Manchester Metropolitan University

Research Data Management Policy 2017

1. Introduction

1.1. Manchester Metropolitan University firmly believes that good research data management is the foundation of good research, since it allows for the verification of findings and supports digital preservation.

1.2. Publicly funded research data are a public good, produced in the public interest, which should be made openly available with as few restrictions as possible in a timely and responsible manner.¹

1.3. The benefits of opening up research data for scrutiny and reuse are potentially very significant; including economic growth, increased resource efficiency, securing public support for research funding and increasing public trust in research. However, opennes implies more than disclosure of data. All those engaged with research have a responsibility to ensure that the data they gather and generate is properly managed, and made accessible, intelligible, assessable and usable by others unless there are legitimate reasons to the contrary.²

² RCUK, Concordat on Open Research Data (July 2016): http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/concordat-on-open-research-data-pdf/
2. Purpose

This policy is an important element of Manchester Metropolitan University’s approach to ensuring research excellence. It recognises the value and importance of data to the University and to others, and demonstrates the University’s commitment to adhering to research funder data policies. It also reflects the University’s desire to go beyond compliance and generate added value from the resources we put into compliance issues.

3. Scope

3.1. This policy applies to any member of university staff or postgraduate researcher (PGR) involved in the creation, collection or generation of research data, regardless of whether or not the research is funded.

3.2. Supervisors of PGRs undertaking research should ensure that their students are aware of the relevant research data management requirements and have a clear understanding of appropriate practice.

3.3. The policy does not apply to taught postgraduate students or undergraduates, but support and guidance for best research practice is available to everyone.

4. Definitions

4.1. Research data

Research Councils UK (RCUK) defines research data as ‘the evidence that underpins the answer to the research question, and can be used to validate findings regardless of its form (e.g. print, digital or physical). These might be quantitative information or qualitative statements collected by researchers in the course of their work by experimentation, observation, modelling, interview or other methods, or information derived from existing evidence. Data may be raw or primary (e.g. direct from measurement or
collection) or derived from primary data for subsequent analysis or interpretation (e.g. cleaned up or as an extract from a larger data set), or derived from existing sources where the rights may be held by others. Data may be defined as ‘relational’ or ‘functional’ components of research, thus signalling that their identification lies in whether and how researchers use them as evidence for claims.

They may include, for example, statistics, collections of digital images, sound recordings, transcripts of interviews, survey data and fieldwork observations with appropriate annotations, an interpretation, an artwork, archives, found objects, published texts or a manuscript.”

4.2. Research project
For the purposes of this policy, ‘Research Project’ refers to any programme of research, whether funded or unfunded, which is led by an academic or postgraduate researcher (PGR) at Manchester Metropolitan University.

4.3. Data Management Plans (DMPs)
DMPs are living documents that describe how data will be managed during the life of a project. DMPs are often requested by funders at the bidding stage and should state what data will be created and how, as well as outlining plans for sharing and preservation. Any restrictions on access to the data should be noted, along with mechanisms to protect unauthorised access.

5. Policy Statements

5.1 Manchester Metropolitan University endorses RCUK’s Concordat on Open Research Data (2016) and the Research Data Management expectations of individual funders. The University requires all staff and students to adhere to these policies, as well as taking into account any other research

3 RCUK, Concordat on Open Research Data.
5.2 Responsibility for research data management during any project or programme lies with the Principal Investigator (PI).

5.2.1 Where data ownership may be ambiguous (e.g. in collaborative projects with external organisations), the PI will be responsible for clarifying responsibilities.

5.2.2 For collaborative projects with external organisations, the person responsible for research data management at Manchester Metropolitan University will be the institution’s Lead Researcher.

5.2.3 Every member of a research team should make themselves familiar with the data requirements of the organisation funding their research.

5.2.4 Responsibilities for research data management may be shared or delegated, but should be clearly outlined in a DMP.

5.2.5 Should the PI leave the university, they must ensure that a copy of their research data from completed projects is retained in the institutional data repository, unless contractual, legal or ethical requirements prohibit this.

5.3 Researchers are responsible for appraising data for depositing and preserving in the University’s Institutional Data Repository. Best practice indicates that this should be data which verify published research findings, are of long-term academic value, or have legal or funder requirements for retention.

5.3.1 Research data and associated metadata which substantiate published research findings should be made openly available, where
5.3.2 Research data deposited in the Institutional Data Repository will be securely archived for a minimum of 10 years, or the minimum period stipulated by legal, contractual, ethical or regulatory requirements, whichever is longer.

5.3.3 Research data deposited in the Institutional Data Repository should be accompanied by a metadata record, which should be sufficient to enable other researchers to understand how the data were collected, created or acquired and, if the data are to be made openly available, to assess its reuse potential.

5.3.4 Data which are retained elsewhere, for example in a national or discipline-specific repository, should also have, as a minimum, a metadata record in the Institutional Data Repository to aid discovery and re-use.

5.3.5 Data should not be deposited with any organisation that does not commit to its access and availability for re-use, unless this is a condition of the project funding or arising from other requirements.

5.4 A DMP should be produced for each proposed research project or funding application, which should explicitly address the capture, management, integrity, confidentiality, preservation, sharing and publication of research data.

5.4.1 Publicly funded research data are a public good and should be made openly available in a timely manner. Data sharing must be addressed in the DMP and in ethical approval processes.

5.4.2 DMPs should take account of and ensure compliance with relevant legislative frameworks which may limit public access to the data.
(e.g. in the areas of data protection, intellectual property and human rights).

5.4.3 Sensitive and confidential research data can be shared ethically and legally if planned from the beginning of the project, and where appropriate mechanisms are in place to anonymise data, obtain correct permissions, and carefully control access to data. These issues should be explicitly addressed in a DMP.

5.5 It is not always possible or appropriate to make research data open, but any restrictions to access must be justifiable and justified.

5.5.1 Access to research data via the Institutional Data Repository can be restricted where necessary to comply with contractual, ethical, legislative or regulatory requirements.

5.5.2 Researchers involved in the creation of original research data retain the right to exclusive first use for an appropriate and well-defined period. Any period of exclusive use should be set out in the DMP and should be balanced against the public interest in release.

5.5.3 The legitimate interests of research subjects must be protected. When gaining informed consent, researchers should include provision for data sharing. Any personal identifiers should be anonymised prior to publication and access to sensitive or confidential information must be carefully controlled.

5.5.4 There may be other valid reasons why research data cannot be made openly available, such as where the costs of preserving or supplying the data are disproportionate. These should be clearly outlined in a DMP, and a metadata record must still be deposited in the Institutional Data Repository.
6. The University’s Responsibilities

6.1. The University provides a secure Institutional Data Repository, which researchers are strongly encouraged to use.

6.2. The University is responsible for the provision of training, support and advice on research data management.

6.3. The University provides support to researchers in the process of depositing research data in the Institutional Data Repository, and will review all deposits before creating live data records.

7. Associated Relevant Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University’s other policies and guidelines, such as:

- Guidelines on Good Research Practice
- Open Access Policy
- Academic Ethical Framework
- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information