



LSHTM DATA COMPASS: DIGITAL OBJECT WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE

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Related Policies & Procedures	See References section

1. SCOPE (i.e. who does this affect)

This procedure is relevant to LSHTM researchers who wish to understand the process of withdrawing digital objects held in LSHTM Data Compass, as well as LSHTM Library & Archives Service staff who will implement the procedure.

2. PURPOSE

LSHTM Data Compass is a digital repository of research data and other digital objects produced by researchers at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and its affiliates.

This procedure outlines processes for the removal of digital objects that the LSHTM Library & Archives Service has acquired and made available through LSHTM Data Compass.

3. INTERPRETATION OF WITHDRAWAL

In the context of this document, withdrawal refers to a process of removing a digital object from public view. A digital object that has been withdrawn may continue to be stored in LSHTM Data Compass (or other systems) in many instances, depending upon the reason for its removal. However, it may be excluded from preservation action or other activities.

4. REMOVAL SCENARIOS

Several scenarios may be recognised where there is a need or desire to remove or replace digital objects in LSHTM Data Compass:

1. An updated version of the digital object containing additional information or corrections has been produced.
2. A digital object is held in a file format considered to be inaccessible or undesirable to the research community
3. A digital object contains information that the data provider discovers it does not have permission to make available, e.g. due to ethical, rights, or legal conditions.
4. A digital object contains information that the data provider discovers it does not have permission to discuss, e.g. as a result of commercial confidentiality, national security.
5. A digital object contains research that has been plagiarised or falsified.
6. The research data repository is replaced.

Due diligence should be performed during the acquisition and appraisal phase to identify and address risk factors that may result in a digital object being withdrawn prior to providing access.

4.1. METADATA RECORD

A metadata record refers to the set of information that describes a distinct research output:

a. *Metadata that refers to LSHTM-hosted digital files:*

A metadata record that possesses an LSHTM-registered DOI will continue to be publicly available after the associated digital file has been removed as a record of its existence and to comply with LSHTM's Datacite contract.

The metadata record will be updated to indicate the reason that it has been removed and additional action may be performed to reduce its discoverability in cases where there is a recognised need. Actions may include: changing the Datacite DOI status from 'findable' to 'Registered' in Datacite and removing the Creator's name from the author browse view.

b. *Metadata that refer to digital files held on a 3rd party server:*

The metadata record will continue to be made available as a record of the digital files existence, unless there is a clear justification for its removal, e.g. commercial confidentiality.

The metadata description will be updated to indicate its current access status and the hyperlink will be removed or replaced.

4.2. DIGITAL FILES

Digital files that have been withdrawn will be handled using one of the following approaches:

1. *Soft deletion:* Files are deleted from the public repository, but held internally on a secure server.
2. *Hard deletion:* Files are deleted from the public repository and internal secure server. Recovery is not possible.

5. WITHDRAWAL PROCESS

Digital objects that have been made public can be edited by the LSHTM Research Data Manager or other repository administrators only. The following process will be applied to handle withdrawal requests:

5.1. REPORT

Send an email to researchdatamanagement@lshtm.ac.uk. The email should state:

- The relevant record ID (URL or DOI) and filenames
- The requested action (withdraw/replace)
 - If requesting withdrawal: provide justification and evidence to support the statement
 - If requesting replacement: the proposed change(s) and replacement files

A 'Report this record' button is displayed on all metadata records in the research data repository.

5.2. ASSESSMENT

The LSHTM Research Data Manager will review the request and consider next steps.

- If the data creator wishes to publish an updated version of a dataset, it may be recommended that a new version of the metadata record is published.
- If an ethical, legal, or other issue is raised, the LSHTM Research Data Manager will report the issue to the LSHTM Research Governance & Integrity Office and obtain advice.

The data custodian will be consulted in cases where the withdrawal request has been submitted by a third party.

5.3. IMPLEMENTATION

The LSHTM Research Data Manager will implement the recommended action, making changes to the research data repository as appropriate.

6. SCENARIO ACTIONS

No.	Reason	Action to be taken
1	A data creator wishes to publish an updated version of a file	<p>If the earlier version has been provided to end users, as evidenced by file downloads (if openly available) or file requests (if controlled access), a new version of the metadata record should be created and the file added.</p> <p>If the file has not previously been accessed & the citation does not require modification (i.e. the publication date is the same), the replacement file will be accepted without the need to create an updated version. However, metadata should be updated to indicate when the replacement file was provided.</p>
2	File replacement as a result of format obsolescence and encoding issues	<p>If the replacement file contains all significant properties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LSHTM Research Data Manager may remove the original file & replace it with a re-encoded instance (e.g. replace a STATA 10 file with a later version). <p>If the replacement does not contain all significant properties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new instance can be made available as an addition to the metadata record A note should be added to the metadata for the original file. <p>In both cases, the metadata record should be updated to describe the performed action.</p>
3	A digital object contains information that the data provider discovers it does not have permission to make available, e.g. due to ethical, rights, or legal conditions.	<p>If the file is openly available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> access permissions will be changed to controlled access Advice should be sought from the Research Governance & Integrity Office & the issue addressed. File must not be provided to data requesters until issue is resolved. <p>If the file cannot be made available in any form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the file should be removed from the repository the request form should be disabled. Metadata should be updated to state that the file is held for preservation only and correspondence details provided. <p>The files will continue to be stored on the LSHTM Secure Server as evidence of research, unless there is a legitimate reason for its deletion.</p>
4	A digital object contains information that the data provider discovers it does not have permission to discuss, e.g. as a result of commercial confidentiality, national security.	<p>If the file cannot be made available in any form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the file should be removed from the repository the request form should be disabled. Metadata should be updated to state that the file is held for preservation only and correspondence details provided. Descriptive metadata should be edited to remove confidential information.

5	An accusation is made that the research has been plagiarised or falsified	<p>If the file is openly available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • permissions should be changed to controlled access while a full investigation is performed. • Interested parties should be informed of the reason that the file cannot be provided and kept up-to-date on progress. <p>If the investigation reveals evidence of plagiarised or falsified research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant files should be removed from the public repository • Request forms should be disabled • Descriptive metadata should be updated to indicate the reason the file is not available. • The Datacite DOI status should be changed from 'findable' to 'Registered'. • Files will continue to be stored on the LSHTM Secure Server as evidence of the original deposit, unless there is legitimate reason to remove it.
6	The research data repository is replaced	<p>Replaced with a new system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital objects will be transferred to the new system. <p>Repository is closed and no replacement is allocated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Data Contact will be contacted to inform them of the situation and asked where they would like to host the digital objects. • Digital objects will be transferred to an alternative repository. If an appropriate alternative is not available, they will be returned to the Data Contact.

7. DEFINITIONS

- *Controlled access*: Available, subject to appropriate conditions being met. E.g. a researcher must provide details on the intended use.
- *Datacite*: A not-for-profit registration agency that provides Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) for research data. <https://www.datacite.org/>
- *Data contact*: One or more people responsible for making decisions with regards to data collection. For example, the Principal Investigator of a project in which data was generated.
- *Digital object*: A unit of digital content that consists of one or more files, including research data, metadata and other files (https://definedterm.com/digital_object/127687).
- *Digital Object Identifier*: DOI is a persistent identifier scheme that can be used to uniquely identify digital objects on the internet. It is maintained by the International DOI Foundation.
- *Data provider*: A person or organisation that has provided a Digital Object to the research data repository for curation and preservation.
- *Digital repository*: A system designed to store, manage and potentially make available digital objects.
- *Metadata*: Data that describes characteristics of other data, such as spreadsheets, databases, and other content types.

- *Openly available*: Available for anonymous download, e.g. without the need for a user login.
- *Research data repository*: A type of digital repository that primarily handles research data.

8. CONTACTS

Questions related to the Digital Object Withdrawal Procedure and its implementation should be directed to the Research Data Manager based within the Library & Archives Service (researchdatamanagement@lshtm.ac.uk).

9. REFERENCES

- LSHTM Research Data Management Policy
<https://doi.org/10.17037/PUBS.00612422>
- RDM Policy support document - Data Access Procedures
<https://doi.org/10.17037/PUBS.00612422>