

Guidance on the Retention of Research Information

As an activity, research involves the creation, collection and collation of a great deal of information, some relating to the management of the research project itself, some to publications and presentations given to report on the outcome of the research and also the data upon which the research is based.

For the purposes of clarity, the following definitions are used:

Research information: All information, records and data relating to the conduct of research including research records and research data

Research records: Information relating to the management and conduct of the research project

Research data: The information collected or created in the course of research but which isn't a published research output

There is no hard and fast rule on how long research information should be retained as research can cover such a range of types of activity over a broad array of subjects.

How long research information should be retained for may depend on a number of factors such as:

- Impact of the research
- Academic reputation
- Derived and linked publications
- Statutory/legal obligations
- On-going or further research
- Validation/testing

Funder Requirements

In many cases the institution funding the research may require some or all research information or research data to be held. Some do not have prescribed retention periods but all UK funding councils and other significant funding bodies require research data to be held in a safe and an accessible way. Those conducting research are therefore required to consider how best to manage their research data in order to facilitate this. (see table below).

The University of Salford advises that :

Research records should be held for a minimum of 6 years after the completion of the research

Research data should be held for a minimum of 10 years after the completion of the research

The actual retention period may be longer where the data is actively used or where otherwise required to retain it as a condition of the research funding.

For more information, please contact the University's Information Governance Team who can provide more specific advice in individual cases.

| Availability and Retention Requirements of Funding Bodies | | |
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| Organisation | Expectations of when data should be accessible to others | Required retention period |
| AHRC | Within 3 months of end of project | At least 3 years from the end of the project |
| BBSRC | Timely; no later than publication of main findings; best practice | 10 years from the end of project |
| Cancer Research UK | Timely; no later than acceptance for publication of the main findings | At least 5 years from the end of the project |
| EPSRC | Metadata available within 12 months of generation; data - timely | 10 years from the date of last access |
| ESRC | Within 3 months of end of project | |
| MRC | Timely | 10 years from generation (in original form) |
| NERC | As soon as possible after the end of data collection | |
| STFC | Within 6 months of relevant publication | At least 10 years from the end of the project "Permanently for data that cannot be re-measured or reproduced. |
| Wellcome Trust | Timely; linked to publication | At least 10 years from the end of the project |