

RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT OFFBOARDING CHECKLIST

This document serves as a general research data management-focused guide to employee/trainee offboarding as they leave UW-Madison affiliated labs or projects. This document can be used alongside the Research Data Services [Onboarding Checklist](#) and other UW-Madison guidance to ensure data is well managed at all stages of a research project. Links to relevant policy language and campus resources are linked to throughout the document. At the end of the document, there is a glossary that defines terms. If you have further questions, contact [Research Data Services](#).

This checklist is adapted from the Research Data Management Onboarding Checklist by Harvard Medical School Data Management Working Group is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

CHECKLIST FOR LEAVING UW-MADISON

PLANNING

1. Create, Refer to, or Update a Knowledge Transfer File

Suggested Policies and Procedures

Additional Resources

Create a descriptive Knowledge Transfer File with relevant metadata to facilitate future accessibility, access, and reuse of data and methods

Check with your department to see if they have a Knowledge Transfer Template specific to your unit or discipline

If no template is available, additional information for generating your own Knowledge Transfer File is provided throughout this document

Example documents: These example documents from UW-Madison's CALS show how a Knowledge Transfer File can help provide a formal process or discussion about transfer and management of research data before leaving.

[UW Madison-CALS Knowledge Transfer Template](#)
[UW Madison CALS Project Update](#)

Knowledge Transfer File should include:

Metadata including file naming conventions, file formats, relevant software tools, access permissions, and versioning

[Best Practices: Data Documentation](#)
[Best Practices: File Naming and Versioning](#)
[Best Practices: File Organization and Structure](#)
[Metadata Overview](#)
[PI & Award Transfers](#)
[Award Closeout](#)

Contact information related to projects and datasets

Locations of datasets and research files

Documentation for publicly shared datasets

How projects and datasets relate to publications and grants

Project start and end dates

Specific grant information for projects and datasets

Other key dates associated with project timelines, and dataset production, and publication

2. Comply with all Institutional, Departmental, and Lab Policies and Procedures Related to Data Retention

UW-Madison has requirements addressing the timelines for data retention and maintenance. Many granting agencies may as well.

[Data Security, Management and Retention](#)
[Policy on Data Stewardship](#)

Consult PI, lab manager, or department for department/college specific policies on knowledge transfer

[Lab Close Out Checklist](#)

Include the entity responsible for data preservation and retention in your Knowledge Transfer File

STORAGE

1. Review and Organize your Data

Take a data inventory: As you plan to leave the University of Wisconsin-Madison it is necessary to consider the data and software applications you have used during your time here. After you leave, you will eventually lose access to these materials:

[Steps to Take Before Leaving the University](#)

G Suite
 Box
 Office 365
 Qualtrics
 Outlook
 CHTC
 Teams
 Slack

[Deactivation Timeline for Campus Accounts](#)

Review lab and departmental data storage protocols

Review and organize data in collaborative folders so they are easily accessible to colleagues

	Document your file/folder organization methods	
	Document file/folder contents	
	Create or update README documents with basic metadata for each distinct dataset	Example README file
	Document in your Knowledge Transfer File, and/or other format requested by your PI or lab manager, the location of data (electronic or otherwise) related to your research	
2. Transfer Access Permissions for Collaborative Data to Appropriate Lab Members or Colleagues		
	Transfer file folder and webpage/website ownership, as appropriate	
	Change privileges and permissions to departmental, lab, or project files to appropriate colleagues	
	Review accounts you will lose access to upon deactivation and ensure collaborators will retain access. Ensure colleagues have access to appropriate data	Deactivation Process
	Qualtrics Teams ResearchDrive LabArchives G-Suite	
	Download and store data on accounts where data will be deleted: Box Office 365	
	Review Data Policies relating to retention, sensitive data, and intellectual property for data created during research undertaken at UW-Madison.	Data Security, Management and Retention Handling sensitive university data Information Security: Awareness UW Policies UW-Madison - IT - Storage and Encryption Policy
3. Identify Data for Migration to Long-Term Storage		
	Contact Research Data Services to learn more about long term storage options.	Research Data Services
	Identify data for migration to long-term storage. Some identified data might be appropriate for sharing in data repository. In that case see Section 4 in SHARING for further information on choosing a data repository.	Data Storage and Backup - Research Data
	Ensure residual data not moved to long-term storage is properly backed up to prevent data loss.	
	Document the location of data moved to long term storage in your Knowledge Transfer File and/or other format requested by your PI or lab manager	
4. Identify Data for Potential Deletion		
	Discuss with your PI the deletion of duplicate or dispensable data to streamline departmental storage	Policy on Data Stewardship, Access, and Retention UW-Madison - IT - Disposal and Reuse Procedures University Research Related Record Schedules inc Grants UW Archives and Records Management
5. Ensure Proper Storage of and Access to Lab Notebooks and Electronic Lab Notebook(s)		
	Store lab notebook and labor records according to lab protocol	About the UW-Madison ELN Service
	Confirm lab notebooks are accessible to appropriate lab members and collaborators	
SHARING		
1. Transferring Data to Other Institutions:		
	Consult with your PI prior to data transfer	Handling sensitive university data
	Note that it is required that data generated at UW-Madison will remain the lab or department. Copies may be transferred once permissions are obtained.	Section 4.4: Transfer in the Event a Researcher Leaves UW-Madison
	If transferring data to another institution prior to departure, ensure sensitive data is securely stored.	Agreement Negotiation - DTUAs Intellectual Property
2. Review Policies of Confidentiality, Data Security, and Intellectual Property (IP)		
	Properly protecting research data is a fundamental obligation grounded in the values of stewardship, integrity, and commitments to the providers and sources of the data. The University's IP policy governs the ownership and disposition of IP including, but not limited to, inventions, copyrights (including computer software), trademarks, and tangible research property such as biological materials. The policy encourages the viewpoint that ideas or creative works produced at the University should be used in ways that are meaningful in the public interest.	Intellectual Property Agreement (IPA) Policy on Data Stewardship, Access, and Retention Copyright Infringement Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Board of Regents Protecting Research Participants Privacy Interests and Confidentiality of Data

	used in ways that are meaningful in the public interest.	HIPAA Security Data Management and Backup
		Research Policies
	Consult with your PI or lab manager for further guidance, as necessary	IP Policies and Forms
3. Identify Publisher, Funder or Institutional Requirements for Data Sharing		
	Identify publisher, funder and/or institutional requirements for data sharing and long-term maintenance	Data Sharing Essentials Policy on Data Stewardship, Access, and Retention
	Consult Data Transfer and Use Agreements (DTUA) to understand data sharing restrictions.	Data Security, Management and Retention Agreement Negotiation - DTUAs Project Agreements HIPAA – Researchers IRB Guidance: Data Release Agreements
4. Identify Which of Your Datasets Should Be Deposited and Shared in Repositories		
	Identify which of your datasets can be shared in public repositories	Handling sensitive university data MINDS@UW Digital Library Services
	Identify which of your datasets are deposited and shared in non-public repositories	
	Confirm data in proprietary repositories is accessible to other lab members	
	Document shared datasets in Knowledge Transfer File	
GLOSSARY OF TERMS		
Archive	The transfer of materials or data to a facility/site authorized to appraise, preserve, and provide access to the information	
Research Data Lifecycle	The stages of data throughout its life, or the course of a project, from its creation to analysis, storage and backup, distribution, preservation, and reuse	
Data Management Plan (DMP)	A two-page document that articulates how the data will be treated during its collection, processing, analysis, preservation, and use/reuse over time. It should include comprehensive information about the types and formats of data, metadata standards or other methods of data documentation, policies for access and sharing, and plans for archiving and preserving for long-term access. A DMP ensures data will be properly documented and available for use by researchers in the future. DMPs are becoming increasingly required by funding agencies when applying for funding.	
Data Repository	A place to hold data, make data available for reuse, and organize data in a logical manner. Data repositories are often subject-specific and allow for researchers to self-submit data. Data repositories may have requirements regarding subject or research domain, data re-use and access, file format and data structure, and the types of metadata that can be used.	
Data Security	The ways in which data is kept safe from harm, alteration, or unauthorized access during gathering, analysis, storage, and transmission. Computer systems used to store data should have security measures such as firewalls, virus protection, and strong password protection.	
Data Transfer and Use Agreement (DTUA)	A Data Use Agreement (DTUA) governs access to and treatment of data. DUAs are required when data is provided by an outside organization to UW-Madison for use in UW-Madison research, or when data from UW-Madison research is provided to an outside organization for their use.	
Electronic Lab Notebook (ELN)	A software tool that in its most basic form replicates an interface much like a page in a paper lab notebook. In an electronic notebook you can enter protocols, observations, notes, and other data using your computer or mobile device. This offers several advantages over the traditional paper notebook.	
Knowledge Transfer File	A knowledge transfer file assists with the transfer of knowledge from one part of the organization to another. Knowledge transfer seeks to organize, create, capture or distribute knowledge and ensure its availability for future users. The file should contain essential informative information related to projects and datasets to ensure the success of future users.	
Metadata	Structured information about a resource that describes, explains, locates, or otherwise make it easier to understand, retrieve, use, or manage that resource. It ensures that the context for how data was created, analyzed, or stored is clear, detailed, and reproducible.	
README	A README file is usually a plain text file that contains information about other files in a folder. It is best practice to create a README document for each distinct dataset at the beginning of a project. A README file can also be used at a project level to capture necessary information and files associated with a project.	
Research Data Management	A concept used to describe the managing, sharing, and archiving of research data to make it more accessible to the broader research community. Research data management provides an opportunity for researchers to create a plan to ensure that their data will be organized, easily shareable with other researchers, and archived for long-term preservation and access.	