



This document has been translated from Swedish into English. If the English version differs from the original, the Swedish version takes precedence.

# Procedures for archiving research material

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## Why archiving research documents?

To enable verification of research findings and keeping track of the administrative processes required for research, the correct documentation need to be retained. In order to start a new project, obtain financial and ethical support for the research, and to plan future research, documents pertaining to funding, applications for ethical approval, and the study itself must be retained.

Research findings must be verifiable at least ten years after project completion. During this period, any research data must therefore be maintained, organised and secure, clearly marked with relevant metadata.

Archiving research also enables others to revisit the material in the future to gain an understanding of the research conducted at Örebro University, within a specific research field, or by an individual researcher.

## Laws and regulations

- The Freedom of the Press Act, Chapter 2, defines the concepts 'document' and 'official document' and prescribes rules with respect to the right of public access to public authorities' documents.
- The Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act lays down rules on public authorities' response to requests concerning access to official documents.
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) contains rules in regard to the handling of personal data and privacy protection.
- The Ethical Review Act provides rules for research concerning humans and biological material.
- The Archives Act contains rules to enable administration of the principle of public access to information through orderly maintenance of official documents.

The Archives Act stipulates that all documents that are official are to be registered (in a records management system), accounted for, and archived. Some documents are to be disposed of after a certain period of time and some documents are to be retained indefinitely. In the eyes of the Archives Act, and according to the Swedish National Archives, 'indefinitely' signifies a timescale of about 1,000 years. Information – data and other documents – generated in connection with research must be handled according to the same principles as other official documents at the university.

## What counts as a research project?

In this context, 'research project' refers to research activities that are defined in time and purpose, often linked to a specific assignment and/or a specific person.

## What counts as research material?

'Research material', or research data, is all kinds of documents generated throughout the research activities of higher education institutions and other public authorities – whether as part of research projects or of continuous research operations – regardless of funding setup.

From an information management perspective, there are generally four categories of research documents:



- **Administrative documents** – for example project plans, funding applications, data management plans, contracts, agreements, project descriptions, correspondence with funding bodies/principals, and documents relating to finance and personnel. Administrative documents are to be retained and registered in the records management system Public 360.
- **Primary material** – material from the research process, such as questionnaires/questionnaire compilations, interviews, research/observation protocols, experimental protocols, measuring and test results, x-ray images, and medical test results. Primary material is to be retained for at least ten years after the completion of the project.
- **Working material** – for example drafts, concepts, scrap material to be revised, compilations, computations, and excerpts. Should analysis data add factual information, the material become official documents and must be archived. When obsolete, working material may be disposed of.
- **Reporting material** – for example interim reports, theses, final reports, original papers, and popular-science publications. All reporting material is to be retained.

### **Research material constitute official documents**

In Sweden, citizens are entitled to free access to the operations of public institutions. This right is expressed by, among others, the Freedom of the Press Act. This act also stipulates the principle of public access to official documents, prescribing rules in regard to the handling of official documents. Said principle also applies to public authorities' research activities. The research process covers various stages and activities. At each stage, different types of official documents are produced.

It is vital that there is a strategy for retention and archiving already at the start of a research project. Consequently, a data management plan should be prepared. Keeping the research data in order already from the start is key to both research quality and credibility.

### **Registering documents**

Örebro University's information management plan provides details of the research documents that are to be registered. Public 360° is Örebro University's records management system, used for registering official documents. Contact the Records Office ([registrator@oru.se](mailto:registrator@oru.se)) if you need assistance or if you have any queries concerning registering official documents.

### **Retention and disposal of research material**

Disposal means that official documents are discarded and/or destroyed. Disposal of research material is only permitted if supported by law or regulation. Örebro University is obliged to comply with both the general (RA-FS) and authority-specific (RA-MS) regulations issued by the Swedish National Archives. The rules for retention and disposal apply irrespective of media and are thus identical for paper documents and electronic databases. Disposal of documents may take place after the prescribed and specified retention period for the document type in question.



## Exemptions from retention and disposal provisions

The Swedish National Archives regulations prescribe that primary material be retained for at least ten years following publication of the final article and retained indefinitely in such cases when the material cannot be recreated. As a researcher, you are responsible for determining, in consultation with the archive function, whether the primary material is to be retained for posterity or whether it should be disposed of ten years after the final article.

In a research project, these documents are always exempt from disposal, that is, they are to be retained indefinitely:

- information about aim, methods, and results in research projects
- material of continued value within the discipline and of value to other research areas
- documents of great value in terms of science, cultural or personal history, or of great interest to the public.

## Archiving

The lion's share of all research material constitute official documents and are generally also public documents. As such, they belong to the university archives and anyone can request access to the material. In exceptional cases, research material may be classified and there may be impediments to its disclosure. However, for material to be classified, there must be support for this in the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act.

The Swedish Archives Act stipulates that the archives of public authorities must be retained, kept in order, and maintained so that they:

- ensure the public right to access official documents
- meet information needs within public administration and administration of justice
- meet research needs

The vice-chancellor has delegated the schools' archiving responsibility to the respective head of school, and the responsibility for departments/offices' official documents to the university director. In turn, the university director has delegated the departments/offices' archiving responsibility to the respective head of department/office.

Unless decisions are made to the contrary, the responsibility at the schools thus rests with the heads of school. The researcher in charge is expected to stay up to date with the research project and the information generated therein. It is up to each school to determine and allocate archiving duties for research matters. The information management plan describes how Örebro University's official documents should be handled. The provisions in the information management plan must be complied with.

## Consents

Consents should be disposed of when the information/data to which they refer are or have been disposed of. Consents given within research projects are handled differently depending on whether the project includes confidential components or not.



- Consents where the title reveals a sensitive subject are to be kept in such a way that it is easy to find them. Code keys and consents must be kept separately. The code key must be registered and the consents kept in order, together with the primary material, until the period of retention has expired.
- Consents where the title/heading does not reveal a sensitive subject are to be archived according to project and school and/or department/office. These are to be kept in order, preferably in alphabetical order and kept together with the primary material until the period of retention has expired. To facilitate retrieval, a register should be created which is to be stored together with the consents.
- Should anyone withdraw their consent, an official note (Sw: *tjänsteanteckning*) is to be made in Public 360°. The on-paper consent must be retained.

### **Archiving your completed research project**

A project is considered closed when 1) the research results have been presented, published, or otherwise made public, 2) an appropriate period of time has passed to enable a review of the documents in order to verify the findings, and 3) the financial reporting is complete.

As soon as possible after the completed project, the research material is to be submitted to the archive function for registering in the archive management system and archiving. Your room, a metal cabinet in the corridor, and/or your own home are not approved storage facilities for completed projects. It is the originals that need archiving. If you need to keep some documents accessible for your activities, you may well make copies. If required, it is also possible to borrow documents from the archives.

### **On-paper research material**

If the primary material is on paper, it must be stored in archive boxes.

When a document is to be retained, it means that it is to be saved for all eternity and for it to be readable for at least 1,000 years.

### **Research material in electronic format**

To a great degree, research material is produced and processed electronically. If there is a large amount of primary material in electronic format, this should be organised in an orderly fashion, making it retrievable for at least ten years. Consult your school and the archives function and then contact IT Support to find out where best to store the research project's primary material. There are several alternatives depending on the research project and school affiliation.

It is of utmost importance that the material is stored in storage facilities provided by the university and that you do not use your own storage facilities and software. As mentioned above, research material constitute official documents and the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the documents are made available and stored securely rests with the university.

When creating a storage location for primary material, some basic metadata about the material must also be prepared and available. Time period (year), categorisation (e.g. group, interviewees or similar) are to be included to make the information accessible even without the researcher's involvement.

## Archiving step by step

### □ Step 1

First, review of all the research material on paper, in folders, on CDs, in computer files, discs, videotapes, et cetera. Then group the material into the four document categories: administrative documents, primary documents, working material, and reporting material, all described in more detail under “What counts as research material?” above. Also refer to Örebro University’s information management plan on Inforum, detailing which documents are to be retained, which ones are to be disposed of, and which ones are to be registered in the records management system.

### □ Step 2

Sort out all the working material, that is, drafts, notes, scrap paper, transcripts, duplicates, and copies. Then remove all paper clips, tape, rubber bands, metal or plastic elements and any other loose objects from the remaining material since these will damage the documents to be retained and archived.

### □ Step 3

The material organised into the remaining three document categories are now to be registered or archived. This means that administrative documents, primary material and reporting material are to be either registered in the records management system, put into archive boxes, or stored electronically. In the archive boxes, each document type must be archived separately. It is important to keep the document types separate since different rules for retention and archiving apply to different document types. Documents that are subject to disposal must not be put in the same boxes as or listed together with documents that are to be retained. Use a file cover or cover page clearly stating what information is included and the time period covered, for example “Primary data research project XXX – 2020”.

Use an archival-quality pen labelled “*Svenskt arkiv*”. Each document type must, as far as possible, be placed in chronological order, which will facilitate any searches in the archives later on. Fill the boxes to the top, making sure, however, that you do not overfill them.

### □ Step 4

Mark the boxes with a pencil on the lower part of the back of the box. The content of the box should be marked with retention period (10 years after project completion) and document type (for example primary material). Also add the year during which the project was completed, for example 2020. Pencil is to be used on the archive box to mark it temporarily prior to labelling. Ink and felt-tip pens or home-made labels may not be used. Example:

**Retention review due  
year 2031**

**Primary material  
Example project**

**Completed 2020**



□ **Step 5**

Contact the archive function ([arkiv@oru.se](mailto:arkiv@oru.se)) to decide when and how the material to be retained can be submitted for archiving.

**Registering scientific articles**

Remember that also scientific articles are to be registered in your research project file. If all official documents in the research project have been registered and the project completed, it is time to close the case in the records management system (Public 360°).

**Contact**

General questions about archiving: [arkiv@oru.se](mailto:arkiv@oru.se)

General questions about registering: [registrator@oru.se](mailto:registrator@oru.se)

General questions about the GDPR: [dataskyddsbud@oru.se](mailto:dataskyddsbud@oru.se)





## Appendix 1. Extract from the 2019 version of the information management plan<sup>1</sup>

Documents	Retained/disposed of	Retention form	Note
Application for external funding with appendices	Retained	Public 360	To be registered Also called funding applications
Agreements/contracts in regard to external funding	Retained	Public 360	To be registered For example grant agreements or consortium agreement
Working material	Disposed of when obsolete		For example scrap paper to be edited
Decisions on external funding	Retained	Public 360	To be registered Approval or rejection
Data management plan	Retained	Public 360	To be registered Retained with application for funding if there is one, otherwise retained separately.
Interim report	Retained	Public 360	To be registered
Final report	Retained	Public 360	To be registered
Questionnaire form, original	Retained	Public 360	A blank version of questionnaire form sent out to respondents. To be retained as appendix to application if included in application to the Swedish Ethical Review Authority. If

<sup>1</sup>Some information has been changed for clarification purposes and has been added from other sections of the information management plan.



			not included in the application for ethical approval, the original is to be registered separately in the case file.
Research register	Retained / 10 years	Paper/archive box/electronically	Refers to, for example, primary material registers. Note that the register must comply with the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act with respect to the handling of sensitive information. The same retention period is to apply to the register as to the primary material.
Documents in regard to participation in externally organised conferences, seminars etc.	Disposed of when obsolete		RA-FS 1991:6 (Swedish National Archives regulations)
Databases	Retained / 10 years	Electronically	Documents considered to possess continued value from a science, cultural or personal history perspective, or to be of great interest to the public are to be retained.
Conference papers/reports	Retained	Electronically/DIVA Paper/archive box	Peer-reviewed conference papers to be registered in DIVA. Non-peer-reviewed material does not need to be registered in Public 360 if the conference paper is saved/registered in DIVA. Note that the



			file must be attached for the information to be considered archived in DIVA, otherwise the information is to be retained in Public 360.  See decision ORU 1.2.1-887/2014
Minutes from conferences and meetings etc. arranged by the school.	Retained		
Agreements/contracts in regard to contract research	Retained	Public 360	
Correspondence	Retained /disposed of when obsolete	Electronically/ Public 360	Significant correspondence to be registered and retained.  Temporary or insignificant correspondence can be disposed of when obsolete.
Method descriptions	Retained	Public 360	To be registered
Primary material/raw data	Retained / 10 years	Public 360/ paper/archive box Electronically	Documents considered to possess continued value from a science, cultural or personal history perspective, or to be of great interest to the public are to be retained.  Other documents may be disposed of 10 years after publication (15 years for clinical drug trials).  Digital primary material to be stored on the N server until it has been delivered to



			<p>the appropriate system for retention. Contact the archive function to ensure that the information is organised correctly.</p> <p>Primary material containing sensitive information is to be registered.</p>
Project descriptions/research plans	Retained	Public 360	To be registered. To be retained with the application for funding, if any, otherwise retained separately.
Project diaries/project records	Retained	Paper/archive box/electronically	
Minutes or equivalent notes from steering and reference group meetings	Retained	Public 360	
Publication lists, final	Retained	Electronically/DIVA	If the information cannot be found in DIVA, it must be archived on paper.
Final reports	Retained	Public 360	To be registered
Applications for and decisions on ethical approval (ethical review boards, Swedish Authority for Privacy Protection, environmental impact assessment bodies etc.)	Retained	Public 360	To be registered
Scientific final reports/articles	Retained	Public 360	To be registered in the research project's case file in Public 360