School of Applied Psychology

Data Ownership Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of a discussion about research collaborations, research training, and data ownership is to set out the rights and responsibilities of new and existing members of a research team. The School benefits and grows from research conducted by its members. In particular, HDRs and other postgraduate and honours students are important members of research teams. The most fundamental assumption of the present document is that the School expects all researchers to conduct themselves with integrity, and to act in good faith and in a collegiate manner. By its nature, research activity will produce intellectual property (IP). This will often be in the form of data, but new ideas and concepts are also a core aspect of research IP. Perhaps owing to the dynamic nature of the generation and modification of research IP, confusion can arise at different points in a research program as to the nature of ownership of different parts of the research. An early discussion will be a useful way to circumvent later problems by clarifying as much as possible the roles of each research team member. This document seeks to outline a process by which such a discussion can be had in turn with research team members. For many people, the best option will not be a stringently legalistic one and the below is an attempt to guide people towards a conversation that can hold them in good stead for the future of their work.

***This document is in two parts*:**

- The early part of the document discusses the principles underlying conversations regarding research IP.
- The latter part of the document provides an outline for an email to begin a data ownership discussion and provides examples of emails.

Special note: Is the project likely to result in commercially exploitable IP? If so, you should consult Griffith Enterprise right away and talk about this, including ownership and IP. This is one situation in which a more formalised approach to 'carving up' IP and all that that entails is probably wise!

As part of the presentation of the **process** we might use to start a conversation about collaboration and data ownership, we use a number of terms, such as **data**, **concepts**, **ideas**, **publication plan**, and **core research team**. These terms are defined in **Appendix A**. These definitions are purely for the purposes of discussion. We don't propose to mandate the meaning of words such as "idea" and "concept" for you!

The Process

The overarching principle is that researchers are collaborating with each other to bring projects to fruition by gathering data and ultimately writing this up into papers. A peer-reviewed paper remains the primary way to demonstrate ownership of an empirical concept, but there will be a number of

steps and smaller scale outputs leading up to a paper. Data, the key ingredient, costs both money and time and in turn collaboration leverages the power of co-operation. For these reasons, the input of fresh ideas into a project can maximise the impact of the original concepts and data. This dynamic situation needs to be managed by clear discussions and it is best if this is seen to be part of a process that began much earlier in the project than the decision to publish a particular paper. It is essential that this occur in a way that both is fair and feels fair. As well, time is of the essence, as data can become stale.

It is impossible to be prescriptive in regards to the many variations that may arise. However, by following a set of simple principles, the decision regarding who owns and/or may use what part of a dataset and for what period of time and for what purpose can be conveyed in an **email** sent to all relevant parties at the beginning of the collaboration. This email will then serve as objective evidence of the decision entered into by all parties. Different teams and researchers will have their own approaches to nominating who sends this email—some may send a group email co-signed by the whole research team, some may have the supervisor send this. The email is especially important when inviting students to collaborate with us by doing their theses in an area pertinent to our projects (this may include aspects such as: pre-existing data that is re-analysed; use of relevant IP in satellite or sub-studies and other forms). Any variations to this email, following the analogy of variations to ethical clearance, would ideally be framed as replies to all to the initial email. Indeed, it is best to see this email as the beginning of a discussion rather than an end in itself.

Naturally, the core research team must be consulted and must agree in writing on any changes to the original project. These changes could include: inviting new researchers to take part (e.g., content specialists, or methodologists, where the data requires their expertise); changing the nature of the participation of postgraduate or honours students in the project; or having to revise later parts of the project on the basis of clear early results).

As we know, in the behavioural sciences, research can take many different forms. Consider the following examples. Your research may fit into one or more of the broad categories represented below.

a) A research team is running a longitudinal assessment project. An initial core project team of 3 academics obtained the funding for the ongoing waves of data collection. There is a set of measures that are included in each wave and these are supplemented by extra measures added in consultation with the project team. In time, supplementary funding is obtained for specialised procedures such as obtaining and analysing blood samples. The concepts of the study are owned by the core research team. As additional researchers come on board, they contribute ideas to use the data that is gathered.

b) A “branded” and funded RCT is running. Aside from the original CIs, a few postgraduates join the project and perform tasks such as running the actual therapy/doing observational coding/running consumer satisfaction/running later follow-ups, etc. They obtain additional benefits, such as clinical supervision and/or training in specialised procedures. As well, they do PhDs, MCPs, Hons theses, respectively. The concepts are clearly owned by the core research team. Each additional idea might be contributed by an additional researcher.

c) A cognitive and a clinical researcher decide to collaborate on a novel problem and gather pilot data with a view to obtaining fund. The concept here is a collaborative one. These researchers need to consider what outputs are likely from initial work and who is to take the lead on these. Ultimately, as the work matures, they would outline a publication plan. As well, they would begin to consider what sub-projects could be assigned to research students or post-docs.

Composing an email

Points to note:

- Who is being invited to participate? (e.g., a postgraduate; another researcher with specialised skills?)
- What parts of the data are available to them? (e.g., Constructs A and B and the scales that measure them + all sociodemographics)

or

- What parts of the data are specifically off limits? It would usually be considered redundant to include both of these points. (e.g., no data from medical charts (beyond basic demographics) are to be accessed)
- Where are the data? (are they gathered? who gathered them? how are they to be gathered?)
- What expectations do the core research team have with respect to the participation?
    - authorship (best if pre-determined as part of publication plan)
    - alternative data gathering
    - timeliness of work and writing (this is often very important in external collaborations) - what is the alternative plan if it is not possible to extract timely work from key collaborators?
- What responsibilities do the core research team accept?
- What is considered to be a successful end to the collaboration (at least, this part of it)?
- What is considered to be a situation requiring external facilitation and who will be best to provide it?

There cannot be one standard email template that is applicable to all collaboration spanning the range from a single honours project to an external collaboration with an ongoing, funded project. Not all the above points need to be covered in every email and indeed this may not be desirable. Below are example emails for a few prototypical situations to inform those will need to compose their own. These emails incorporate many of the points above. When composing your own, be mindful of the nature and timing of the research collaboration, as discussed in this document, but try to be very clear about the roles, responsibilities, and data ownership issues that are pertinent to your situation.

Example emails:

Example A*-honours student joining a supervisor in their pre-established study*

Dear [name],

Welcome, it's great to have you on the team! This email will serve as a handy reminder of the way your work and thesis will fit into the broader project that I have been conducting.

As discussed, I have for some time been examining the relationship between Construct A and Construct B. The idea for your honours thesis is that we will gather data to assess additional predictors of Construct A. You will be working as part of a group. This means that when you gather data, there will be variables in there that will be part of someone else's honours or postgraduate thesis. However, for your thesis, you will only have access to the self-report data on the cognitive predictors of Construct A and not the attitudinal predictors or the interview data. Everyone will have access to the common data on sociodemographic variables.

After your thesis is submitted, we plan to submit the results in a manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal. We would be joint authors on this paper. However, there may be other members of the group whose data may be included or who might contribute in other appropriate ways and if so, they would also be authors and authorship order would be determined according to contribution.

I look forward to a fruitful collaboration. If you have any queries about the above please reply to this email by [date]. Otherwise we will agree that this email forms the basis of our collaboration. For the benefit of all, any changes to our collaboration will be discussed and updated by further email.

Example B*-postgraduate student joining a large, pre-established group study*

Dear [name],

Welcome, it's great to have you on the [ABCD] Project team! It's our understanding that you'll be working on Project data for your PhD thesis, under the supervision of [Dr A Supervisor], who is a Project team member. This email will serve as a handy reminder of the way your work and thesis will fit into the broader [ABCD] Project.

You will be examining the relationship between Construct A and Construct B. In order to do this, you will have access to data on these specific constructs from all current assessment waves. As well, you will have access to all sociodemographics in the project (for the convenience of all researchers, there are codebooks for the sociodemographics data set that specify exactly what variables are a part of this set). Please note, if, with the support of your supervisor, you wish to examine other aspects of the data, this may be possible but will need to be approved in advance by the [ABCD] Project team.

Your responsibilities with respect to the [ABCD] Project are to participate in the gathering of data for the 4^{th} wave of data collection. We envisage that this will entail X hours per week for Y weeks. You will need to attend training in specialised statistical procedures (or specialised data collection procedures etc). You will also need to attend monthly whole Project meetings at which you will

occasionally need to present your work in progress or discuss other aspects of the ongoing Project as appropriate.

As you and your supervisor progress towards a defined thesis proposal, you should consider drawing up a publication plan together. In this plan, you will outline the range of intended publications using Project data, the planned journal outlet and the likely authorship. As this is a collaborative project it is likely that you will be co-writing papers at least with your supervisor and probably with other project members. University and general scientific guidelines mandate how authorship can be administered and you need to be mindful of these. *[What if the supervisor changes…?]*

We hope that you find your time on the project fruitful. We are pleased to have you on the project and hope that we all benefit from our collaboration. If you have any queries about the above please reply to this email by [date]. Otherwise we will agree that this email forms the basis of our collaboration.

***Example C**-researcher with specialised skills joining group study*

Dear [name],

Welcome, it's great to have you on the [ABCD] Project team! It's our understanding that you'll be working on Project data and collecting and analysing fMRI data in the next wave of data collection in order to understand the neural correlates of Construct A. This email will serve as a handy reminder of the way your work will fit into the broader Project.

We will be providing, from [ABCD] Project funding, financial support for the fMRI data and RA hours to help with the analysis of these. As discussed, we will have funding for 30 participants. We need to have run these participants by [date] and their data needs to have been processed by [date] in order to meet the deadline of a joint presentation at the International Conference of fMRI Data in [city] on [date]. We will provide statistical support for the overall analyses but will require you to run and interpret the specialised fMRI analyses. As discussed, you will be first author on the conference publication. However, should you need to alter your time commitment in the next six months we have agreed that [Dr X] will take over as first author. Following the conference publication, we have agreed that we will jointly write up the findings to a high-impact journal, again with you as first author subject to timely availability. We hope to see a manuscript submitted six months after the conference and we will add this paper to our publication plan including authorship and timing. We are excited about what you are bringing to the Project and look forward to a fruitful collaboration. If you have any queries about the above please reply to this email by [date]. Otherwise we will agree that this email forms the basis of our collaboration. For the benefit of all, any changes to our collaboration will be discussed and updated by further email.

Appendix A

Definitions

Data refers to the empirical evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, that is generated within a research project. Some examples of quantitative data include, self-reports either in hard copy or via computer/online participation, physiological or biological measures, and archival data (e.g., criminal justice system, medical charts). As well, interview or other open-ended responses which may later be analysed through a variety of perspectives form the basis of most qualitative data. It is recognised that the range of data available in the behavioural sciences is very large and the above is not an exhaustive list.

Concepts are the original statements of the relations between constructs or the novel conjunctions of existing concepts that form the core of a new research project. Examples might be targeting a specific aspect of cognition in an anxiety treatment program, applying social psychological work on stereotyping to medical diagnoses, or applying trajectory analysis to a particular developmental issue. Although such definitions are inevitably fuzzy, **concepts** are best seen as the core ideas underlying a data set and likely to have been the main reason why a dataset was gathered in the first place.

Ideas are the statements of relations between constructs that spin-off the core concepts of a dataset. These may have been specified when the research was proposed but are also very likely to arise once the dataset is in existence. Often, **ideas** use parts of a dataset already in existence to test novel predictions form the basis of postgraduate projects.

A **publication plan** is a description of each paper or output (rationale; composition; likely target journal; authors, in order) that is expected from the project. The publication plan should be laid out in writing as close as possible to the start of the project. If the project is expected to accrue collaborators (esp., postgraduate and/or honours students) then it is best if a foundation publication plan is devised by the core research team in advance. Composed carefully, the publication plan can do much of the work alluded to in this document. The plan helps the researchers to focus on outputs early in the project. Very importantly, it should include a clear specification as to the order of publications (i.e., which, if any, need to come out before others). Publication plans may well change as the project proceeds and it is best to record this, along with rationales, in writing.

Special note: In situations such as the beginning of a collaboration between a supervisor and an HDR student, it might not be appropriate to devise a publication plan at a very early stage. This is a special case in which more weight is usually placed upon the HDR student developing novel ideas that will be the basis of their work. It may be important in such situations to outline concepts that may arise from pre-existing work of the supervisor and then to follow-up with a more formal statement such as a publication plan when the proposed methods and data of the student project are sufficiently clear.

The **core research team** is the group (this could be an individual) of researchers who came up with the original project upon which the studies are based. This would automatically consist of the CIs on a funded grant but could be an analogous group on an as yet unfunded project. One of the most important jobs of the team outside of coming up with the actual project and funding, is devising and

managing the publication plan (see above) and amending this as different members join the research team. Another important job is in mapping out the domain of the project. Presumably, the project must have multiple facets that make it necessary to have a team rather than an individual. These may include (without limiting the discussion), measures or data on particular constructs, studies using specific methodologies or lab techniques (e.g., experimental, field, or correlational) or particular syntheses. Whatever the facets of the project data, the core research group must early on outline who takes primary ownership of each part. Often, this will be quite apparent but it is always prudent to spell it out. Are there concepts which form the core business of the project that need to be reserved for the core research team; if so, detail these clearly. As well, there are undoubtedly parts of the project that are basic and standard and are essentially "property in common". These too should be spelled out.

Naturally, we must remember that the nature of collaboration, the respective roles of the collaborators, and consequently, the possible outputs, may change over time. Again, clear communication is essential. Where there have been such changes, the plans should be updated accordingly, including a brief rationale for each change, as this is often very useful if there are discussions about changes in future.