

Data Sharing Policy

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Data Sharing Policy

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Policy statement

The MRC's overarching policy aim for data-sharing is to maximise the life-time value of research data assets for human health and to do so in a way that is timely, responsible, with as few restrictions as possible, and consistent with the law, regulations and recognised good practice.

1. Introduction

Every year, the MRC invests around £850m of public money in research¹, the primary output of which is data. We want to maximise the research opportunities that such a diversity, richness and quantity of data provides. One of the best ways of achieving this is to ensure that data are properly preserved for sharing and informed use beyond the originating research teams.

Our policy on data-sharing builds on the principles developed of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The report "[Promoting Access to Public Research Data for Scientific, Economic and Social Development](#)"² identified that publicly-funded research data are a public good, produced in the public interest and that they should be openly available to the maximum extent possible.

The [OECD Principles and Guidelines for Access to Research Data from Public Funding](#) (2007)³ promotes a culture of openness and sharing to increase "the return on public investments in scientific research," exchange of good practice, awareness of the costs, benefits and restrictions on sharing.

The MRC policy is also consistent with the [Research Councils' Common Principles on Data Policy](#)⁴ which in turn reflect the OECD principles.

Our data-sharing policy applies to all MRC-funded research. It does not prescribe when or how researchers should preserve and share data but requires them to make clear provision for doing so when planning and executing research.

¹ MRC Annual Report 2015/16 p20 <https://www.mrc.ac.uk/publications/browse/annual-report-and-accounts-2015-16/>

² <https://www.ics.uci.edu/~gbowker/promoting%20access.pdf>

³ <https://www.oecd.org/sti/sci-tech/38500813.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/datapolicy>

2. Principles

2.1 The MRC expects valuable data arising from MRC-funded research to be made available to the scientific community with as few restrictions as possible so as to maximise the value of the data for research and for eventual patient and public benefit. Such data must be shared in a timely and responsible manner.

2.2 The MRC believes that data-sharers should receive full and appropriate recognition by funders, their academic institutions and new users for promoting secondary research.

2.3 New studies that result from this data-sharing should meet the high standards of all MRC research regarding scientific quality, ethical requirements and value for money. It should also add recognisable value to the original dataset.

2.4 Such research is often most fruitful when it is a collaboration between the new user and the original data creators or curators, with the responsibilities and rights of all parties agreed at the outset.

2.5 Data arising from MRC-funded research must be properly curated throughout its life-cycle and released with the appropriate high-quality metadata. This is the responsibility of the data custodians, who are often those individuals or organisations that received MRC funding to create or collect the data.

2.6 A limited, defined, period of exclusive use of data for primary research is reasonable according to the nature and value of the data and how they are generated and used.

2.7 On-going research contributing to the completion of datasets must not be compromised by premature or opportunistic sharing and analysis. Sharing should always take account of enhancing the long-term value of the data.

2.8 MRC policy is not intended to discourage filing of patent applications in advance of publication and recognises that it may be necessary on occasion to delay publication for a short period to allow time for applications to be drafted.

2.9 For medical research involving personal data, the appropriate regulatory permissions – ethical, legal and institutional – must be in place before the data can be shared.

2.10 Researchers, research participants and research regulators must ensure that within the regulatory requirements of the law, opportunities for new uses are maximised. Potential research benefits to patients and the public should outweigh identified risks. Risks such as inappropriate disclosure of personal information must be managed in a proportionate yet robust manner.

2.11 Access policies and practices for new and existing MRC-funded data collections must be transparent, equitable, practicable, and provide clear decisions consistent with MRC data sharing policy. Studies can consult the [MRC policy and guidance on sharing of research data from population and patient studies](http://www.mrc.ac.uk/publications/browse/mrc-policy-and-guidance-on-sharing-of-research-data-from-population-and-patient-studies)⁵ for support on how to meet the MRC data-sharing principles.

2.12 All applicants submitting funding proposals to the MRC are required to include a Data Management Plan (DMP) as an integral part of the application. MRC Institutes and Units are required to submit one as part of the Quinquennial Review (QQR) report.

⁵ <http://www.mrc.ac.uk/publications/browse/mrc-policy-and-guidance-on-sharing-of-research-data-from-population-and-patient-studies/>

3. Related Documents

[MRC policy and guidance on sharing of research data from population and patient studies](#)⁶
[Good practice principles for sharing individual participant data from publicly funded clinical trials](#)⁷
[Data Management plans](#)⁸

[RCUK Data Sharing Principles](#)⁹
[RCUK Guidance on best practice in the management of research data](#)¹⁰
[Concordat on Open Research Data](#)¹¹

4. Effective date

This policy is effective from 2005.

5. Review date

This policy will be formally reviewed by September 2017.

6. Amendment history

Version	Date	Comments/Changes
v1.0	March 2005	Approved by MRC Council
v.1.x	November 2011	Subsequent reviews introduced some minor changes that did not alter the intent of the policy.
v2.0	September 2016	Formatted according to MRC standard policy format

All weblinks confirmed on 12 September 2016.

⁶ <http://www.mrc.ac.uk/publications/browse/mrc-policy-and-guidance-on-sharing-of-research-data-from-population-and-patient-studies/>

⁷ <http://www.methodologyhubs.mrc.ac.uk/files/7114/3682/3831/Datasharingguidance2015.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.mrc.ac.uk/research/policies-and-resources-for-mrc-researchers/data-sharing/data-management-plans/>

⁹ <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/datapolicy/>

¹⁰ <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/rcukcommonprinciplesondatapolicy-pdf/>

¹¹ <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/concordatonopenresearchdata-pdf/>