

Determine the time period that research data should be kept

A retention period represents the time span that an item will be kept. At the end of this period, the item should be re-appraised to decide if it is still needed or can be discarded/destroyed. Several organisations specify retention requirements for research outputs which affect the length of time they need to be kept.

- **London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine:**

Research data must be kept for a minimum of 10 years following study completion, in accordance with the LSHTM Retention and Disposal Schedule. Data only needs to be kept in one form - paper resources do not need to be retained if the same information is held digitally. LSHTM retention requirements do not apply to data generated for MSc student projects.

- **Research funders:**

Many research funders state research data must be kept for a minimum of 10 years following study completion. Some funders state longer retention periods – the Medical Research Council (MRC) requires clinical and population health studies to be kept for 20+ years; whereas the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) require funded research to be "securely preserved for a minimum of 10-years after the data was last requested by a third party" (i.e. 10 years after the last access). Contact your research funder for guidance on their data retention requirements.

- **Journal publishers:**

Journals increasingly state that research data that underpins findings should be available, either openly or on request, for a minimum of 10 years following the paper's publication.

- **UK legislation:**

The UK Data Protection Act states that personal data contained in research data must not be kept for longer than is necessary to fulfil the intended purpose.

- **Domain requirements:**

Many research disciplines apply specific retention requirements. For example, the ICH Guideline for Good Clinical Practice states that "Essential documents should be retained until at least 2 years after the last approval of a marketing application in an ICH region" or longer if required by the applicable regulatory requirements or by an agreement with the sponsor.

- **Data provider:**

Third party data may be covered by a licence agreement outlining its retention period, e.g. 1 year, the duration of the PhD, after which it must be deleted. If you are asked to provide a Data Destruction Certificate, please contact IT Services.

Book an appointment

To discuss your data retention plan, contact the LSHTM Research Data Management Service at researchdatamanagement@lshtm.ac.uk.

Further information:

- LSHTM. Health funder requirements for data management and sharing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17037/DATA.172>
- LSHTM Records Retention and Disposal Schedule <https://lshtm.sharepoint.com/Services/Information-Management/Pages/-records-retention-and-disposal-schedule.aspx>