



# Managing and Archiving Research Documents

Summary of “Hantering och arkivering av  
forskningshandlingar – Handbok för forsk-  
ningsverksamheten vid Göteborgs universitet”  
(Managing and Archiving Research Documents  
– A Handbook for the Research Activity at the  
University of Gothenburg)



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

## Managing and Archiving Research Documents

During 2007-08, a project was carried out at the University of Gothenburg to draw up a method to manage and archive research documents<sup>1</sup>. A project group of approximately 20 researchers formed the hub of the project. This document is a summary of the results of the work. The full report is available at [www.rk.gu.se/arkiv](http://www.rk.gu.se/arkiv).

### Why archive?

There are two important reasons to archive research documents:

Firstly, it is a matter of quality. Well-organised research archives are a requirement of critical reviews, reanalysis and longitudinal studies. In the interest of protecting the good reputation of research, it is also important that it is transparent and can be reviewed as necessary.

Secondly, there are legal archiving requirements. As the

---

<sup>1</sup>Here, research documents refer to administrative project documents as well as raw data that have been collected, material for processing, scientific reports and theses.



University of Gothenburg is a governmental authority, it is subject to the national legislation on the right of public access. The regulations in the Archives Act and the National Archives (RA-FS and RA-MS) contain rules for the retention and disposal of data.

### **Status of research documents as public documents**

Most of the information managed at the University of Gothenburg should be considered as public documents. This means that the public has a right to look at the contents of the documents on request, except when there is an applicable paragraph in the Official Secrets Act. The regulations also cover research documents. No individual researcher therefore has the right to promise secrecy that is not covered by the Official Secrets Act. The right to look at public documents is tried legally by the Administrative Court of Appeal. If there is any uncertainty as to the status of a document, one of the University's lawyers should be contacted.

### **Registration**

Public documents submitted to the University of Gothenburg shall be registered without delay, with the

exception of documents that have a content that is temporary or of little importance to the authority. An example of such information is spam. Documents covered by the obligation of professional secrecy must be registered. Other documents must, as a minimum, be organised systematically for simple retrieval. The registration concept should not be confused with entry in the official register. Entry in the official register is a form of registration, and registration can be made in many different systems. Examples of systems used at the University of Gothenburg are DIABAS (case registration), AGRESSO (financial administration), PALASSO (staff administration), EKO (contract management) and GUP/GUPEA (Gothenburg University Publications and Electronic Archive). Registration may also be done manually on paper.

### **The following documents should be submitted to the relevant faculty office or equivalent for entry in the official register:**

- documents concerning the appointment of project staff
- decisions on the disposal or transfer of research documents between authorities



**The following documents should be registered in other systems at the University:**

- contracts concerning external funds (EKO)
- invoices and other financial documents (AGRESSO)
- staff administration (PALASSO)
- scientific reporting (GUP/GUPEA)
- PUL application (PUL register)

**The following documents should be stored at the department or faculty in systematic order:**

- documents concerning project planning and control
- applications and decisions on external funds
- applications and decisions on ethical approval, ethical animal approval and other applications for permission

- correspondence with sponsors, project staff, research persons, etc.
- information to researchers
- raw data from investigations and processed analysis material
- reports and theses
- financial and scientific final accounts

**Retention and disposal**

During the course of the research project, documents of temporary or little importance may be disposed of when they become obsolete.

Examples of such documents:

- Intermediate products (unfinished working material, drafts and concepts)
- Correspondence of a temporary or unimportant nature
- Copies and duplicates

Documents judged to have continued value for the future shall be saved

and archived<sup>2</sup>. This means that paper clips, plastic pockets and rubber bands should be removed from the material and the material should be arranged in archiving boxes and registered. For digital archiving, formats and standards that are public, open and supplier independent should be chosen, for example, XML or 8-bit ASCII SS-ISO 8859-1 for data and metadata, PDF/A for documents, TIFF/IT for images and MP3 for sound and MPEG-4 film. Documents that are not deemed to have any value for the future may be disposed of 10 years after publication, or 15 years for clinical testing of pharmaceuticals.

The motivation for the time limit is that it should be possible to review research results for a certain time. A special disposal decision must be taken before disposing of data (see the handbook [www.rk.gu.se/arkiv](http://www.rk.gu.se/arkiv)). The researcher should then contact one of the of the University's archivists and discuss the value of the material for the future. If disposal is then deemed

appropriate, the head of department signs the disposal decision together with the researcher. One copy of the disposal decision should be stored at the department and one copy sent to the faculty office for entry in the official register.

The primary reason for documenting and entering the disposal decision in the official register is that no one should later have to question why research material has been destroyed. It also gives the authority some control over which documents exist in the activity. If there is no disposal decision in the official register, the documents are assumed to remain with the individual researcher (authority).

### **Storage**

Public documents should be stored in a way that protects them from damage, destruction, theft and unauthorised access. Storage should be in an approved archiving room or special filing cabinets. When procuring a cabinet, it is important

---

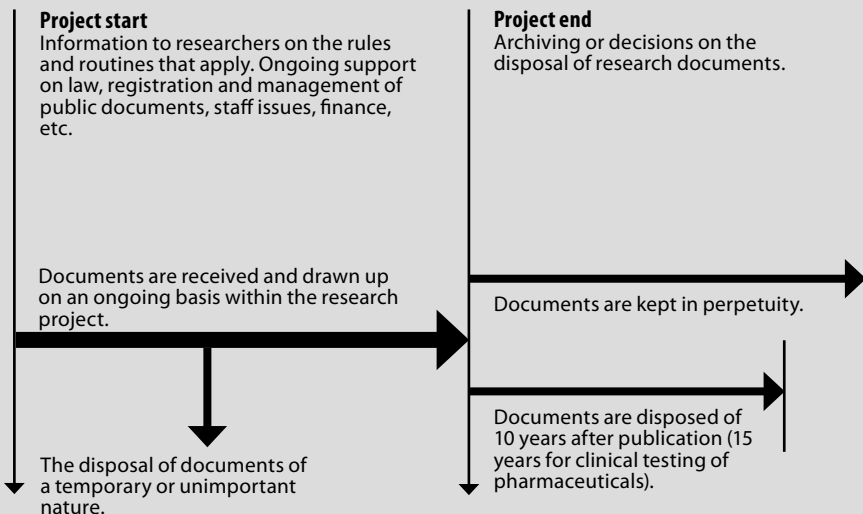
<sup>2</sup>According to RA-FS 1999:1, documents containing information on the purpose, method and results of a research project shall be retained, as shall documents that reflect the project plan with regard to, for example, financial conditions and external contacts as well as any changes to the project during the course of the work. Documents shall also be retained if they are deemed to be of continued value to the science or another research area, of great scientific-historical, culture-historical or biographical value, or of great public interest.

to consider that the cabinet should protect the contents from fire for 120 minutes. The National Archives, which is the supervisory authority for the management of archives by governmental authorities, does not approve 60-minute cabinets. In the absence of approved archiving areas, the minimum requirement is that the documents are locked away in a separate location.

**Delivery**

Research documents used in daily activity shall be stored in the relevant department and faculty for ease of access. Documents that no longer serve any practical purpose in the activity may be transferred, at an appropriate time, to the main archive

in Vasaparken. The archive creator is responsible for the transport of the documents. The University Board then takes over legal and financial responsibility for the material. After a few years, all documents are delivered to the Regional State Archives in Gothenburg for final storage. The University of Gothenburg has permission from the National Archives (RA-MS 2008:18) to submit research material on languages, dialects, folklore, names, and cultural heritage with linguistic links to the Archive for Dialects, Placenames and Folklore in Gothenburg (DAG). DAG is part of the governmental authority the Institute for Language and Folklore. The agreement is primarily concerned with research



*Methods for managing and archiving research documents*



at the Department of Ethnology and the Department of Swedish.

If a researcher wants to take research material to another authority, he/she should contact one of the University's lawyers. Consideration must be given to secrecy and the presence of personal details. Agreements on the transfer of research material between governmental authorities shall be retained by the department concerned and be entered in the official register at the faculty office for easy retrieval.

### **Responsibility**

Heads of departments and other heads (section heads/faculty heads/project leaders) are responsible for their departments' compliance with the set of rules that controls the management of public documents. Researchers are responsible for documents managed within their

own research.

### **Advice and support**

Questions concerning management and archiving of research documents are answered by a lawyer, registrar or archivist at the Vice-Chancellor's Office. The university's archivists can also offer some practical help at the time of archiving. For more information, see [www.rk.gu.se](http://www.rk.gu.se)



