

Appendix G: Research Data Retention Policy and Guidelines

1. All original data should be held in an appropriate durable form (for example, paper, electronic or photographic records, etc) by individual researchers for a minimum period of five years after publication or five years following the completion of the research if publication is not intended.
2. If data of a confidential nature are obtained, for example from individual patient records or from certain questionnaires, individual confidentiality must be observed and research workers must follow the guidelines laid down by the relevant research ethics committees concerning privacy and confidentiality.
3. All original data involving questionnaires, consent forms, surveys, interviews or observations of human participants, research involving animals, ionizing radiation, and recombinant DNA must be stored on University premises. Data associated with research deemed by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) to be "more than minimum risk" must be retained in accordance with the HREC's Data Retention Procedures, administered by the Research Services unit. All data storage must be in accordance with the University's Retention and Disposal Schedule.
4. Individual researchers should be able to hold copies of the data for their own use. Retention solely by the individual researcher provides little protection to the researcher or the institution in the event of an allegation of falsification of data.
5. In normal circumstances, research results and methods should be open to scrutiny by colleagues within the University and, through appropriate publication, by the profession at large. Secrecy should be necessary for a limited period in the case of contracted research or in specialized areas where co-operation of subjects will not otherwise be attainable.
6. Confidentiality agreements to protect intellectual property rights may be agreed between the institution, the researcher and a sponsor of the research. Where such agreements limit free publication and discussion, limitations and restrictions must be explicitly agreed. It is the obligation of the researcher to enquire whether confidentiality agreements apply and of the Head of School or research unit to inform researchers of their obligations with respect to these provisions. All confidentiality agreements should be made known at an early stage to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), or nominated representative.
7. Researchers are responsible for ensuring appropriate security for any confidential material, including that held in computer systems. Where computing systems are accessible through networks, particular attention to security of confidential data is required. Security and confidentiality must be assured in a way that copes with multiple researchers and the departure of individual researchers.
8. In the case of postgraduate research, the student and the supervisor should draw up a signed written statement detailing where the original data are being stored, who should maintain copies of what parts of the data, and what rights of publication each party has during the student's candidature and when the student completes the degree or withdraws from the project. This original signed statement should be held on the Student File held by Research Services; a copy should also be retained in the relevant School(s). (See template attached; available on Research Services Web Site: <http://www.acu.edu.au/research>)