Research data policy briefing

What do funders require?

Common policy requirements are that:

- Data management and sharing plans are submitted in grant proposals
- Data are made openly available with as few restrictions as possible in a timely and responsible manner
- Data are preserved for 10+ years[1] after the end of the award

New requirements in the RCUK Common Principles on Data Policy[2] that are increasingly being picked up by individual funders are:

- Metadata should be recorded and made openly available to facilitate reuse
- Published results should include information on how to access the supporting data
- Funds can be requested to support data management and sharing.

	Data plan	Data sharing	Preservation	Costs
AHRC	A Technical Appendix is required.	Datasets to be available in an accessible and appropriate depository for at least three years after the end of the grant.	Datasets to be available for at least three years after the end of the grant. Archeology data to be offered to ADS.	No statement.
BBSRC	A data sharing plan is required.	Data should be made available in a timely and responsible manner (i.e. no later than publication of main findings).	Data should be maintained for 10 years after project completion.	Where justifiable, funding to support the management and sharing of research data can be requested as part of the full economic cost of a research project.
CRUK	A data management and sharing plan is required.	Data should be released no later than the acceptance for publication of the main findings. In most cases, data sharing should be possible without compromising the confidentiality of participants.	Data should be preserved and available for sharing for a minimum of five years after the end of grant. Data should be properly curated and released with the appropriate high-quality metadata.	Data management and sharing are an integral component of the research process so CRUK will not provide additional funds for these activities.

[1] n.b. MRC & Wellcome periods for preservation are noted in good research conduct codes rather than data policies
[2] http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/DataPolicy.aspx

Sarah Jones, November 2011
Available at: http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/policy-and-legal

	Data plan	Data sharing	Preservation	Costs
EPSRC	Data plans are not required.	Structured metadata to be published online (normally within 12 months). Publications should state how to access supporting data.	Data to be securely preserved for a minimum of 10 years from the end of embargo period OR last 3rd party access request.	Research organisations are to ensure adequate resources are provided to support the curation of publicly-funded research data, from within their existing public funding streams.
ESRC	A data management and sharing plan is required.	Data must be made available for preparation for re-use and/or archiving within three months of the end of the award.	The ESRC data service providers are responsible for post-award data management and preservation (for data accepted for archiving).	The ESRC will review any costs associated with implementing the data plan and provide appropriate funding for data management.
MRC	A data management plan is required.	Valuable data should be made available to the scientific community with as few restrictions as possible, and be shared in a timely and responsible manner.	Primary research data must be retained for a minimum of ten years from completion of the project. Research records relating to clinical or public health studies should be retained for 20 years.	No statement.
NERC	Applicants are required to provide outline data management plans.	Environmental data are considered a public good and will be made openly available for others to use.	NERC requires that data of long-term value are submitted to NERC for long-term management and dissemination.	Funding applications must identify all resources needed to implement the Data Management Plan.
STFC	A data management plan is required.	Data should be made publicly available after a limited period, unless there are specific reasons why this should not happen.	Original data should be retained for at least 10 years, and for data that cannot be re-measured, effort should be made to retain them 'in perpetuity'	No statement.
Wellcome Trust	A data management and sharing plan is required.	As an absolute minimum, researchers should make relevant data available to others on publication of their research, however opportunities for timely and responsible pre-publication sharing should also be maximised.	Data should be maintained securely for a minimum of 10 years. Research based on clinical samples or relating to public health might require longer.	Applicants may include any costs associated with their proposed approach for data management and sharing as part of their proposal.

How has data policy developed at different institutions?

University of Oxford

The University collaborated with colleagues at the University of Melbourne during the EIDCSR project[3] and held a workshop on developing institutional policy and guidance for research data.[4] Feedback from Melbourne indicated that implementation can be problematic, so showing commitment and developing infrastructure is key. The University released guidance webpages and a statement of commitment to research data management during the EIDCSR project.[5] This policy will be further refined during the current JISC-funded project: Data Management Rollout at Oxford (DaMaRO).[6]

University of Edinburgh

Professor Jeff Haywood (Vice Principal for Knowledge Management) covened two working groups on research data at Edinburgh: one on research data storage and one on research data management. These stemmed out of recommendations from various JISC projects and Information Services activities.[7] Chris Rusbridge, former DCC director, was employed as a consultant to lead work on the Research Data Management Policy.[8] This was ratified in May 2011 and is described as an aspirational policy. Jeff's presentation at the 2011 IDCC conference talks about the University's plans for policy implementation.[9]

University of Hertfordshire

Existing institutional policy has been extended at Hertfordshire to incorporate data management. The Data Management Policy covers all types of data (corporate, administrative and research data) and an appendix gives more specific guidance on managing research data and the importance of data management planning.[10] Policy implementation is being pursued through the JISC-funded project: Service Oriented Toolkit for Research Data Management.[11]

University of Northampton

Developments at Northampton have been led by the institutional repository and Research Support Specialist, Dr Miggie Pickton. The recommendation for a research data policy came out of a DAF survey undertaken across the institution.[12] A case study presented by Miggie notes initial difficulties encountered when trying to get the policy approved.[13] The Research Data Policy has now been endorsed[14]and implementation plans are being discussed with the DCC who will support this work.

University of Southampton

A draft Research Data Management policy was developed during the JISC-funded Institutional Data Management Blueprint (IDMB) project.[15] The policy draws on the model adopted by Monash University in Australia. It covers a range of key topics, outlining responsibilities for each and the support available. The policy will be reviewed and put forward for ratification during the JISC-funded DataPool project. A blog post by Steve Hitchcock discusses progress and plans for implementation.[16]

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[3] http://eidcsr.oucs.ox.ac.uk/
[4] http://eidcsr.oucs.ox.ac.uk/policy_workshop.xml
[5] http://eidcsr.blogspot.com/2010/11/oxford-research-data-management-pages.html
[6] http://damaro.oucs.ox.ac.uk/
[7] http://www.ijdc.net/index.php/ijdc/article/view/194/259
[8] www.ed.ac.uk/is/research-data-policy
[9] http://www.dcc.ac.uk/webfm_send/603
[10] http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/secreg/upr/IM12.htm
[11] http://research-data-toolkit.herts.ac.uk/
[12] http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/2736/
[13] http://www.dcc.ac.uk/events/research-data-management-forum/rdmf7-incentivising-data-management-sharing
[14] https://www.northampton.ac.uk/info/20283/academic-research/1606/research-data-policy
[15] See Appendix A: http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/196241/1/IDMB_Blueprint.pdf
[16] http://blogs.ecs.soton.ac.uk/datapool/2011/12/14/driving-institutional-research-data-policy/

Potential policy development approaches

The examples above show various methods of developing research data policy. You may choose to:

- extend existing institutional policies (e.g. Hertfordhsire)
- provide a statement of commitment initially (e.g. Oxford)
- implement a number of short, well-defined rules (e.g. Edinburgh)
- mix requirements with details of procedures and support (e.g. Northampton & Southampton).

It may be useful to refer to existing requirements to frame your policy, for example citing research conduct codes or noting agreement/adoption of the RCUK Common Principles on Data Policy.

Useful considerations as starting points are:

- What external requirements are you subject to?
  e.g. the RCUK Common Principles or individual funders' data policies

- What policies and research governance are already in place at your institution?
  e.g. codes of good research conduct / adoption of the UK Research Integrity Office code, Intellectual Property policy, ethical frameworks, records management guidelines…

- What support and infrastructure is available?
  e.g. institutional repository, storage and back-up provision, library skills, research support staff…

- What awareness is there of data management practice?
  Several of the policies were informed by surveys into existing practice and researchers' needs, so their findings may provide useful comaprisons to direct your work.

- How will the policy be communicated and implemented?
  The requirements need to be practical and feasible to adopt. Associated guidance will be useful. You could also describe your policy as aspirational like that of the University of Edinburgh.