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# Research Data Audit Tool

This tool is designed to support researchers when conducting research involving human participants. It should be used periodically to ensure good data management and research integrity. It may be particularly helpful within the context of research supervision by helping research supervisors ensure that all participant data, and any personal data, is managed appropriately.

## Preparation

1. A suitable time and place should be identified for the audit to take place. The research team should have access to their research data (including personal data where relevant, such as consent forms). Paper copies of personal and confidential data should **not be** moved for the purposes of undertaking the audit, but rather continue to be stored as planned and the accessed as part of the audit.
2. All those involved in the audit should be familiar with the following policies:
   1. [The University policies on data creation, organisation, storage and sharing](https://library.port.ac.uk/research.html)
   2. [The Concordat to Support Research Integrity](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/topics/research-and-innovation/concordat-support-research-integrity)
3. Allow at least one hour for the audit and if necessary, schedule a follow-up audit for items that may become relevant later, or to review the action plan.

## Undertaking the audit

1. Work through the checklist with the auditor/supervisor addressing the questions. This is intended as a guide and may be adapted if it does not fit the specific project.
2. During the audit the auditor should see physical evidence of the research processes.
3. Create an action plan of any development needs identified, and issues that need immediate action.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date of Audit:** |  | |
| **Name of Researcher(s):** |  | |
| **Name of Auditor:** |  | |
| **Project Title:** |  | |
| **Ethics Reference Number:** |  | |
| **Anticipated data collection**  **start and end dates:** | *Start* | *End* |

For all/any of the below that have resulted in a change to the original protocol that was given a favourable opinion by the research ethics committee (REC), please ensure that an amendment has been submitted to the relevant REC.

**PLEASE ADD NOTES TO THE TABLE BELOW AND THEN ENSURE THIS FORM IS KEPT WITH THE RESEARCH RECORDS.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Study details*** | | | |
|  | | Have any changes occurred to the supervisory team, or collaborators on the study?  *If relevant for post-graduate research, has a UPR3 been completed?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | Has anything changed about where the research is taking place?  *Are the appropriate permissions and risk assessments in place?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
| ***Recruitment and taking consent*** | | | |
|  | | Has the inclusion/exclusion or eligibility criteria for who can take part had to change? | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | How are the signed consent forms being stored?  *Does this adhere to the University policy on* [*data storage and security while my research project is taking place*](https://library.port.ac.uk/w835.html)*?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | Show me the consent form for participant number *[X]*.  *Is the researcher able to easily retrieve the file? Is their storage system well organised?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | Does the version number on the above consent form match the documentation approved by the ethics committee?  *If not, has there been a substantial amendment? What has changed from the approved documentation?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
| ***Conduct during the study*** | | | |
|  | | Imagine a participant *[Ahmed Aziz]* calls you to say they wish to withdraw and have their data removed. They do not know their participant ID. Without deleting any actual data, show me the steps you will go through to resolve the situation.  *Does the researcher’s plan align with the ethics documentation? Would the researcher be able to identify the required data in paper and electronic form? Do they have a participant log stored in a secure way?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | Show me how the raw research data *[e.g. interview recordings; data collection forms; observation checklists]* are being stored.  *Are the data appropriately filed? Do they have participant IDs? Are electronic files encrypted if containing sensitive/personal data?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | If undertaking interviews, can you play me the first *[5]* minutes of the interview with participant number *[X]*. What are your reflections on your interview style?  *Is the recording well filed? Is the researcher following their protocol during the interview? Is there any feed forward that might improve future interviews?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | Explain what happens to the data between the point of collection *[e.g. if an interview is recorded on a device or a paper-based form is completed in situ]* and it getting stored and filed in its current location? If using an interview recording device – show it to me – are there any files currently stored on it?  *How is the researcher managing files in transit or on portable devices? Does this adhere to their protocol and university policies?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | Can you show me the risk assessment(s) that have been completed for the research activities you’re undertaking?  *Is there evidence of a risk assessment having taken place? Does it address the risks to participants and researchers as outlined on the ethics form?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | Are participants getting reimbursed/paid for their participation? If so, how are you administering this process?  *Is it in accordance with the ethics application form? Are personal sensitive details being stored appropriately? Is the process happening in a timely way?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | Show me how the research data are being stored. [e.g. interview transcripts; quantitative data on a spreadsheet ready for analysis]  *Has it been anonymised? Is it organised in an appropriate (legacy proof) format? Is it stored separately to personal identifiable data?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
| ***If the study has ended*** | | | |
|  | | Have research participants, public involvement members, participating organisations and any other relevant stakeholders who have supported the study been informed of the research findings? | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | Has an [end of study report](https://www.port.ac.uk/research/research-and-innovation-culture/research-ethics) been submitted to the research ethics committee? | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | How are any research data, that are being retained, stored?  *Is this in accordance with the University policies and ethics documentation? If relevant, how are data being shared?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
|  | | What is the plan for destroying data that are no longer required?  *Are personal data being handled/destroyed appropriately? Have all the appropriate data that need to be destroyed been identified?* | |
| *Notes:* | |  | |
| ***Agreed Audit Follow-up actions*** | | | |
|  | | | Date to be completed: |
| 1. |  | |  |
| 2. |  | |  |
| 3. |  | |  |
| 4. |  | |  |
| 5. |  | |  |
| 6. |  | |  |
| Add more rows if necessary | | | |