**Management of Research Data and Records Policy (MPF1242) – Major Amendment**

**Consultation Draft March 2021**

***Appendix - Frequently Asked Questions***

| **Clause** | **Question** | **Answer** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| All | The majority of clauses in the policy outline responsibilities for researchers – what is the University doing to support researchers to meet these responsibilities? | The University is currently investing in a multi-year Research Data Management Program (through the [Petascale Campus Initiative](https://gateway.research.unimelb.edu.au/resources/my-university/petascale-campus-initiative)).  This policy amendment represents one small component of the Program. Additionally, the Program is currently in the process of:   * **Implementing new research data infrastructure**, including:   + **Secure research environments** to support researchers in processing and managing sensitive research data safely   + **Retention storage** to support researchers with meeting their retention obligations * **Enhancing existing research infrastructure** to improve performance, improve researcher experience, and lower barriers to access/use * **Developing new resources** such as guidelines, information resources and training to support researchers with good RDM practices * **Streamlining access to RDM services** to ensure researchers can locate and receive support from the various research data support teams across the University   All of these have been developed with extensive academic engagement and input, to ensure that solutions and resources produced meet researcher requirements. |
| All | When will the amended Policy come into effect? | The amended Policy will come into effect after an consultation period with the University community, endorsement by the Research Ethics and Integrity Strategy Committee and final approval by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).  It is likely this process will be completed and come into effect in Q2 of 2021. |
| All | What does this amended Policy mean for research data and records generated prior to the Policy coming into effect? | The amended policy will apply from the Effective Date and govern research activities from that point.  While the Policy clauses introduced in this amendment are not retrospective, it is important to note that they are often a distillation of pre-existing obligations defined by legislation and research codes of practice (as outlined in Clause 3.1).  The University is currently progressing a series of strategic research data management initiatives that will enable easier compliance with the obligations outlined in the amended Policy. Where possible, these initiatives will attempt to encompass/support research data and records generated prior to the amended Policy’s Effective Date. |
| All | How does the Policy address contributor arrangements e.g. for research done with collaborators at other institutions? | If formal agreements have allocated primary responsibility for data to a third party (e.g., a government or industry partner, another administering institution for a research grant), the Policy does not apply.  For other contributor arrangements, the Policy instructs that data ownership and responsibility for data must be identified and documented at the beginning of the research project/activity, with key factors that should be considered in this process.  The working group is considering if a practical process for determining ownership and responsibility can be developed for the [University Process Library](https://au.promapp.com/unimelb/process/group/61f5bf88-9d0c-47df-8ec2-1b5d6b8535d5) to support this Policy.  More generally, complex collaboration arrangements may need to be referred to the University’s Legal Services or Research, Innovation and Commercialisation to clearly resolve issues of data ownership or responsibility. |
| All | How does the Policy address physical research data and records? | Physical forms of research data and records are included in the definitions for research data and research records and the same standards for their management apply as for digital formats.  Where adequately managing physical research data and records is not practical, the Policy recommends that durable records documenting or derived from them should be stored in digital formats (when appropriate).  Of note, the University provides central services for the long term storage of hard copy records through [Records and Information](https://records.unimelb.edu.au/services/storage), as well as resources and support for digitisation of physical research data and records through the [University Digitisation Centre](https://library.unimelb.edu.au/digitisation). |
| 5.1, 5.16 | Why do Indigenous data sovereignty clauses specify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples instead of all First Nations peoples? | We note that principles for Indigenous intellectual and cultural property rights are similar for First Nations peoples internationally (as outlined by the [Global Indigenous Data Alliance’s CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance](https://www.gida-global.org/care)). These principles are regarded as ‘ethical requirements’ for research regarding First Nations peoples. Adherence to ‘ethical requirements’ are referenced throughout the Policy, and we have not attempted to define the breadth of these requirements.  Specific mention of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been included to support compliance with Australian legislation and research codes of practice, particularly the *Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research*. |
| 5.2, 5.8 | For research data and records under the University’s control, what are the mechanisms for Researchers to ensure the University has a record of the ownership and responsibility or the research activity’s completion? | Research Computing Services currently maintains a register for research projects stored on central research infrastructure (i.e. managed by Research Computing Services), including details about a project’s status as active or completed.  The recommended process for creating or updating a record within this system is currently being documented for the [University Process Library](https://au.promapp.com/unimelb/process/group/61f5bf88-9d0c-47df-8ec2-1b5d6b8535d5) to support this Policy.  As infrastructure, services and processes develop over time, the documented process will be updated to guide researchers in how to meet these policy clauses. |
| 5.5 | Does the University’s responsibility to provide facilities for the safe and secure storage and management of research data and records have limits in relation to individual entitlements? | The University is investing heavily into providing extensive facilities for the storage and management of research data.  However, due to the size of the University’s research community and exponential data growth in certain disciplines, there are necessary limits on individual entitlements to University facilities (e.g., storage capacity) which support a more equitable distribution of central research resources.  For researchers with extensive data requirements, the University will assess requests for additional capacity on University facilities on a case-by-case basis. |
| 5.5 | What are the research data advisory services at the University to consult with about how to meet legal and ethical obligations? | Various teams are able to provide advice and support regarding your research data management. These include the Office of Research Integrity and Ethics, Scholarly Services, Research Computing Services, Legal and Risk and others.  These teams can found on the Research Gateway [here](https://gateway.research.unimelb.edu.au/resources/platforms-infrastructure-and-equipment/doing-data-better/help). |
| 5.7, 5.8 | Current retention obligations are impractical for researchers to meet. Can the policy take a more minimalist view of what should be retained?  Examples might include specifying certain classes of data and research records which need to be retained over others e.g. processed data vs raw data, or retaining metadata records in place of research data. | The policy mandates around retention are derived from the Public Records Act 1973 (Vic) and the [Retention and Disposal Authority for Higher and Further Education Functions](https://prov.vic.gov.au/recordkeeping-government/document-library/pros-1607-higher-and-further-education-functions) (which are summarised in the [University Records Retention and Disposal Authority](https://records.unimelb.edu.au/services/disposal_advice/rda)).  The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research also states that it is a responsibility of researchers to “Retain clear, accurate, secure and complete records of all research including research data and primary materials.”  We acknowledge that:   1. The exponentially growing scale of research data is not well accommodated by these regulatory mandates. 2. As stated by the Guide supporting the Code, “the central aims of retention of data and information are to enable the justification of outcomes of the research and the facilitation of sharing of research data.”[[1]](#footnote-2) 3. There are disciplinary differences that impact what research data and records should be retained for the justification of research outcomes.   While complete retention may be necessary to demonstrate research integrity in some cases, the University is currently working with other Universities to influence and develop more nuanced and pragmatic views of research data retention on a national scale. The Policy and supporting guidance will be revised to reflect these as they evolve. |
| 5.8, 5.17 | Does clause 5.17 encouraging publication to disciplinary repositories contradict clause 5.8 encouraging depositing of research data and records onto University facilities at the conclusion of a project? | The intention of these clauses is different. While clause 5.17 concerns data reuse by others, clause 5.8 concerns legal retention obligations.  Clause 5.8 has been included as it can be extremely difficult for researchers to reliably and securely retain research data or records for the periods legally required by the Public Records Act 1973 (Vic) (these range from 5 years after the completion of the research activity to permanent retention, see [*University Records Retention and Disposal Authority*](https://records.unimelb.edu.au/services/disposal_advice/rda)).  The University provides facilities for the reliable and secure long-term retention of research data and records. The intention of this clause is therefore to encourage researchers to pass responsibility to the University so they can be supported in meeting their retention obligations. |
| 5.10 | What is the *University Research Data Classification Framework*? | The University Research Data Classification Framework will provide researchers with a mechanism to classify their research data into different categories of sensitivity. For each category, the Framework will indicate processes or security controls that are recommended to adequately protect data based on best practice principles.  The Framework aims to help researchers to manage their sensitive research data by distilling the complex ethical and legal frameworks that regulate sensitive research data into an accessible and actionable format.  The Framework is currently being developed by the Sensitive Data Academic Advisory Committee (constituted through the Petascale Campus Initiative), with representation from multiple areas of academic and professional expertise managing sensitive research data. It will be endorsed by the Research Ethics and Integrity Strategy Committee prior to being made available for use. |
| 5.12 | Is it appropriate to apply the Privacy Policy (including requirements for Privacy Impact Assessments) for the management of personal information in research when human ethics processes cover similar concerns? | The Office of Research Integrity and Ethics and Legal and Risk are currently investigating mechanisms to reduce redundancy in these two processes and ensure researchers have clarity on how to meet their obligations regarding personal information in their research data and records.  The University’s ethics processes do not generally advise on whether specific platforms are suitable for use with personal information.  A privacy impact assessment might therefore be appropriate if a researcher is considering the privacy implications of a research platform they want to use or are planning to develop. |
| 5.17 | Is it appropriate to state all researchers are encouraged to publish their research data or should this clause defer to current disciplinary norms (where publication of research data and records may not be standard)? | This clause has been included to encompass the growing emphasis from funders and publishers internationally to maximise the reuse potential of publicly-funded research data.  In Australia, both the ARC and NHMRC encourage more open sharing of research data[[2]](#footnote-3),[[3]](#footnote-4). The University has also recently endorsed [Principles for Open Access to Research Outputs](https://library.unimelb.edu.au/open-scholarship/principles-on-open-access-to-research-outputs), which similarly encourages the sharing of research data in line with principle 8.  We acknowledge that disciplinary norms differ significantly regarding publication and reuse of research data. This clause recommends instead of enforces data publication, acknowledging that even in the absence of specific legal or ethical requirements preventing data publication, that data publication may not be appropriate for all research. |
| 5.17 | Why have the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) only been used in the context of data publication and not throughout the document? | The FAIR principles were developed in the context of data sharing and reuse and have become widely accepted as a guiding framework for these activities internationally. We recognise the value of applying FAIR principles to research data and records in these contexts.  Data accessibility is referred to in clause policy statement 4.1 (b) and underscores all subsequent procedural principles. Accessibility as a principle is critical to enable for a broad range of important processes related to research findings, e.g., defence of authorship, defence of research integrity, research commercialisation (which requires confirmation of intellectual property ownership and priority date claims for patents).  Findability, interoperability and reusability are more specifically/inherently related to reuse.  As the research impact and value of data reuse varies greatly between disciplines or for different types of research data, we believe that framing the whole policy around the FAIR principles is unnecessarily onerous for some research communities. |

1. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/Management-of-Data-and-Information-in-Research.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://www.arc.gov.au/policies-strategies/strategy/research-data-management [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/resources/open-access-policy [↑](#footnote-ref-4)