Research Data Management Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') is committed to research excellence and integrity, and to providing a research environment that will promote both a high standard of professional conduct by its researchers, and a culture of research practice that is ethical, competent, safe and accountable.

(2) The responsible management of research data and primary materials by the University and its researchers is a requirement of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 (the Code), of Northern Territory and Commonwealth legislation, and of research funding bodies such as the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

(3) To optimise research outcomes and their validity, research data, records and primary research materials must be stored, retained, documented and/or described, made accessible for use and reuse, and/or disposed of, according to legal, statutory, ethical and funding body requirements.

Section 2 - Purpose

(4) This procedure outlines:

a. the University's requirements for managing research data and primary research materials in accordance with the Code, University governance documents, and relevant legal, statutory, ethical and funding body requirements; and
b. the research data management responsibilities of the University, its researchers (staff and visitors) and students undertaking research.

Section 3 - Scope

(5) This procedure applies to:

a. all staff, students and visitors undertaking or supporting research at all University research locations, and any research the University is obliged to consider; and
b. all research data, including associated records or notes and primary materials in some form, that are collected, created or generated for approved research conducted at or on behalf of the University.

Section 4 - Procedure

Ownership, Stewardship and Control

(6) Subject to the exceptions set out in the Intellectual Property Policy:

a. The University normally owns and has rights to use any original research data and primary materials generated

by University staff; and

b. Students normally own the research data they generate.

(7) Researchers involved in collaborative projects should come to an agreement on the ownership of data and primary materials prior to the commencement of the research and ensure this is documented in writing.

(8) CDU recognises Indigenous data sovereignty. Indigenous cultural and Intellectual Property must be respected when determining appropriate ownership and use of primary materials and data resulting from research involving First Nations people.

(9) Subject to any contractual, statutory, ethical or funding body requirements, and ensuring that the University retains the master copy of the data, researchers leaving CDU may retain a copy of the research data for future use.

Storage, Retention and Disposal

(10) Research data, primary materials and associated records are considered University records and must be stored, retained, disposed of or transferred in accordance with the Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure and Library's Research Data Management Guide.

(11) Wherever possible, physical research data and primary materials should be digitised to minimise the risk of loss or damage.

(12) All research data, primary materials and records must be stored in supported institutional platforms, listed on the Research Data Management Guide - Data Storage. In determining the most suitable platform, researchers considering the use of third-party tools and cloud services must take into account those tools and services' security, privacy policy, terms of use and the nature and classification of the data.

(13) Research data that is subject to an approved ethics protocol must be stored in accordance with the approval.

(14) The format and retention period of research data and primary materials is determined by the specific type of research, the provisions of relevant state, territory and national privacy laws, funding body or publishing guidelines. A summary is available in the Research Data Management Guide - Data Retention.

(15) In the event that results from research are challenged, all associated research data, materials and related records must be retained until the matter is resolved. Research data, materials and related records that may be subject to allegations of research misconduct must not be destroyed.

(16) Research data and primary materials should be reviewed to prevent accidental loss of material that may still have legal, ethical or scholarly value.

(17) Research data and primary materials must be disposed of in accordance with the Retention & Disposal Schedule - Research Management, and Commonwealth and Northern Territory government legislation. Researchers must seek written approval from the relevant faculty delegated authority and retain a record of the disposal decision.

Safety, Security and Confidentiality

(18) Confidential data and sensitive information must be managed in accordance with any contractual or funding agreements and legislation, including the Privacy Act 1988, the Information Act 2002, and Defence Trade Controls Act 2012.

Access

(19) The University encourages accessibility, sharing and reuse of research data, subject to any constraints from the funding body, contractual, ethical, cultural, privacy or confidentiality requirements.

(20) In cases where open data publication is not considered appropriate, opportunities for mediated access to interested parties should be considered.

(21) When using, reusing or sharing research data researchers must comply with the Copyright Policy and Intellectual Property Policy, confidentiality and licence agreements and ethical requirements.

(22) Access or reuse of research data used in or generated by research involving First Nations peoples and communities will be subject to consultation with those people and communities prior to access or reuse.

Roles and Responsibilities

(23) The University will:

a. Provide advice and training to staff and students on research data and primary materials management planning, storage, care, access and disposal. This may include establishment of communities of practice.
b. Make available research data management planning information and tools through the University Library – Research Data Management Guide.
c. Provide safe and secure facilities and infrastructure for the physical and digital storage of research data and primary materials for the term that is needed.
d. Provide an open access repository and support for researchers submitting metadata and research datasets.
e. Provide researchers assistance in the establishment of Collaborative Research Agreements for multi-institutional research projects as well as advice on agreements and licences for research data access and use.
f. Enable secure destruction of data once its retention period has expired and approval has been provided for destruction.
g. Ensure principal investigators and research supervisors have the appropriate skills and knowledge for their roles and responsibilities.

(24) Researchers will:

a. Produce, maintain and implement a research data management plan that specifies the end-to-end management of research data and primary materials. This includes accountability for AI generated research data as well as data that is processed or handled using third-party tools. See Research Data Management Guide - Data Management Plan (DMP).
b. If conducting research involving First Nations people:
    i. Apply the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research and AIATSIS Collection Access and Use Policy in local jurisdictions when formulating a research data management plan.
    ii. Consult with research participants and communities regarding the methods of collecting, storing and accessing the data and sharing the results, and further steps or the learnings from the research at the end of the research project.
c. Retain clear, accurate, secure and complete records of all research data and primary materials.
d. Ensure research data and primary materials are stored safely and securely.
e. Comply with ethical and legal obligations when managing research data and primary materials.
f. Ensure that, where they are engaged in a project with other institutions, a written agreement is put in place between the collaborating parties prior to the project specifying ownership, access to, storage, and transfer of research data and primary materials.
g. Determine appropriate sharing, publication and licensing arrangements for research data.
h. Report any inappropriate use of, access to or loss of data immediately and in accordance with University governance documents and, where relevant, other reporting schemes such as the Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme.

i. Ensure that the timing and modality of the disposal of research data and primary materials is consistent with the Code, University governance documents, current legislation, as well as ethical and contractual requirements.
j. When leaving the University, ensure custodianship of their research data and associated records is transferred to an appropriate researcher and approved by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor.

(25) Principal investigators and supervisors will:

a. Ensure students are inducted and aware of their obligations relating to research data management.
b. Provide mentorship to students and junior researchers on appropriate management of research data and primary materials for their field of research.
c. Review student research data management plans and ensure they are lodged with the University.
d. Ensure that, at the completion of their candidature and prior to departure from the University, students complete the Offboarding Checklist.

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(26) Non-compliance with governance documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Employees or the Code of Conduct - Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025 and the Code of Conduct - Students.

(27) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees and Complaints Policy - Students.

(28) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

(29) Failure to adhere to this procedure, the Responsible Conduct of Research Policy and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 is a serious matter that may be grounds for disciplinary action.
The Responsible Conduct of Research Procedure outlines how to make, receive and report allegations and complaints about suspected breaches or research misconduct.

Status and Details

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Faculty" - An organisational and academic unit in the University that delivers courses and conducts research.

"University" - Charles Darwin University, a body corporate established under section 4 of the Charles Darwin University Act 2003. The University is comprised of the various faculties, CDU TAFE, organisational units, and formal committees, including the governing University Council and Academic Board.

"Governance document" - means policy or procedure published in the Governance Document Library. Policies and procedures are collectively called ‘governance documents’ and are often referred to as ‘policy’ or ‘University policy’.

"Principal investigator" - An academic member of staff with principal responsibility for the management of a research project.