



Indigenous Data Sovereignty

This guide has been developed by the Moondani Toombadool Centre (2024).

1. Purpose

These guidelines outline the principles and protocols for managing research data related to Indigenous peoples at Swinburne University of Technology (SUT), including Indigenous communities we engage with locally, nationally, and internationally. These guidelines align with Swinburne’s Research Data Management procedures and aim to ensure that the collection, storage, use, and sharing of Indigenous data respects and upholds the rights of Indigenous individuals and communities. They also consider the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies.

In addition to research data, these guidelines apply more broadly to other types of Indigenous data, such as staff and student personal information.

2. Scope

These guidelines apply to all Swinburne staff, researchers, students, and external collaborators involved in projects or activities using Indigenous data.

3. Definitions

- **Indigenous Data Sovereignty:** The right of Indigenous peoples to govern the collection, storage, ownership, and use of their own data, whether archival or contemporary.
- **Indigenous Data:** Information related to Indigenous peoples, including traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, demographic, and health data.
- **Indigenous Community:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities, as well as global First Nations communities.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Technology used to perform tasks requiring human intelligence, such as perception, decision-making, and language translation.

4. Key Principles

- **Recognition of Sovereignty:** Swinburne University acknowledges the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples over their data, including data processed through AI technologies.
- **Informed Consent:** Data collection involving Indigenous peoples must be based on free, prior, and informed consent.
- **Culturally Responsive:** Data practices must respect Indigenous traditions, cultures, and protocols.
- **Collaboration:** The university will actively collaborate with Indigenous communities in managing their data.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Swinburne University will maintain transparency in data practices and be accountable to Indigenous peoples, including Indigenous staff working at the university.

5. Procedures

- **Data Governance:** The governance of Indigenous data, including data-related activities such as AI applications, will be managed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the Research Office in partnership with the Moondani Toombadool Centre and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement).
- **Data Agreements:** SUT will develop formal agreements with Indigenous communities to outline terms for data collection, storage, and dissemination.
- **Integration with University Policies:** These guidelines inform all university research policies that involve Indigenous peoples and are aligned with existing research data management procedures.
- **Ethical Review:** All research proposals involving Indigenous data and AI technologies must be reviewed by both the Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC).
- **Capacity Building:** Support initiatives that enable Indigenous communities to manage, archive, and use their data as they see fit.
- **Data Security:** Implement robust data security measures to protect the privacy and confidentiality of Indigenous data.
- **Dissemination and Reporting:** Ensure data and findings are shared with Indigenous communities in accessible and culturally appropriate ways.

6. Protocols

- **Engagement:** Engage with Indigenous communities early in the project planning process to incorporate their perspectives.
- **Informed Consent:** Ensure Indigenous communities provide free, prior, and informed consent, with a clear understanding of how the data will be used.
- **Data Sharing:** Respect Indigenous communities' control over who can access their data and how it will be used.
- **Benefit Sharing:** Ensure that research benefits are shared with Indigenous communities, including opportunities for co-authorship and presentation.
- **Cultural Safety:** Ensure that data collection methods are culturally safe for Indigenous participants.

7. Responsibilities

- **Moondani Toombadool Centre:** Provide resources, support, and training on IDS to the University community, ensuring responsible use and engagement.
- **Research Office:** Provide governance of Indigenous data, including data-related activities such as AI applications.
- **Swinburne Staff, Researchers, and Students:** Adhere to the guidelines in all relevant projects and engage in continuous learning about Indigenous data sovereignty.
- **University Administration:** Provide institutional support and resources for implementing these guidelines.
- **Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC), Ethics and Integrity, Research Analytics Services, and Research Grants and Contracts:** Guide research processes and ensure compliance with the guidelines.

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Web swinburne.edu.au/strategy-initiatives/moondani-toombadool-centre