FAQ about research data sharing

Q: Do I have to share all of my research data?

You should research data which:

- Is necessary to validate findings described in your publication
- Data which might be valuable to others
- Data which cannot be re-generated (for example, data coming from environmental observations)

Q: I own my data - do I need to share it?

If the sponsor or funder of your research requires you to share your data, you are obliged to do so.

Q: What should I do to comply with funders' expectations on research data sharing?

You should:

- Share all research data that can be shared, and provide the link to your data in your publication - Budget for research data management cost in your grant application
- Be aware of help available to you at the University of Cambridge (www.data.cam.ac.uk)
- For further guidance consult the policy of your funder: www.data.cam.ac.uk/funders

Q: What happens if I am not compliant with EPSRC expectations?

The EPSRC will check the availability of data under-pinning published research that acknowledges the EPSRC, looking for the following:

- Is there a statement describing how to access underlying data?
- Is the data available?

EPSRC will do random checks on papers published on/after the 1st May 2015 - individual researchers might be contacted.

Q: Do I need to share data underpinning my PhD thesis?

You are encouraged to do so, providing that:

The research process is not damaged by premature and/or inappropriate release of research data. For example, if you release your data, you might be unable to use them in future publications.

In general it is advised that supervisors are always consulted before any research data underpin- ning PhD research is released.

Q: Can I restrict access to my data?

Most funders expect publicly funded research data to be made freely available, with as few restrictions as possible. However, there are some exemptions to this:

- Personal/sensitive data should not be released into public domain, unless consent of the person is given and data is properly anonymised
- Delays/restrictions are acceptable if necessary to protect IP or commercially confidential data
- If data preservation is not possible or cost-effective, it is acceptable not to publish the data, as long as the ability to validate published research findings is not compromised and the access to data might be granted in other ways

Q: My publication has been already accepted and I did not provide a statement about data. What shall I do?

We have created a decision tree to help you deciding on what to do: www.data.cam.ac.uk/files/epsrctree.pdf.

Q: How do I inform the funder about possible problems with data sharing?

You should do it when preparing a data management plan, when applying for a grant.

Q: Can I submit my data to any repository I want?

If you are funded by NERC or by the ESRC, you are required to submit your data to their data repositories. Otherwise, it is up to you and your research group to choose the most appropriate repository. We provide guidance on data repositories: www.data.cam.ac.uk/repository.

Q: How do I submit my data to the University of Cambridge data repository?

You can submit your data to us via our simple webform: www.data.cam.ac.uk/upload.

Q: Do I need to pay for sharing my research data via the University data repository?

The current one-off charge for long-term curated data storage at the University of Cambridge data repository is £4/GB (www.data.cam.ac.uk/repository). This cost should be budgeted into all future grant applications.

Q: How do I link to my data? Do you have any template statements that I could adapt for my publication?

Yes, we provide a list of sample statements at www.data.cam.ac.uk/faq-0/data-repositories

Q: Do I need to share my source code?

If your source code is necessary to validate your research findings, then you are expected to share it. Please read more here: www.data.cam.ac.uk/faq-0/source-code

Q: I am involved in an international collaboration with people who do not want to share data. What should I do?

Ideally (and in future collaborations) you should inform your potential collaborators that due to your public funding, you are expected to share research data as openly as possible. With your current research project you should determine with your collaborator which data can be shared. If (some) research data need to be restricted, then you should provide an appropriate statement in your publication explaining the reason why access to data is restricted.

Q: What if someone uses my data improperly?

That's unfortunately always possible and cannot be avoided. Every time you publish, you risk being misinterpreted – that's also true in the traditional publication process. Publishing research data underpinning your publication actually decreases the risk of your work being misinterpreted or misused, as you can be more transparent about your research findings.

Remember to choose a proper license for your data – the type of license will determine what people can/cannot do with your research data. Read more about licenses here: www.data.cam.ac.uk/data-management-guide/looking-after-and-sharing-your-data.

More questions?

Have a look here: www.data.cam.ac.uk/faq-0 or contact us at info@data.cam.ac.uk