Managing Research Records

OVERVIEW
The University, its faculty, and its trainees have a common interest and a shared responsibility to ensure that research is:

- Appropriately recorded.
- Retained for the legally required length of time.
- Available for review under appropriate circumstances.

Original research records are essential to:

- Protect intellectual property rights.
- Answer ongoing questions regarding management of a research program.
- Address possible questions that may arise regarding the propriety of research conduct.

Definition
Research records are defined as the compiled records generated to document the investigation process and the resulting data, regardless of the form or the media. Research records may also include the materials or products generated by the research.

Records Retention Schedules
To help meet state and federal records retention requirements, the University, in coordination with the State Records Committee, has established records retention schedules for use by all WSU units. The schedules are published as the All-University Records Retention Schedules in BPPM 90.01.

Many records series related to research may be viewed in the Research and Sponsored Project Records table in BPPM 90.01.

Investigators and staff must adhere to the minimum retention requirements for records series included on the research records retention schedule, as well as other applicable retention schedules published in BPPM 90.01.

For more information regarding University records retention and disposition requirements, refer to BPPM 90.01.

Additional Information
(Grants Issued On or After December 26, 2014)
For more information regarding post federal award records requirements for grants awarded on or after December 26, 2014, refer to the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 2, Part 200, Subpart D, Record Retention and Access.

Administrative and University administrative and other operational data, as defined by
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Operational Data Policies

WSU Executive Policy Manual EP8: University Data Policies, are not covered by this research records policy (BPPM 45.35).


Retention of Research Records

The senior member of a research team (i.e., the principal investigator) is responsible for the appropriate long-term maintenance of the research records of that team.

The senior member of a research team is obligated to ensure that team members:

- Understand the elements of a high-quality research record.
- Produce and retain records that adequately document the experimental methods and accuracy of data collection, as well as the methods and accuracy of data interpretation.
- Understand the University's obligation to retain records for the minimum periods required and approved by the state (see BPPM 90.01).

In the event the senior member of the research team (i.e., the principal investigator) leaves the University for any reason, they must notify their supervisor of the location of project's research records.

The principal investigator may take copies of the project's research records upon leaving the University. In cases where copies are not adequate for continuing research purposes, the principal investigator may take original research records. However, the principal investigator must provide the University with copies of all of the research records they are removing.

Other members of the research team may not take original research records with them upon leaving the University. However, they may take copies of relevant research records that the principal investigator determines to be appropriate.

Essential Records

The senior member of a research team also must establish and maintain procedures for the protection of essential records in the event of a natural disaster or other emergency (see BPPM 90.15). Such procedures are particularly important for long-term research projects.
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Records of Historical Value

In addition, if the senior member believes that the research records rise to the level of historical value, they are to contact all of the following:

- The chair/director, dean, or chancellor.
- The Vice President for Research.
- Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections in Holland Library.

See BPPM 90.02 regarding archival records.

Ownership and Access to Research Records

The University retains title to:

- Data arising from sponsored projects.
- Research performed at the University.
- Research performed by University personnel in the course of University employment.
- Research for which the University provided the funds and/or significant resources.

The University has the right of access to the supporting records for all research for which it retains title or which it must access to fulfill its legal obligations, compliance obligations, or other obligations to research sponsors.

To the extent possible, when accessing such records, the University safeguards the confidentiality of sources or human subjects who participated in the research. When possible, the University provides reasonable notice to applicable researchers, sources and/or human subjects, and research sponsors of its need to access the records and avoids interruption of ongoing research. In all cases, the University is subject to Washington State laws and regulations, including the Washington Public Records Act, RCW 42.56. See also BPPM 90.05.

The University's right of access to the data continues regardless of the location of the responsible investigator or location of the records.

External research sponsors may have the right to review the data and records resulting from that support.
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OWNERSHIP AND ACCESS (cont.)

Co-investigators and trainees who are an integral part of a research project have the right to review all records and data that are part of the project and are necessary to perform their duties.

Student Class Research Projects

The University does not retain intellectual property rights (e.g., title) to student class research projects. See BPPM 90.06 for further information regarding student records.

STORAGE OF RESEARCH RECORDS

Original research records must be stored in University-owned and maintained files, regardless of whether the records are in paper or electronic form.

For convenience, an investigator may choose to keep a duplicate copy of the research records on a personally-owned computer or portable digital storage device or in their personally-owned and personally-maintained filing cabinet or storage device. However, the investigator must store the original files in a University digital or paper file. The investigator must safeguard the confidentiality of records retained in privately-owned and privately-controlled files.

If original research records are stored in a digital/electronic medium, the records must be safeguarded using encryption or other effective method to comply with any applicable confidentiality requirements and file backup or other effective method to ensure the records' continued accessibility.