Data Management FAQs

“What happens when I complete a data management plan?”

After completing and submitting the online form, you will receive email confirmation of the Data Management Plan (DMP) which will also be forwarded to the Information Management and Archive Services (IMAS) Team to create your digital storage space. The IMAS team will email you a link to a unique Microsoft Team which will include SharePoint file space in the Files tab. You can then add any other members of your research team who may also require access to the information. Your research records can then be uploaded to the files tab in the Team which is a direct link to the secure SharePoint site created for your research project.

IT and the Library will also be notified and will make contact with you if you have any atypical storage requirements or any data reuse requirements.

“I already use other storage (ECU Sharedrives / OneDrive / Box / Dropbox etc) for my research. Do I need to move to this new space?”

By using this ECU provisioned SharePoint space, your research is not only stored securely during your research project, it will also be securely managed by the IMAS team after the completion of your research, in accordance with the State Records Act. Ongoing retention needs will be addressed, your research will be accessible to those who need it across any device in any location, and appropriate metadata is captured to facilitate the ongoing management of your research data.

There are many advantages of using SharePoint to manage your research records:

- **Secure**: Our Office365 environment has the required ISO certifications that provide us with confidence that data is stored securely, backup up appropriately and encrypted in transit and at rest;
- **Cost effective**: Storage on the SharePoint platform is included in our existing Office365 subscription. There is no additional cost to research projects in storing data to this platform;
- **Easy to use**: Teams is now used by all ECU staff for Calling and Collaboration. This makes the entry point to Research data storage familiar for researchers;
- **Accessible**: Office365 is accessible from anywhere without the need for a VPN or specialised software;
- **Support for file types, size and volume**: SharePoint allows the storage of a wide range of file types, individual file sizes up to 15GB and collective storage volume per site collection of 25TB;
- **Support for collaboration**: SharePoint enables the nominated Investigator(s) to share data with internal and external collaborators from the SharePoint platform; and
- **Retention Ready**: SharePoint collections will be pre-populated with the recommended, retention ready folder structure that will aid researchers in keeping their data in a retention ready state that meets compliance requirements.

If you have an ECU provisioned Box space that you are currently using, you can continue to do so. When your project is complete and the data is retention ready, IMAS will assist in moving your data into the new SharePoint environment.
“Who, aside from my research team, can access my research data?”

When using the ECU provisioned SharePoint storage, a small number of staff who are responsible for the management of ECU information and the spaces it resides, have access to the research information. As ECU employees, they are bound by ECU policy and the University Code of Conduct to protect the confidentiality of any information they would potentially have access to. These small number of staff only access the SharePoint sites if you need assistance, or when your data are ready for retention at the end of your project.

This is accepted as standard practice by ECU’s Research Ethics Committees so there is no need to stipulate individuals in these roles as part of your ethics application.

“Members of my research team are not ECU researchers; can they access this research space?”

When your DMP is created, you (and if you are a student, your Principal Supervisor) will automatically become the ‘owner’ of the storage space that is created for you. As such, you are in control of who has access to your research project Team space. Simply click the three dots next to your team name and click ‘Manage team’. You can then add or remove group members as required, including people external to ECU.

“How should I talk about data management when applying for grant funding?”

The Research Services Pre-Award team can assist you with your grant development prior to submission. They can be contacted at Research-Preaward@ecu.edu.au

The information below can be used or adapted in your research grant application to demonstrate how you will manage your research data. This wording reflects the formal policy position of the University pertaining to data and records management.

Suggested wording:

In line with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018), and ECU’s Research Data Management Policy, a Data Management Plan will be created at the commencement of the project. This plan will outline the data characteristics, storage and security of the data, retention requirements and any potential access and reuse of the data in the future. The DMP will trigger provision of secure Microsoft SharePoint storage for the data during the project. The DMP will also allow ECU to manage the data collected as part of this project securely and in line with all institutional, state and national policies and guidelines as well as the agreements in place between all research partners.
“How do I access my research information if I leave ECU? “

As per the ECU Research Data Management Policy, when a researcher leaves the University, the original research data must remain at the University. If a researcher wishes to continue to use the research data after leaving ECU, the researcher may take a copy of the data, upon approval from their Executive Dean. Any subsequent research publications and other outputs which are generated after leaving ECU, must acknowledge ECU’s contribution to the output. Similarly, if any University researchers wish to utilise the data generated at the University, any subsequent research publications and other outputs must acknowledge the original researcher.

“What should I do with hardcopy records / data? “

It is important your non-digital data is protected and kept as safe and secure as is practicable during the course of your research. Hardcopy records such as surveys or logbooks need to be retained if they support the final outcomes of your research project. If you indicate you have hardcopy data to manage in your DMP, IMAS will be in touch to discuss how they can support you in securely managing and retaining these data during the active research phase and while being retained at the conclusion of the research project.

“Can I submit my Data Management Plan without having a Research Ethics Approval Number (REMS)?”

A data management plan should only be created once you have commenced your ethics application and have received an ECU ethics number (REMS or STREAM). If you wish to complete a plan before you have an ethics number, please contact research.integrity@ecu.edu.au

“I have nearly completed my research; do I still need to complete a data management plan?”

We recommend all current research projects have a data management plan in place. Not only does this ensure that you are meeting your responsibilities under the Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research, completion of the DMP will automatically notify the appropriate service centres at ECU (eg: IT, IMAS and the Library) who will take the necessary actions to ensure the storage, retention, reuse and access of the research data is supported for the remainder of the research project and throughout the retention period specified in the State Records Act.

“What does the data retention date mean?”

This would usually be your estimated project end date, the time when you have completed collection and analysis of your data and the documents and data are ready for archiving and/or sharing.

Leading up to this date IMAS will contact you to establish if you are ready for your data and records to be archived. If you have indicated that your data can be shared, staff from the Library Services Centre will also be in touch around this date.

If you are not ready to archive or share your data at this point, don’t worry. You can change your retention ready date at any time by contacting IMAS at imas@ecu.edu.au
“Can I set up my own folder structure in this storage space / why is my storage space pre-populated with folders?”

The pre-defined top-level folder structure in your storage space is standardised to facilitate the ongoing management of your research data. You are welcome to create subfolders within these folders if you wish, but we ask that you do not save information outside of that structure.

If you require more information about what information should be captured within each of these folders see the Research Project File Structure.

“I am conducting a multi-centre project and have my ethics approval from another HREC, do I still need to complete an ECU Data Management Plan?”

Yes, just as you are still required to test your research through ECUs Research Ethics Management System (and potentially complete a ‘prior review’ application), you also need to complete an ECU DMP to notify ECU of your data management and storage plans.

The lead institution may have responsibility for maintaining the data however as the research is being conducted by ECU researchers, those responsibilities should be clearly set out in your plan.