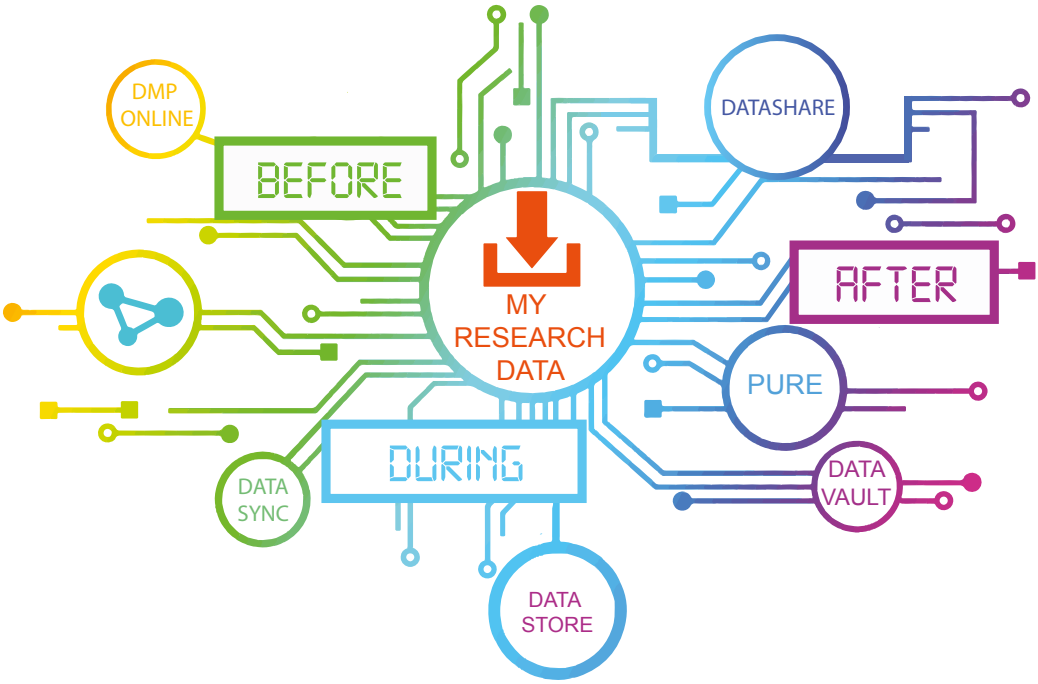
A Guide to the Research Data Service



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

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This booklet was updated in 2025 by the Research Data Support team, Library and University Collections, Information Services, University of Edinburgh, data-support@ed.ac.uk.

The latest version can be downloaded from:
https://library.ed.ac.uk/research-support/research-data-service/guidance

Research Data Management

Research Data Management (RDM) is a general term covering how you organise, structure, store, and care for the data used or generated during the lifetime and after the completion of a research project.

In addition to many major funders requiring research data to be actively managed, it is good research practice to ensure that your data are managed properly throughout the life of the project. This means planning how you will collect, store, and care for your data before you start the research process, through to how you will ensure it is maintained in the longer-term, and, if appropriate, shared with your research community and beyond.

The University of Edinburgh has a formal Research Data Management Policy that requires research data to be managed to the highest standards as part of the University's commitment to research excellence. This ensures that sensitive data are suitably protected, and that non-sensitive data reach the widest possible audience.

Information Services provides a suite of tools and support to assist you in managing your data according to policy and best practice. This guide provides an overview of the tools, explaining what they are, why you should use them, and how to use them.

University of Edinburgh Research Data Management Policy:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/research-data-policy
Research Data Service:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/research-data-service

Research Data Service

We provide and advise upon a range of tools and support to help you before, during and after your research project:

BEFORE: identify existing datasets for reuse, plan how you will collect, manage, and store your data, including storage and backup, sensitivity of the data, and whether it can be shared;

DURING: analyse data, store and backup active data, synchronise your data across devices and with your research collaborators, and version your software and files;

AFTER: record, share, and archive your data for the long-term;

TRAINING AND SUPPORT: online and face-to-face workshops and courses, plus direct support when you need it.

BEFORE	DURING	AFTER	TRAINING & SUPPORT
create a data management plan	working with data	share and archive your data	

What is DMPonline?

DMPonline is a tool created by the UK's Digital Curation Centre (DCC), based here at the University, which helps researchers write and maintain Data Management Plans (DMPs).

Why should I use it?

The tool includes a number of templates for funders in the UK and overseas to help write your DMP according to the specific requirements you need to meet. It is customised for Edinburgh use too, so you are provided with examples and guidance based on local support and services. If you are working with other researchers you can share your plan to write collaboratively. Once you complete your plan you can download it as a plain text file or PDF so you can submit it alongside your grant application.

How can I access it?

The tool and guidance is available via:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/data-management-plan
You can sign up by entering your email, organisation, and password. You can also sign in using your University login once you have linked these institutional credentials to your DMPonline account.

Contact the Research Data Support team at data-support@ed.ac.uk to assist you with your data management plan.

Find and Reuse Data

What is Find and Reuse Data?

The Find and Reuse Data page provides support for discovering and accessing data for secondary use in research, learning and teaching. A short list of annotated links to dataset search engines, national and international data providers and University resources (such as paid subscriptions) will help you discover high quality published data sources.

Why should I use it?

Your research project may involve acquiring and analysing existing datasets, not just collecting new data. You may need to show your funder that the project you envisage will produce unique results. Or you may want population data to use as benchmarks for your own survey or qualitative study. The page is a one stop shop to get you started with data discovery.

How can I access it?

View the Find and Reuse Data page: https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/discover-data

Storing Data

What is DataStore?

DataStore provides file storage for active research data, and is available to all research staff and postgraduate research students (PGRs).

DataStore provides a free individual allocation for each researcher, as well as shared group spaces. For more demanding projects additional capacity of virtually any size can be arranged.

Why should I use it?

It is fully backed-up, secure, resilient, multi-site storage, and new storage allocations can be created immediately.

How can I access it?

You can connect to DataStore as a network shared drive, and users of the University's Supported Desktop already have their individual DataStore space mapped to their M: drive.

Information and instructions for using DataStore can be found at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/DataStore

Other connection methods and full connection instructions are available at: https://information-services.ed.ac.uk/computing/desktop-personal/connect-uni-file-storage

Sensitive Data

What is a Trusted Research Environment?

A Trusted Research Environment is a controlled and secured service environment for research using sensitive data (personal, special category, or confidential).

Why should I use a Trusted Research Environment?

- Access and work with sensitive data with a high degree of security;
- Allow authorised researchers to work together on sensitive data;
- Meet stringent requirements of data owners, e.g. NHS.

Trusted Research Environments

- Edinburgh International Data Facility Safe Haven Services: https://edinburgh-international-data-facility.ed.ac.uk/services/safe-haven-services
- Dataloch: https://dataloch.org/

Guidance on working with sensitive data

- Working with Sensitive Data: https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/research-support/research-data-service/during/sensitive-data
- Data protection: https://www.ed.ac.uk/data-protection
- Information Security: https://www.ed.ac.uk/infosec/how-to-protect

Collaborate and Sync

What is DataSync?

Datasync is a tool to allow researchers to share data with collaborators and to synchronise data across multiple devices. The web interface can be used to share data with anyone who has a valid email address and allows access from any web browser. It also has an app to synchronise data between computers and mobile devices.

Why should I use it?

You will have dedicated DataSync storage, plus the ability to connect up your personal and group data on the RDM DataStore for effectively unlimited storage capacity, giving you the ability to synchronise and share your active research data.

How can I access it?

Find out more about collaboration tools, including DataSync, the Wiki, and UoE Sharepoint at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/collaboration-sync

Versioning and Code Management

What is the Version Control Service - GitLab?

The Version Control Service - GitLab allows users to store active documents, source code and other research objects (theses, papers, data, etc). It is frequently used to manage code and software development projects but can be used for most text-based document types.

Why should I use it?

When files stored using GitLab are updated, older versions are retained, making it possible to revert to them if required. The service also allows for multiple people to collaborate on a project, tracking multiple changes to source code and documents authored by multiple contributors.

How can I access it?

The GitLab service is available at no charge, however, if you require a repository of >10GB then a charge may be made.

Find out more and access the GitLab service via
https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/version-control

Electronic Notebooks

What is an Electronic Notebook?

An Electronic Notebook is an alternative to the traditional paper lab book or notebook. It can be used to record details of a piece of research in just the same way, but it will also enable the embedding of, or direct links to, other digital files, such as images, models, or protocols.

Why should I use it?

An Electronic Notebook can be used in place of a paper one and, depending on the platform chosen, will also provide a number of additional benefits. They can be shared between members of a group, regardless of location and in some cases can be published to make the contents publicly available. They can enable group members to work collaboratively on a piece of research, with all of the results and notes being stored in one place.

How can I access it?

A number of different electronic notebooks are in use around the University, some are free open-source platforms while others require a subscription.
The University currently subscribes to RSpace, and Wikibench was developed at UoE. You could also speak to local IT support and other researchers in your school to find out what is in use locally.

To find out more about these, and others visit our webpage
https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/notebooks

Recording Datasets

What is Pure?

Pure is the University's current research information system. It contains individual profiles of research information for all staff members involved in research. Staff members are encouraged to add content and maintain their profiles with details of projects, publications, datasets, etc.

Why should I use it?

The University uses Pure to record descriptive data (metadata) about research data in line with institutional and funder policy requirements. The metadata must be sufficient to allow others to understand what research data exists, how it was generated, and how to access it. Datasets catalogued in Pure are automatically included in a staff member's online profile in Edinburgh Research Explorer (https://www.research.ed.ac.uk) alongside other research outputs such as journal articles, conference papers, and research grants.

Where data are stored in an external repository, a persistent identifier, such as a DOI, can be added to the Pure record to link them to grants and publications creating a more robust scholarly record. DataShare and DataVault automatically have a Pure record generated for their datasets.

How can I access it?

For information and help on how to add a dataset description to Pure see: https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/pure-dataset

Sharing Open Data

What is DataShare?

Edinburgh DataShare is a free, open data repository which allows University of Edinburgh researchers to upload, share, and license your data resources for online discovery and reuse by others. Your data will be discoverable through search engines to maximise visibility and impact. DataShare can provide you with usage statistics so you know when your data have been downloaded.

Why should I use it?

- Increase impact of your research;
- Make your data assets discoverable, reusable and citable;
- Minimise the risk of data loss for your own future use;
- Meet funding body requirements & comply with University policy;
- Ensure your research data are preserved for posterity.

A big advantage of depositing your data is that they will be preserved - even for your own future use. The system creates a permanent record, a Digital Object Identifier (DOI), and a suggested citation, enabling your work to be formally attributed when cited or re-used by others.

How can I access it?

Simply click the 'Deposit' button on the home page of the repository and sign in using your University login: https://datashare.ed.ac.uk/

Long-term Retention of Data

What is DataVault?

DataVault is an archive storage service where academic staff can safely store non-open research data for the long term.

Why should I use it?

Your data will be kept safe from accidental deletion or inappropriate access, and, when combined with a record of the dataset in Pure, will fulfil the expectations of research funders who require long term storage of research data. DataVault can also be used for the storage of sensitive research data in a restricted environment.

Data can be copied from DataStore into the DataVault, and when a retrieval request is made a copy is placed back into your DataStore. Using the DataVault allows you to archive old data from your DataStore, freeing up space for new research. The DataVault also makes a good location for storing specific versions of your data, for example at the end of a grant.

How can I access it?

DataVault is a web-based system, accessible using your University login. Free to use for research projects of less than 100GB, storage is chargeable above that amount. User guides and other information can be found at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/datavault

Training

MANTRA

MANTRA is an open, web-based training course intended for self-paced learning by PhD students, early career researchers, or anyone else who manages digital research data. It provides guidance about good RDM practice, illustrated with real-world stories. You can take the course from start to finish, or pick and choose from different data management topics.

RDMS MOOC

The Research Data Management and Sharing MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) uses the Coursera on-demand format to provide short, video-based lessons and assessments. It is normally taken across a 5-week period with a cohort of other learners. Certificates are available to any learner who completes a course for a small fee.

Workshops and courses

We provide short courses and interactive workshops open to all research staff and postgraduate researchers. They focus on issues such as good practice in research data management, working with personal and sensitive data, writing data management plans, and archiving your research data.

Tailored Training

Courses on any aspect of RDM can be tailored for schools, institutes or research groups on demand.

Find our online courses or arrange training relevant to your needs from: https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/data-training

Support

Research Data Service Website

The Research Data Service website is a one stop shop for information about research data management and related services available at the University of Edinburgh: https://www.ed.ac.uk/is/research-data-service

Edinburgh Research Data Blog & Social Media

The Research Data Service blog and social media accounts have been set up to communicate and inform about RDM activities and developments at the University:

Blog: https://libraryblogs.is.ed.ac.uk/datablog/

Bluesky: @edopenresearch.bsky.social

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/library-research-support-university-of-edinburgh

Threads: https://www.threads.com/@edinburghopenresearch

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/edinburghopenresearch

Help and Support

All enquiries about research data management can be made to IS Helpline or directly to Research Data Support. Email: data-support@ed.ac.uk

TRAINING & SUPPORT

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact IS Helpline by email: IS.Helpline@ed.ac.uk