Research Data Management and Governance Policy

Section 1 - Background Information

Definitions

Term	Definition
Researcher	Anyone engaged in research activity by ACU as a member of staff, a volunteer, an affiliate, an adjunct, or visiting scholar.
Research Student	Anyone enrolled in a Research Higher Degree, including doctoral degrees and masters by research degrees.
Research Project	A project undertaken by a Researcher or a Research Student. A Research Project includes activities throughout the research life-cycle, including project planning and inception through to closure and post-project publication and dissemination or publication of Research Data or findings. For the purposes of this Policy, a Research Higher Degree is a Research Project.
Research Data	Data generated throughout and beyond the research life-cycle. Data that are in the form of facts, observations, images, computer program results, recordings, measurements, narratives or experiences on which an argument, theory, test, hypothesis or another research output is based. Data may be numerical, descriptive, visual or tactile. Data may be raw, or analysed, experimental or observational and may be held in any format or media. Data include records that are necessary for the reconstruction and evaluation of reported results of research and the events and processes leading to those results.
Research Data Materials	Physical objects collected and/or used during research from which Research Data may be obtained such as biological samples, survey questionnaires, measurements, recordings, texts and computer results.
Data Governance	The exercise of authority, control and shared decision-making (planning, monitoring and enforcement) over the management of data assets.
Data Management	All the processes and actions required to manage Research Data using good practice throughout and beyond the research life-cycle for current and future research purposes and users.
Metadata	Information about an object or resource that describes characteristics of that object, such as content, quality, format, location and access rights. Metadata is considered adequate when it describes the data in enough detail to enable reuse of the data.
Institutional Repository	An institutional solution for the storage, description, discovery and reuse of ACU Research Data collections. The contribution of Research Data collections and descriptions to the Metadata Store increases the visibility of ACU research to the national and international research community, fosters researcher collaboration and appropriate citation of Research Data.
Research Data Management Plan	A document that describes how you will collect, organise, manage, store, secure, back up, preserve and share your data during and beyond the life-cycle of the Research Project. It deals with matters such as retention and disposal, archiving, accessing, sharing or publishing the data, and conditions or restrictions for data reuse.

Scope

(1) The Research Data Management and Governance Policy (hereafter referred to as ‘the Policy’) covers:

a. all Australian Catholic University (hereafter referred to as 'the University') Researchers and Research Students engaged in research activities associated or affiliated with the University, in all disciplines, irrespective of their location;
b. all University staff, adjuncts, visitors and students (in the following referred to as 'Researchers') engaged in research activities associated or affiliated with the University, in all disciplines, irrespective of their location; and
c. all Research Data and Research Data Materials regardless of format, and subject to the provisions of any relevant contracts or funding/collaboration agreements.

Ownership

(2) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) (DVCRE)

Legal Framework

(3) The University acknowledges that Research Data management must be consistent with:

a. relevant Federal and State legislation;
b. the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 (in the following referred to as 'the Code');
c. the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research;
d. Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) under the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).
e. relevant State Privacy Principles;
f. University procedures and guidelines;
g. Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) requirements;
h. contractual requirements; and
i. practices in the discipline and specialisation.

(4) The Code states that all individuals and institutions engaged in research have a responsibility to properly manage Research Data, by addressing ownership, storage and retention, and access by the research community, over and beyond the end of the Research Project, particularly where the research would be difficult or impossible to repeat.

(5) This Policy must be read in conjunction with other related University policies, procedures and agreements which include but are not limited to:

a. Research Code of Conduct;
b. Higher Degree Research Policy;
c. Intellectual Property Policy;
d. Records Retention and Disposal Schedule;
e. Records and Archive Management Policy;
f. Data and Information Governance Policy;
g. Indigenous and Cultural Intellectual Propoerty (ICIP) Protocol
h. Policy on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Research; and
i. ACU's Research Data Management Toolkit

Ownership of Research Data

(6) Ownership of Research Data must be determined based on existing University policies, procedures and agreements; and

(7) Researchers must be aware that ownership of Research Data may also be influenced by funding agreements or

collaboration agreements with other institutions.

Research Data Management Plans

(8) The University recognises that Research Data Management Plans are an integral part of best practice in Research Data management. Research Data Management Plans are required for submission of competitive research grant applications including the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

(9) All Research Projects should be accompanied by a Research Data Management Plan. Information and resources on preparing a Research Data Management Plan can be found in the Research Data Management Toolkit.

Research Data Creation and Collection

(10) Researchers must ensure that data created or collected is accurate, valid, complete, and managed from the point of origin to support data quality, ethics, and reuse.

(11) The collection of data outside Australia must comply with the data collection laws of that jurisdiction.

(12) Human Research data:

a. Must be created and collected in compliance with the ACU Research Code of Conduct Policy.

(13) Animal Research data:

a. Researchers collecting research data from animals must do so in compliance with the principles of the NHMRC Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes and applicable legislation and standards.

(14) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

a. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' data must be created or collected in compliance with the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol and the Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, Ethics (CARE) Principles; and
b. Researchers engaging in fieldwork in areas of significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must acknowledge, consult, and engage with the Indigenous owners of the land before commencing fieldwork.

(15) Personal and/or Health Information:

a. Must be collected in compliance with ACU Research Code of Conduct and relevant Privacy Statements.

(16) Artificial Intelligence (AI):

a. Any use of AI in the collection or analysis of research data must be conducted and documented in accordance with the Policy on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Research.

Data Classification and Labelling

(17) Where practicable, the researcher should classify and label each research data element in compliance with the ACU Data and Information Classification Framework.

Data Custodianship and Stewardship

(18) All research data must be assigned a Data Custodian, who should be identified in the Research Data Management Plan.

(19) The Research Data Custodian will be the administrative point of contact for queries regarding the Research Data, including for access to Data which is classed as Mediated Access (restricted or special) for a given research project. . This will often, but not always, be the Principal Investigator on a project. Research Data Custodians may change over time.

(20) Data Stewards are Members of the Executive who oversees Data Management and Data Governance within the remit of their designated role, functional area, or system administration.

(21) Data Stewards are responsible for the quality and integrity, ethics, implementation and enforcement of data management within their business unit.

(22) Should a Data Custodian depart the University, Data Governance responsibility for their Research Data reverts to the Data Steward until a replacement Custodian is formally designated.

Storage, Access and Retention

(23) To optimise research outcomes, Research Data must be:

a. documented and/or described by adequate descriptive and technical metadata;
b. stored securely to protect against theft, misuse, damage or loss;
c. held in appropriate, University approved facilities that allow access to be managed as required; and
d. made accessible for use and reuse, and/or disposed of, according to legal, statutory, cultural, ethical and funding bodies' requirements.

(24) For further information on how to develop and maintain adequate metadata, which facilities are approved by the University for the storage of Research Data, or requesting approval for a different storage facility for your Research Data, please refer to the storage options which are outlined in the Research Data Management Toolkit.

(25) Determining the most appropriate Research Data storage option(s) for a Research Project can be clarified by completion of a Research Data Management Plan.

(26) In accordance with the Code, Researchers may additionally store Research Data on their own infrastructure, including computers and/or external storage devices, provided the data is held securely in accordance with the requirements of the Research Project.

(27) Unless otherwise mandated, Research Data must be retained at a minimum for the appropriate period specified in the Code, University policies, procedures and guidelines, Federal and State legislation, as well as ethical and contractual requirements.

(28) The specified retention period can vary depending upon the discipline and type of research. Further information on retention periods can be found in the Research Data Management Toolkit and in the Records Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Reuse and Collaboration

(29) Where research is undertaken in collaboration with other institutions, any written agreement or contract should cover Research Data ownership, storage, accessibility, retention and disposal;

(30) Researchers may place restrictions on access to Research Data in accordance with this policy and its related procedures and guidelines;

(31) Research Data must be made available for discussion with other Researchers, subject to legal, contractual, confidentiality and ethical considerations;

(32) Research Data may be transferred to a nationally controlled inter-institutional database to facilitate collaborative research across institutions;

(33) Researchers given access to Research Data must maintain confidentiality; and

(34) Information to enable the identification of any restriction on access and reuse of Research Data must be included in the Institutional Repository.

(35) The Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reuseable (FAIR) Principles should be adhered to, in order to support reuse and collaboration and documented in the Research Data Management Plan

Disposal

(36) Research Data must be disposed of safely consistent with the Code, University policies, procedures and guidelines, Federal and State legislation, as well as ethical and contractual requirements; and disposal of research material must not occur prior to the expiration of the appropriate retention period or prior to the resolution of any challenge to the results of the research, whichever is the longer period.

Section 2 - Policy Statement

(37) The University is committed to achieving Research Data management standards for secure data retention, and to optimising the benefits of research through collecting, storing and making Research Data accessible in such a way that it can be used in future by members of the community.

(38) In this respect the University recognises that:

a. Research Data is a valuable product of research activity which can assist in raising the research profile of Researchers, Faculties, Schools, Centres and Institutes, increasing returns on public investment, complementing research outputs and publications, providing research transparency and justifying research outcomes;
b. the management and governance of Research Data should be compatible with the University's mission and the commitment to the highest ethical standards in research, protecting the rights, dignity, health, safety and privacy of the community, including research subjects, and with its commitment to the welfare of animals and the integrity of the environment;
c. access to Research Data can raise the research profile of Researchers and the University, increase returns on public investment, promote open inquiry and debate, and enable innovative uses of data that may not have been foreseen by the Researchers at the time the data was generated; and
d. Research data management and governance is a shared responsibility. All relevant academic and administrative units should work in partnership to implement good practice.

Section 3 - Policy Purpose

(39) This Policy:

a. forms part of the University's governance framework for Research Data management and governance;
b. outlines responsibilities with respect to storage, retention, accessibility, use, reuse and disposal of University Research Data; and,
c. informs procedures and guidelines related to storage, retention, accessibility for use and reuse, and/or disposal of the University Research Data.

Section 4 - Application of Policy

(40) This Policy applies to the management of Research Data created by the University Researchers throughout and beyond the research life-cycle.

Section 5 - Approvals, Roles and Responsibilities

(41) All of the below activities are to be carried out consistent with the Code, University policies, procedures and guidelines, Federal and State legislation, as well as ethical and contractual requirements.

(42) The University is responsible for:

a. ensuring compliance of the University with the requirements of the Code;
b. governance and management practices surrounding Research Data;
c. providing information and training to all Researchers and relevant University staff in regards to confidentiality, Research Data management as well as policies and governance surrounding research at the University;
d. allocating facilities for the safe and secure storage and retrieval of Research Data, as appropriate to the discipline;
e. overseeing the design, development, implementation and maintenance of centrally supported digital storage for Research Data and the Institutional Repository; and,
f. enabling inter-institutional sharing where required.

(43) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) is responsible for:

a. overseeing Research Data management planning activities across the University, and where appropriate, on an inter-institutional basis;
b. reviewing and approving facilities for the storage of Research Data in accordance with this policy;
c. providing advice on the appropriate disposal of Research Data Materials; and,
d. developing and disseminating this Policy and supporting documents for the management of Research Data.

(44) The Library Director is responsible for:

a. developing, implementing and maintaining the Institutional Repository; and,
b. developing and disseminating procedures and providing training and support for University research and administrative units involved in Research Data management and governance.

(45) The Chief Information and Digital Officer is responsible for:

a. developing, implementing and maintaining centrally supported digital storage for Research Data.

(46) Heads of Schools, Research Centres and Institutes are responsible for:

a. implementing University guidelines and procedures on the retention of Research Data relevant to their research discipline and specialisations;
b. ensuring Researchers within the cost centre are aware of their obligations in maintaining up-to-date Research Data Management Plans;
c. ensuring Researchers within the cost centre are aware of their obligations and engage in training opportunities in the storage of Research Data on the University's data storage system; and

d. ensuring that the timing and the modality of the disposal of Research Data within their School, Research Centre, or Institute is consistent with the Code, University policies, procedures and guidelines, Federal and State legislation, as well as ethical and contractual requirements.

(47) Data Stewards are responsible for:

a. exercising high-level executive governance over Research Data within their business unit, Executive portfolio, or functional area;
b. ensuring compliance with Data Governance frameworks, ethics, and data classification standards across their area of responsibility;
c. approving access protocols for sensitive or restricted data sources where required; and
d. assuming interim governance oversight of Research Data upon the departure of a Data Custodian until a replacement is formally designated.

(48) Data Custodians are responsible for:

a. managing the day-to-day operational administration, access, and integrity of specific Research Data collections throughout the research lifecycle;
b. acting as the primary point of contact for queries regarding data access;
c. ensuring the Research Data Management Plan (RDMP) accurately reflects the storage, security, and access arrangements for the data; and
d. ensuring appropriate handover or reassignment of data custody prior to departing the University.

(49) Researchers are responsible for:

a. ensuring that any Research Data Management Plans associated with their projects are kept up-to-date as the project changes over time;
b. maintaining an operational awareness of relevant Data Governance frameworks, policies, and protocols as they apply to their research projects
c. maintaining accurate records of Research Data, and ensuring that these records and the Research Data are securely stored, including data held in computing systems;
d. ensuring that their Research Data are stored in accordance with this policy and information is provided for the Institutional Repository;
e. enabling the sharing of their Research Data;
f. retaining Research Data at a minimum for the appropriate period, and, if the results of the research are challenged, at a minimum until the matter is resolved; and
g. ensuring appropriate disposal of Research Data.

(50) Research Students are responsible for:

a. Developing a Research Data Management Plan for their project and keeping it up-to-date as the project changes over time;
b. developing an awareness of Data Governance protocols and applying them to the management of their research project;
c. maintaining accurate records of Research Data, and ensuring that these records and the Research Data are securely stored, including data held in computing systems; and
d. If appropriate, enable sharing of their Research Data; and as appropriate, maintain minimum data retention periods.

Section 6 - Review

(51) Unless otherwise indicated, this policy will still apply beyond the review date.

Section 7 - Associated Information

(52) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources, please refer to the Associate Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Not Yet Approved
Effective Date	To Be Advised
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Approval Authority	Academic Board
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Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Abid Khan Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)
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