It is important that principal investigators give careful thought to the issue of ownership of data.

Particularly members of staff who are utilising students as co-investigators should pay particular attention to the issue of coercion, if participation in the research project is part of a subject-related requirement, or if the research is embedded in a subject in some way. It should be clearly stated what agreement has been reached as to the role of the student (for example as a research assistant), and how this role is to be acknowledged in any publication of the research findings.

It may be useful to consider the following:

- Ownership depends on consent and contractual agreements, whether the data is identified or non-identified, whether the research is conducted in public or private institutions or public or private persons and so on.

- Where projects are undertaken as part of an organisational activity and undertaken by employees during their paid work time the data and results would generally be considered to belong to the organisation. When projects are paid consultancies the data and results become the property of the purchaser. The general understanding is that the same philosophy applies to academic research especially if it results in a marketable proposition – but patent law may help here.

- If students are conducting research in external organisations, they should not only seek permission for access to participants but also, state specifically what will be given to them in the final report. This information is also included on the Information Sheet for participants.

- Researchers should ensure that they negotiate, clarify and document ownership of all research databases with programmers, database designers, interested parties and co-researchers and comply with copyright and intellectual property laws and policies as they relate to databases.