

STANDARD ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

15.99.03.M1.03 The Responsible Stewardship of Research Data

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SAP Statement

Texas A&M University through its faculty, research staff, postdoctoral fellows, and students produce scientific and technical data and other results of research that must be preserved and made accessible to others in accordance with sponsor agreements and federal and state regulations. This SAP outlines the assignment of responsibilities, procedures and processes that will assure that research data is properly recorded, retained for the required period of time and made available for review as obligated.

Definitions

Research data is defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-110/2CFR 215.36 as “the recorded factual material commonly accepted in the scientific community as necessary to validate research findings.” It includes recorded information produced in any form or media during a research investigation. Research data may consist of research notes, laboratory notebooks, textual information, numeric information, images, audio and video recordings, diagrams, instrumental readouts, photos, reports, publications, samples, materials and other recorded information necessary for the reconstruction and evaluation of reported results of research. It also includes the protocols, charts, graphs, and other information, events and processes that lead to results. Research data does not include “preliminary analyses, drafts of scientific papers, plans for future research, peer reviews or communications with colleagues.” The definition of “research data” may be more specific or expanded by specific federal regulations or sponsor requirements of individual sponsored agreements.

Official Procedures/Responsibilities/Processes

1. GENERAL

Texas A&M University pursues the highest standards in the stewardship of research data in order to meet institutional responsibilities to federal and other sponsors, to maintain the value of the data for faculty and researchers and to assure that research is performed with integrity and the highest ethical standards. Texas A&M University through the Office of the Vice President for Research is responsible for overseeing the stewardship of data on Texas A&M University research projects performed under the auspices of Texas A&M University.

This SAP applies to all Texas A&M University faculty, staff, students and others at Texas A&M University involved in the design, conduct and reporting of research on Texas A&M University research projects.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Both Texas A&M University and Texas A&M University investigators have rights and responsibilities in regard to the responsible stewardship of research data.

2.1 The Office of the Vice President for Research is designated as the responsible office for research data management at Texas A&M University.

2.1.1 Roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Vice President for Research in research data management include but are not limited to the following:

- i. Establishing procedures and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that institutional obligations for research data retention and sharing are met, as generally documented in grant and contract agreements or other state or federal regulations governing sponsored agreements;
- ii. Providing administrative oversight for compliance that require special data access, retention and reporting provisions such as issues involving the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), select agents and dual use, export controlled technologies, use of animals, recombinant DNA, confidentiality, privacy and classified research;
- iii. Establishing procedures and controls to ensure the protection of the rights of students and research staff and their rights to access data from research in which they participated;
- iv. Establishing procedures and controls for the protection of intellectual property rights and proprietary information as contractually committed; and
- v. Facilitating the investigation of scientific misconduct, conflict of interest or other inquiries.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities of the principal investigator include but are not limited to:

- i. the selection of the appropriate scope and methodology of collections, management, retention and archiving based on the type of research being conducted;
- ii. the determination, in consultation with the Texas A&M System Sponsored Research Services (SRS), if the selected scope and methodology standards are of sufficient detail and duration to comply with the applicable laws and regulations and contractual terms, conditions and obligations;
- iii. the preparation, submission and implementation of any required data management plan in accordance with sponsor requirements regarding retention, dissemination and sharing of research results;
- iv. the training and dissemination of sponsor requirements and other regulations to research staff, graduate students and others working on the project regarding collection and retention of data; and
- v. the retention of data for the period of time as described in Section 4 of this SAP.

2.3 Roles and responsibilities of department heads, deans and other unit heads are to establish an internal process to assure that

- i. stewardship of research data by the principal investigator, or within the department, college or unit is managed responsibly and in accordance with these guidelines;
- ii. hiring processes include a procedure for accepting responsibility for data transferring to the university via an agreement between the institution from which the principal investigator is transferring and Texas A&M University; and
- iii. employee separation procedures are in place to assure that original research data of the separating employee does not leave the University unless a written agreement is entered into between Texas A&M University and the institution to which the employee is transferring.

3. OWNERSHIP

Unless precluded by a Texas A&M University contract agreeing to specific other terms, research data conducted on a Texas A&M University project belongs to Texas A&M University.

4. COLLECTION AND RETENTION

4.1 Research data must be retained for a minimum of 3 years after the end of the project. If any of the following apply, the required retention period may be longer:

- i. the sponsor agreement has required a longer retention period for the research data;
- ii. there is a need to protect intellectual property resulting from the project;

- iii. there is an allegation of scientific misconduct or conflict of interest or other unresolved issues concerning compliance as determined by the Vice President for Research; or
 - iv. there is a student who is still working on the research data as part of his or her degree.
- 4.2 Beyond the minimum period of retention and if none of the above four criteria have been met, the PI may choose to destroy the data.
- 4.3 Location and the primary steward of research data in support of the sponsored research activities will be referenced in MAESTRO. This will ensure that the location of TAMU data retained elsewhere is known to TAMU in order for the University to meet its obligations regarding data accessibility and sharing.
- 4.4 Research data will normally be retained by the administrative unit in which the research is being performed. Units responsible for research data will assure that data is preserved, secured, backed up and managed in accordance with University Rule 29.01.03.M0.01 and related standard administrative procedures.
- 4.5 For data to be located in facilities or in repositories not belonging to Texas A&M University, permission from the Vice President for Research is required unless such location is sponsor required. If such location is sponsored required, no additional approvals will be necessary other than disclosure as to the location of the research data in MAESTRO.

5. TEXAS DIGITAL LIBRARY

The Texas Digital Library is a consortium of Texas universities that provides a centralized service for storage, preservation, management and publication of digital research data. As TAMU is a member of the consortium, investigators can choose to use these services with no additional approvals so long as the location of this data is known to the University via the MAESTRO research system. Access to these services can be coordinated through the University Libraries services.

6. TRANSFER OF RESEARCH DATA TO ANOTHER INSTITUTION

- 6.1 In the event of the termination of an individual working on Texas A&M University research projects, he or she may take copies of research data resulting from those projects unless data cannot be easily reproduced or is prohibited by the sponsor agreement. Original research data will remain with Texas A&M University and the Principal Investigator.
- 6.2 If the Principal Investigator leaves Texas A&M University and wishes to transfer the original research data to another institution, the Principal Investigator can submit such a request through their department head and dean to the Vice President for Research. If approved, the Vice President for Research will enter

into a written agreement with the new institution that will ensure that the new institution will accept the research data responsibilities for the project and will provide access to Texas A&M University, if needed. After such agreement has been entered into by the University and the new institution, research data and the obligations for it can be transferred to the new institution.

- 6.3 If the Principal Investigator leaves Texas A&M University and wishes to transfer equipment containing research data to a new institution, the request and approval process described above in Section 6.2 must be followed. This is in addition to requesting and receiving approval to transfer the equipment through the University's established method for transferring inventory. Both approvals are required before the transfer can be made a request to transfer data associated with the equipment would be needed.

Related Statutes, Policies or Requirements

2 C.F.R. Part 215

[System Policy 15.01 Research Agreements](#)

[University SAP 29.01.03.M0.01 Security of Electronic Information Resources](#)

Contact Office

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