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**Parent Policy: Research Policy**

# Research Records Stewardship Guidance Procedure
# Appendix B: Research Records Classification Guidelines

| Office of Administrative Responsibility: | Vice-Provost (Information Technology) |
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| Approver: | Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Vice-President (Research) |

## OVERVIEW

Researchers may use this system to inform practice for handling their research information assets.

## PURPOSE

To provide a classification system for various kinds of sensitivity levels associated with **research records**.

## GUIDELINES

Researchers will determine the security and disclosure risk that applies to their research information assets.  This assessment should address records for both research and operational activities.  A research project will likely contain a variety of records with different risk classifications.

As part of planning their research activities, researchers must do a security and disclosure risk assessment impact of their work, and handle their research records to the highest standard based on that assessment.   Research records fall into one of four categories, and these categories are to be used in undertaking the risk assessment:

1. CLASSIFICATION OF RESEARCH RECORDS

   a. Unrestricted Research Records

      i. Description

      Research records containing information that is not considered a security or disclosure risk. Unrestricted information includes but is not limited to information deemed public by legislation or through a policy of routine disclosure and active dissemination.

      ii. Examples of unrestricted research records (this list is not exhaustive)

      - public research Information
      - research meeting agendas and minutes
      - background research papers with no copyright restrictions
      - description of a data collection instrument

   b. Protected Research Records

      i. Description

      Information that is available to authorized individuals for the purpose of research activities.  Information in this category is considered private and its disclosure would be considered inappropriate and contravenes acceptable norms.  The level of harm to the subjects of research or the institution, however, would be low.

      ii.  Examples of protected research records (this list is not exhaustive)

      - draft research proposals
      - research planning documents
      - the names and locations of employees working on a research project

c. Confidential Research Records

   i. Description

The disclosure of information in this category is considered potentially harmful to the subjects of research or could threaten the institution's competitive advantage, damage partnerships, relationships and reputation. A breach of confidential research records would cause serious harm.

   ii. Examples of confidential research records (this list is not exhaustive)

- research data with personal information
- third party information submitted in confidence
- the identity of the subjects in a samples frame or a population

d. Restricted Research Records

   i. Description

Research information that if released could cause serious harm to the subjects of research, society or the host institution.

   ii. Examples of restricted research records (this list is not exhaustive)

- research data with personal health information
- release of information for creating a deadly virus
- disclosure of the nesting sites of an endangered species

2. EXAMPLES OF RISK IMPACTS

  a. Unrestricted Research Records

   i. little or no impact

   ii. if lost, changed or denied, would not result in injury to an individual or organization

  b. Protected Research Records

   i. unfair competitive advantage

   ii. disruption to research operations if not available

   iii. low degree of risk if corrupted or modified

  c. Confidential Research Records

   i. loss of reputation or competitive advantage

   ii. loss of personal/individual privacy

   iii. financial loss

   iv. high degree of risk if corrupted or modified

  d. Restricted Research Records

   i. loss of life

   ii. extreme or serious injury

   iii. loss of public confidence

   iv. destruction of partnerships and relationships

   v. extreme risk if corrupted

3. QUESTIONS ABOUT CLASSIFYING RESEARCH RECORDS

If researchers are in doubt about how to classify their research records, they should consult with staff in the Vice-Provost (Information Technology) Office and/or the Research Ethics Office.

## DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use. [▲Top]

| Research Records | Research information assets supporting both research and operational needs.  This includes administrative information and records produced for analytic or evidentiary purposes.  Research records include those documents and records and materials captured by or for a researcher that are necessary to document, reconstruct, evaluate, and validate research results and the events and processes leading to the acquisition of those results.  Research records may be in many forms including but not limited to laboratory notebooks, survey documents, questionnaires, interview notes, transcripts, machine-generated data or performance outputs, recruitment materials, consent forms, correspondence, other documents, computer files, audio or video recordings, photographs including negatives, slides, x-ray films, samples of compounds,  and components of organisms. With regard to research involving human participants or animal use, research records usually relate to the data collected about the subjects of the research, but may also include genomic sequencing and similar genetic information about animals used in research. |
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## FORMS

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## RELATED LINKS

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