"The road to data sharing is paved with good intentions": Looking at Institutional Research Data Policies

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Prevalence of Institutional Research Data Policies
Number of Research Data Policies by country
Explaining differences between UK and Germany

Strong centralised public funding regime for research and universities

Federal state with a strong tradition of independence for professors and universities
Share of UK HEI's with a Data Policy by Russell Group membership

- Member: 42%
- Non-member: 58%
Cohort group in which the UK HEI with Research Data Policy was established

- Ancient (1100-1800): 6%
- Nineteenth century (1801-1899): 23%
- Civic universities (1900-1960): 23%
- Plate glass universities (1961-1968): 19%
- Intermediate era (1969-1991): 0%
- Second wave of new universities (2001-2015): 16%
- Nineteenth century (1801-1899): 23%
- Civic universities (1900-1960): 23%
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• **Recommend:** The policy is a document to provide weight for RDM and data sharing. To that end, a policy should
  – Raise awareness in institutions of RDM and re-use
  – Raise awareness and clarify issues of data ownership
  – Outline broad institutional responsibilities for RDM.
Framework


Research Data Policy definitions of key RDM terms by year adopted
Length of definition of "Data/Research Data" in selected Research UK HEI Research Data Policies

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Word Count</th>
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Library Services
British Library of Political and Economic Science
UK HEI Research data policies definition of key RDM terms by Russell Group membership

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Definition (Row %)</th>
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<th>Total (Column %)</th>
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<td>13 (42%)</td>
<td>18 (58%)</td>
<td>31 (100%)</td>
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Definitions

- **Recommend:** State that data is an asset in its own right and include a phrase about it being recognised as such.
- Definitions of what “data” best left to supporting documentation to define on a devolved basis.
Policy broadly defines the role institution plays in supporting RDM and outlines RDM responsibility of researchers.

No institutional support mentioned: 9%
Institutional support mentioned: 12%
Institutional support mentioned and specified: 79%
• **Recommend:** Policies should define a level of responsibility for the institution, not just the researchers.
• Exact responsibilities could be left to supporting documentation but state who is involved in RDM.
Requirement to complete a DMP

- Yes, institutional or funder, with fields specified: 83%
- Either optional funder required but fields not specified: 7%
- No: 10%
• **Recommend**: suggest a DMP is recommended in a way that highlights how it underpins good RDM practice.
• A DMP requirement brings in resource questions so consider that.
Research Data Policy specifies who it covers

- 62% No
- 19% Staff
- 19% Staff and Students
• **Recommend**: Communities of research activity need to know if this policy applies to them.

• To whom does the policy apply:
  – Staff (including or excluding visiting staff?)
  – PhD students?
  – all postgraduates
  – Undergraduates
Policy contains a statement on institutional ownership of research data.
Recommend: Ownership of intellectual property is usually covered by employment and funding contracts. Therefore, this point is more one of awareness, but it can provide cover when necessary.
Policy contains a statement on the primacy of external funding requirements

- No mention of contractual/funding requirements: 24%
- Specified where funder policies take priority: 49%
- Mention of contractual/funding requirements: 27%
External arrangement

• **Recommend:** Agreements between researchers, institutions, and funders cover this area. However, it is useful to contain a policy statement on the primacy of these agreements for the sake of clarity.
Policy specifies criteria on what data and documentation is required to be retained

- Yes, specified: 24%
- No: 33%
- Non-specified reference, or criteria specified in supporting document: 43%
UK HEI Policy specifies criteria on what data and documentation is required to be retained

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<td>13 (42%)</td>
<td>18 (58%)</td>
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RetentionPolicy

- **Recommendation:** The question of what to keep can be better addressed by a support service in conjunction with the researchers and archives/repositories.
Policy contains a statement on length of time data should be kept
UK HEI Policy contains a statement on length of time data should be kept.

![Bar chart showing number of policies](chart.png)
Length of retention

• **Recommendation:** Funder policies will vary, may change, and will take precedence. It is arguably better to define retention as “long-term” with specific details addressed by the institutional repository using guidance from funder policies and disciplinary norms.
Policy contains a statement on the ethical use/reuse of data, particularly how it affects potential reuse.

- **Yes**: 80%
- **No**: 10%
- Mentions of relevant legislation on data protection/FoI: 10%
• **Recommendation:** Include a statement about requiring data be “shared to the fullest extent possible”. The policy should recognise commercial, contractual, legal, and ethical restrictions that prevent open data being possible, but still allow for data sharing.
Policy contains a statement on how data will be accessed

- No: 11%
- External archive or repository with details available through university: 24%
- University repository and/or external: 65%
• **Recommendation:** that the policy include a requirement for all generated research data – even if deposited elsewhere - to have a catalogue reference in publications repository, or Library catalogue.
Policy contains a statement on data availability

- No: 13%
- Non-specified: 22%
- Specified requirement for data to be open (subject to funders/ethics): 65%
• **Recommendation**: Better to not mention specific types of licences for data.
Policy contains a statement on costing of RDM
Costs

- **Recommendation**: given the difficulty in identifying costs and variation in how different researchers see this as their responsibility, it would be better not to mention costing. Supporting advice can be given either through the RDM service or Research Office.
UK HEI period policies state they are subject to review

![Bar chart showing the number of policies reviewed over different periods:]

- None: 12
- Non-specified: 6
- One year: 4
- Two years: 2
- Three years: 0
UK HEI Policy states it is subject to periodic review by year of adoption

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• **Recommendation:** It is recommended the policy states it is subject to review at regular defined periods and by whom it is reviewed.
Table 2 Overview and analysis table courtesy of Laurence Horton. Downloaded by clicking on the image below.

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<th>Institution in alphabetical order</th>
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Note: The table above provides a summary of the implementation of RDM policies across various institutions. Each entry indicates the date when the policy was adopted, the rationale behind it, and various other details such as support for data management plans (DMP), source of funding, ownership, external access, and retention practices. The table also highlights aspects such as software used, access control, and review procedures.

Data availability

http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-851566

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**UK Higher Education Institution Research Data Management Policies, 2009-2014**


This dataset compares existing research data policies at UK higher education institutions. It consists of 31 cases. Policies were compared on a range of variables. Variables included policy length in words, whether the policy offers definitions, defines institutional support, requires data management plans, states scope of staff and student coverage, specifies ownership of research outputs, details where external funder rights take precedence, guides on what data and documentation is required to be retained, how long it needs to be retained, reinforces where research ethics prevent open data, finalises where data can be accessed, speaks about open data requirements, includes a statement on funding the costs of Research Data Management, and specifies a review period for the policy. Hyperlinks to policies are also included. Institutions and policies are coded in line with [ISO 3166-1/2](http://www.iso.org) to enable regional comparison and allow for future international comparisons to take place. Data also includes the institution’s year of foundation and a categorical variable grouping institutions by year of foundation allowing comparison across cohort groups of universities. A further two variables allow for identification of research based universities.

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**Research funders:** Economic and Social Research Council

**Subjects:** Education

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Research Data Management, policy
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