

S+PA
Workforce
Observatory

Sport and Physical Activity Workforce Observatory data deposit policy



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About the Sport and Physical Activity Workforce Observatory

The workforce observatory is the gateway to shaping the future of the sport and physical activity sector; through data-driven insights, bridging theory and practice, and fostering meaningful collaboration between academia and the sector.

The observatory provides access to the latest real-world data and cutting-edge research into the UK sport and physical activity workforce; helping to develop curriculums; future-proof organisations; inform policy development; support workforce management, development, and planning; and foster new research collaborations and interdisciplinary studies.

[Find out more about the observatory here.](#)

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the principles, processes, and standards governing the deposit of datasets into the Sport and Physical Activity Workforce Observatory Data Catalogue (hereafter the DataLab Catalogue).

This policy ensures that all deposited data are handled securely, ethically, and in line with legal, professional, and sector standards, enabling responsible sharing and long-term preservation of data relevant to the sport and physical activity workforce sector.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- any dataset deposited with the Observatory for the first time, including quantitative, qualitative, mixed method, or longitudinal datasets. Updated datasets will be subject to a streamlined quality assurance process
- data originating from academic institutions, public bodies, charities, professional organisations, private sector bodies, or individuals
- all stages of the data lifecycle, from submission and curation to storage, access, and reuse.

This policy covers data that maybe deposited once, cyclically, or as updated versions of previously deposited datasets.

3. Governance and framework alignment

This policy operates within the Observatory's wider Data Governance Framework and adheres to the SAFE Principles:

- Safe Projects: Data are used only for appropriate, approved purposes
- Safe People: Only trusted and trained users access data
- Safe Data: Data are treated and managed to protect confidentiality
- Safe Settings: Secure technical environments are used for storage and access
- Safe Outputs: All outputs are checked for disclosure risks before release

It is also aligned with:

- UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018
- UK Data Service Deposit and Access Frameworks
- CIMSPA Data Ethics and Governance Standards
- relevant international data protection laws for overseas contributors (where applicable).

4. Eligibility for deposit

Depositors may include:

- universities and research institutions
- government or arms-length bodies
- professional bodies and charities
- private sector organisations
- independent researchers.

Depositors must be the data owner or authorised rights holder, with authority to share the data under the terms outlined below.

Depositors outside these categories may contact CIMSPA to discuss eligibility.

5. Data acceptance criteria

The Observatory will accept datasets that:

- are relevant to the sport, physical activity, physical education, coaching, or workforce domains
- are of research, policy, or operational value to the sector
- are sufficiently documented to enable reuse and understanding
- comply with ethical and legal standards, including informed consent and anonymisation where applicable
- have a clear data provenance and ownership declaration.

Datasets containing personal or sensitive data will undergo a risk assessment and may be restricted to controlled access.

The Observatory reserves the right to reject deposits that pose ethical, legal, or quality concerns.

6. Submission process

The Observatory follows a structured 7-stage process to ensure secure, high-quality, and ethically sound data handling:

Stage 1: Data submission

Who: Researchers or data providers

What: Raw datasets, metadata, and documentation

How: Through a secure portal or API (both human upload and programmatic submission)

Requirements:

- Accepted formats – CSV, XLSX, JSON, XML, R, etc
- Mandatory metadata fields (title, creator, date, methodology, license)
- Upload via encrypted transfer
- Confirmation of ethical and legal compliance
- Consent statements (where applicable), including informing participants that data may be deposited in an open repository

Stage 2: Initial validation

Goal: Verify file integrity and completeness

Steps:

- Automated checks for file corruption and completeness
- Confirm metadata presence and formatting
- Verify license type and ethical compliance (consent, anonymisation)

Outcome: Dataset accepted for review or returned for correction.

If issues are identified, the dataset will be returned to the depositor for correction.

Stage 3: Quality assurance

Goal: Ensure accuracy, consistency, and ethical suitability

Activities:

- Run validation scripts (e.g., range checks, missing values)
- Human review for documentation quality, ethical suitability, commercial sensitivity, anonymisation quality
- Provenance review
- Disclosure risk checks

Outcome: Quality verified dataset ready for curation.

If issues arise, the depositor is asked to refine and resubmit.

Stage 4: Metadata enrichment

Goal: Enhance discoverability and interoperability.

Actions:

- Enrich metadata with controlled vocabulary terms
- Assign persistent identifiers
- Link related datasets, publications, or projects
- Interoperability mapping for external aggregators and repositories

Outcome: FAIR-compliant metadata record.

Stage 5: Repository ingestion

Goal: Securely store in the Observatory's repository.

Includes:

- Version control and preservation metadata
- Secure redundant storage
- Application of access categories (open, restricted, embargoed)

Outcome: Dataset ingested and governed within repository infrastructure.

Annual or updated datasets may follow a streamlined update workflow.

Stage 6: Indexing and cataloguing

Goal: Make data discoverable and interoperable.

Steps:

- Index metadata in the Observatory Data Catalogue
- Expose API endpoints for search and programmatic access
- Register metadata with external aggregators where applicable

Outcome: Dataset visible and searchable via the Observatory portal.

Stage 7: Publication and notification

Goal: Disseminate and support reuse.

Includes:

- Public landing page with citation and license details
- Notification to contributors and stakeholders upon publication
- Usage metrics and impact tracking
- Attribution to the data provider (unless anonymity requested)

Outcome: Dataset published and available for responsible reuse.

7. Data curation and access

The Observatory team will review all submissions for quality, completeness, and risk.

- Accepted datasets will be assigned a unique identifier (DOI) and published in the Data Lab Catalogue.
- Access levels may vary:
 - **Open data:** publicly available under open license
 - **Safeguarded data:** available under specific terms outlined in the [SAFE Principles Framework](#) to registered users
 - **Controlled data:** available only via secure settings and projects approved by the Sport and Physical Activity Workforce Observatory Board

The access category is chosen by the depositor and reviewed by the Observatory.

8. Retention and withdrawal

- Datasets are retained for a minimum of 10 years, in line with the UK research standards, unless otherwise agreed with data depositors.
- Depositors may request shorter retention, subject to discussion.
- The Observatory may perform migration to ensure long-term accessibility.
- Depositors may request withdrawal; such requests will be reviewed based on contractual, ethical, or citation obligations.
- Withdrawal requests will be processed within 30 working days, unless urgent ethical/legal reasons require faster action.
- CIMSPA may retain a preservation copy for audit, regulatory, or research integrity purposes.
- Updates and new versions may be deposited; the streamlined update workflow applies.

9. Responsibilities

Depositors are responsible for:

- ensuring data accuracy, legality, and ethical compliance
- removing or anonymising personally identifiable information where necessary
- providing accurate metadata, updates, and documentation.

The Observatory is responsible for:

- securely managing deposited data
- maintaining accurate metadata and version control
- enforcing access and use controls in accordance with the SAFE principles
- oversight of ethical/legal compliance
- ensuring no commercial confidentiality is breached through identifiable data access.

10. Breach and enforcement

Breach of this policy, or misrepresentation of data rights or ethics, may result in:

- withdrawal of data
- revocation of access rights
- notification to institutional or legal authorities where applicable.

Escalation process in case of breach or ethical concern:

1. Incident logged
2. Access paused
3. Depositor notified within 72 hours
4. Internal review by Data Governance Lead
5. Final determination and communication

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