UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DATA AND TANGIBLE RESEARCH MATERIALS POLICY
POINTS CONSIDERED

Background
RPAC has been working on a policy document for some time that addresses issues concerning the
ownership of research data and tangible research materials generated at UC. This has been an effort
started, stalled, and stopped for many years, and in the interim both UCSD and UCLA issued Guidance
on Access and Management of Research Data that closely resembles early drafts that RPAC worked on.
Over the past year and a half, RPAC met with a small advisory group made up of representatives from
UCSD, UCLA, Berkeley, the Office of General Counsel, and more recently CDL to better understand the
issues at hand and to polish off the old data policy draft. The draft that was shared with several
Academic Senate committees at the end of 2019 as a preliminary draft with the acknowledgement that
there were certain aspects of the draft that could benefit from further discussion. The general feedback
received during these meetings is that the draft tried to cover too much ground, including by imposing
an unrealistic retention requirement for maintaining research data and tangible research materials, and
thereby muddying the true intent of this policy.

Given this feedback, with the help colleagues at CDL, RPAC made revisions to the draft by staying
focused on the question of who owns the data and materials generated during the course of research, in
addition to better highlighting the value of research data and materials. The thought behind this is that
we can address specific questions in subsequent implementing guidance. The list below details the
discussions that had taken place to get the policy to its current state.

Resolved Issues:

1. **Research Data and Tangible Research Material Retention:** The University has a detailed records
retention schedule specific to administrative records. Research Data, however, are not included in
that schedule. In fact, UC does not have a policy on the minimum length of time for which
Research Data and Tangible Research Materials are to be retained. Early versions of the policy
draft stated that Research Data and Tangible Research Materials must be maintained for a
minimum of 6 years, with certain exceptions where data may need to be retained for longer. The
policy did not include a provision for who may approve earlier destruction or removal, and
whether that is a campus or case-by-case decision.

**Resolution:** After discussions with several groups (VCRs, UCORP, SLASIAC, CoUL, and others) in
late 2019 about the initial policy draft, it was stressed that the cost (both financially and
administratively) to maintain Research Data and Tangible Research Materials is significant and in
some cases would not make sense (e.g., while researchers may keep data from collected blood
samples, they may not keep the blood sample itself due to its cost to keep it in the fridge;
researchers may keep notes from interviews but not the video of the interview itself). Thus, this
iteration of the draft policy does not state a minimum length of time for which all Research Data
and Tangible Research Materials must be retained. Rather, the policy explains that Principal
Investigators must retain Research Data and Tangible Research Materials as long as required by
funders, publishers, campus policy, compliance or regulatory bodies, applicable law, and as
indicated in other relevant agreements. To ensure proper preservation, Principal Investigators
must have systems or practices for maintaining and retaining Research Data and Tangible
Research Materials in accordance with stated requirements and with the standards of their
scholarly disciplines and campus departments. The policy also points out cases where retention
periods may need to be longer.

2. **Transfer of Research Data or Tangible Research Materials to Another Institution:** The draft policy
states that the University will always retain ownership of original Research Data and Tangible
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Research Materials even if the Principal Investigator or the research is transferred to another institution, but on a case-by-case basis, the campus may allow for the transfer of original Research Data or Tangible Research Materials to another institution in such situations.

Resolution: We did not describe whether there is an expectation for a formal agreement with the new institution, such as an MTA, DUA or other agreement. We left this open so that the campus has flexibility to manage this on a case-by-case basis. For example, for a small project, a campus may only require an email acknowledgement from the institution receiving the data or materials; however, for a major research project, there may be a need for a formal contractual arrangement.

3. Common Data Identifiers and Data Management Plans: If UC will be requiring the retention of Research Data, it would be beneficial if that data is retained in a usable format, such as with common data identifiers or specified data management plans. Should this policy encourage/require the use of data management plans or common data identifiers?

Resolution: The policy now states that Principal Investigators must have systems or practices for maintaining and retaining Research Data and Tangible Research Materials in accordance with stated requirements and with the standards of their scholarly disciplines and campus departments. We discussed that should further resources be helpful on this point, we can address them in subsequent policy guidance.

4. Copyright Policy: The initial draft of the data policy included “Scholarly Works” as part of the definition of Research Data so to only point out that “Scholarly Works” is not included in the definition of Research Data.

Resolution: In the current iteration, the term “Scholarly Works” is not included in the definition of Research Data. This issue is instead addressed with an FAQ question.

5. Use of personal devices for research purposes: What is UC’s stance on Research Data and Tangible Research Materials collected and stored on personal devices?

Resolution: We addressed this point with an FAQ at the end.

6. Publication of Research Data: The question came up of whether this policy should address the issue of research collaborators, graduate students or others working on a Principal Investigator’s project who publish data ahead the Principal Investigator or without the Principal Investigator’s consent.

Resolution: This iteration of the draft is silent on addressing this issue, but we discussed several ways in which we can try to tackle the issue in the policy. For example, we one way to tackle this issue is to include a bullet under University Employee Responsibilities that states the requirement to confer with the Principal Investigator about the use of Research Data generated under a research project to ensure that there are no independent publications prior to first publication by the Principal Investigator. However, there was debate as to what happens if a lower level researcher does not agree with a Principal Investigator? would a Principal Investigator need to confirm with all the collaborators (a term not defined in the policy) before they can publish or re-use the data?; what would the agreement need to look like?; What criteria can the Principal Investigator use to fairly deny the request? Another way to try to address this issue is to support mutual agreement between a Principal Investigator and collaborators on how and when and by
whom the research data may be released/published/shared (such as by including a statement about securing agreement among all research collaborators in regard to data use, sharing, and reuse.) Ultimately, it seemed like the issue of publication was outside the scope of this policy and should not be addressed in this policy. In addition, in trying to come up with the right approach to address the issue seems to counter the main intent of this policy, that the Regents own Research Data and efforts to arbitrarily resist or delay use Research Data for critical University purposes flies in the face of the policy.