Managing your research data

Essential information for research students

As a research student, whatever your discipline, you will collect and process research data and materials. These may be textual or numerical, qualitative or quantitative, in sound, image or multimedia formats, and exist in a variety of forms, including digital files, print documents and physical objects.

Research data management is an essential part of the researcher's toolkit. Undertaken properly, it will enable you to realise the maximum benefit from your research. It will preserve the integrity of your research and help you comply with relevant policies and legal and ethical requirements.

The University requires you to manage research data responsibly, and to preserve and share data of long-term value in compliance with its Research Data Management Policy. Your funder may have a similar research data policy, as will be the case if you are funded by a UK Research Council.

As you plan and conduct your research you will need to think about some or all of these things:

- How to store your data and back them up effectively so that they are protected against corruption and loss;

- How to organise your data, using meaningful file names and logical folder structures, and applying version control to modified files;

- How to document your data, so that you (and others) can understand what the data are, how they were collected/generated, and how they have been processed;

- How to securely store, process and control access to personal and sensitive data, to ensure you are meeting the requirements of the Data Protection Act and your ethical obligations;

- How you can preserve your data in the long term and provide access to them so that they can be consulted and re-used by other researchers.

How we can help

Training on research data management and writing a data management plany for your research project is provided through the Graduate School's Reading Researcher Development Programme.

Visit the research data management website for an introduction to research data management, and guidance on managing, preserving and sharing data. Here you can find links to University services and sources of further information and support.

We can advise on how to store and manage your data effectively, and how to preserve and share your data once your research is completed. We run the University's Research Data Archive, which can be used to preserve and provide access data supporting your thesis and published research outputs.

Contact and further information

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https://www.reading.ac.uk/research-services/research-data-management (download this guide here)