

# ESRC Research Data Policy – frequently asked questions

## When was your revised policy published?

24 March 2015

## Did the revised policy come into force with immediate effect?

Yes

## What has changed?

The key change to the policy is that ESRC grant holders are no longer automatically required to offer data to the UK Data Service. (Certain grants with ESRC investments will explicitly state that the ESRC's data service provider must be used.)

Grant holders are still required to ensure that data created as a result of research projects are made available for reuse. Data can be deposited with the ESRC data service provider (currently UK Data Service), or an appropriate responsible digital repository, provided certain criteria are met (see below). In all cases the grant holder must provide metadata for resource discovery via the UK Data Service to maximise the discoverability of ESRC data assets. Please contact the UK Data Service (<http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/deposit-data.aspx>) for further advice. This revision also recognises the changing landscape and in particular the growth in institutional repositories and changes to the requirements of publishers.

The remainder of the policy is largely unchanged but has been restructured to state the principles underpinning the policy upfront. This is in line with other ESRC policies such as the Framework for Research Ethics (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/information/framework-for-research-ethics/index.aspx>).

A clear statement of roles and responsibilities is included. Implicit in previous policies, we have explicitly stated our expectations for clarification. The roles and responsibilities section of the policy recognises the multiple players involved in delivering good data management and sharing.

## **Your policy states that ESRC grant holders “must formally deposit all data created or repurposed during the lifetime of the grant with a responsible data repository within three months of the end of the grant”. Does this mean I do not have to deposit my data with the UK Data Service?**

In general, yes. However national resources such as our longitudinal studies and time-series data arising from grants as well as other strategic investments will be expected to continue to deposit their data at the UK Data Service. Therefore, ESRC will explicitly state for some investments that the ESRC's data service provider must be used. For example, Millennium Cohort Study, Understanding Society and British Election Studies are obliged to deposit data with the UK Data Service.

For other projects data may be lodged with the ESRC data service provider, or an appropriate responsible digital repository which may be an institutional repository.

### **As an award holder do I still need to deposit data within three months of the end of the grant?**

Yes, the requirement to formally deposit data within three months of the end of the grant remains, as stated in our standard grant terms and conditions and Research Funding Guide. The UK Data Service provides progress reports to the ESRC.

### **How do I know when a repository is responsible?**

Grant holders are responsible for selecting a repository which meets the following criteria:

- ensures that these data are available for reuse following the FAIR data principles (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) [a provisional statement is available <https://www.force11.org/group/fairgroup/fairprinciples>]
- ensures that data are made available with as few restrictions as possible, for example minimising any access restrictions or embargos
- provides persistent identifiers for its holdings

Grant holders are also responsible for

- providing metadata for resource discovery via the UK Data Service (including the persistent identifier)

If the UK Data Service does not consider a grant holder's preferred repository is not considered suitable or a grant holder does not have access to a repository which can meet these requirements, grant holders will still be expected to deposit their data with an ESRC data service provider. Please contact the UK Data Service for further advice.

### **Will the ESRC fund repository services in Research Organisation?**

The policy clearly states that costs for long-term preservation cannot be included in grant proposals. We fund national services, therefore funding for alternative services is not possible. We do however, allow award-holders to cost activities relating to the preparation of data for curation.

### **How do you expect HEIs to ensure that projects adhere to their Data Management Plan (DMP) throughout the life of their funding? How is compliance expected to be measured and reported?**

We believe that the Data Management Plans are living documents and best used as an integral part of the research cycle. Thus Data Management Plans are best implemented and reviewed throughout the research process as part of research progression and review.

HEIs are not expected to report on a research projects' adherence to the DMP and we do not specify how it should be monitored. We do not plan to do so and this is not the purpose of explicitly stating our expectations of institutions. Rather, it is for institutions to

embed it within its broader activities supporting good data management so that best practice continues to be promoted and encouraged.