and sharing of research data. It is set up to enable data sharing with external collaborators. Each research staff or student is assigned server space to facilitate the storage and sharing of data. Researchers will be encouraged to publish data along with research outputs to increase their visibility and the citability of their research outputs. See Appendix A. Online Data Storage Procedure.

7. Ownership of Research Data and Primary Materials
Unless owned by a third party, and subject to any relevant research contracts, research data and primary materials acquired through research will be owned by the University. However, the researcher/s undertaking the research will be entitled to take, retain and use a copy of that research data and primary materials on the condition that:

- that data and materials may only be used for commercial purposes if a licence is agreed with the University (which licence may require a financial return to the University); and

- publications based on that data and materials acknowledge the University’s participation in a manner reasonably acceptable to the University.

The University will remain the custodian of any research data and primary materials acquired through research unless they are owned by a third party or are subject to a formal collaborative agreement.
Custodianship does not override intellectual property rights (see Copyright Compliance and Intellectual Property Policy). Where projects span multiple institutions, an agreement must be developed at the commencement of the research covering the ownership, control and management of primary materials and research data. In general, all materials and data retained at the end of a project are the property of the institution that hosted the project unless otherwise agreed at commencement of the project or subject to funding requirements.

8. Retention of Research Data and Records
The minimum recommended period for retention of research data is five (5) years from the date of publication. However, in any particular case, the period for which data should be retained should be determined by the specific type of research, for example:

- for short-term research projects that are for assessment purposes only, such as research projects completed by students, retaining research data for 12 months after the completion of the project may be sufficient,
- for most clinical trials, retaining research data for 15 years or more may be necessary,
- for areas such as gene therapy, research data must be retained permanently (e.g. patient records), and
- if the work has community or heritage value, research data should be kept permanently at this stage, preferably within a national collection.

For published research data if the results from research are challenged, all relevant research data and primary materials must be retained at least until notification from the University that the matter is resolved.

9. Access to Research Data and Primary Materials
Subject to any relevant legislation (for example regarding the protection of personal information), any relevant research contract and the Copyright Compliance and Intellectual Property Policy, research data and primary materials should be made available by researchers for use by other researchers and interested persons for further research, after reasonable periods following the completion of the research. The Institutional Repository will be used to ensure access to research data can be both securely stored and shared. Appropriate restrictions can be placed on sensitive data to ensure it is not released publicly. See Appendix A - Online Data Storage Procedure.

Researchers given access to confidential information must maintain that confidentiality. Confidential information must only be used subject to relevant Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) approvals.

10. Removal or Movement of Data and Records
Policy statements and agreements, and covering ownership and storage of research data can be reviewed whenever there is movement or departure of research staff including when researchers move between institutions or employers and when data are held or are to be transferred outside Australia.

11. Destruction of Records
Generally, primary materials and research data will be destroyed at the end of the relevant retention period (see Section 8). Records that may be relevant to emerging or current allegations of research misconduct or any form of pending or threatened litigation must not be modified or destroyed but maintained until the matter is resolved.

12. Collaborative Research Projects
Where projects span several institutions, an agreement must be developed by the researcher/s prior to the commencement of data collection outlining the ownership and management of primary materials and research data during and following the research project. In general, all materials and data retained at the end of a project
are the property of the Institution that hosted the project unless otherwise agreed at commencement of the project or subject to funding requirements.

13. References


## APPENDIX A - Online Data Storage Details

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| **Overview** | Torrens University Institutional Repository (Torrens.figshare) has been designed to operate as both a digital institutional repository and a secure storage space for research data. The Repository enables data files to be shared with both internal and external collaborators.  
Data files created in Torrens.figshare are assigned metadata tags which include creation or edit date, subject heading, key words and contributors/collaborators.  
Data files and data sets can be published using the Repository Infrastructure, ensuring  |
| **Step 1 Assigning Server Space** | Each research person (staff or student) is assigned server space to create, store and share data. An initial 20 GB is provided but this can be expanded when required.  
Accounts are created using Torrens University credentials, which are matched to a HR feed containing unique identifiers for each individual. It is not possible to access server space without a Torrens staff or student account.  |
| **Step 2 Creation of data files/data sets** | Researchers save files to their Repository space, which also enables them to share files or create project space to invite colleagues, supervisors or external collaborators (through email) to work on files.  
Shared files can only be accessed through a nominated email account related to the supervisor or collaborator. It is not possible to access these files without being nominated by the owner.  
Each file contains metadata tags, which include date of creation and modification. This enables the tracking of files during the project and at completion of project.  
Files are also linked to associated grants through an additional metadata tag.  |
| **Step 3 Research data publication** | Researchers have the option of publishing research data, making it publicly viewable and citable. Upon publication, files are assigned DOIs, which increases research profile.  |
| **Step 4 Retention and ongoing management of data** | Compare HR feed data with metadata tags to locate lapsed or concluded projects.  
Contact project leaders or supervisors to resolve whether data is to be published or deleted.  
Delete, retain or publish files, based on retention policy listed in section 8 Retention of Research Data and Records of the Research Data Management Policy.  |
| **Related: Recording of Theses** | HDR students are required to submit an electronic copy of their completed thesis before graduating. This is published in the Institutional Repository and assigned a Digital Object Identifier.  |

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