



## Research Ethics

### Personal data – definitions & examples

Term	Definition	Examples
<b>Personal data*</b>	Data relating to a living individual who is or can be identified either from the data or from the data in conjunction with other information that is in, or is likely to come into, the possession of the data controller	Name, address, contact details, ID number etc.; however, a person can also be identifiable from other information, including a combination of identification elements such as physical characteristics, pseudonyms occupation etc.
<b>Personal sensitive data*</b>	Personal data as to - (a) the racial or ethnic origin, the political opinions or the religious or philosophical beliefs of the data subject, (b) whether the data subject is a member of a trade union (c) the physical or mental health or condition or sexual life of the data subject, (d) the commission or alleged commission of any offence by the data subject, or (e) any proceedings for an offence committed or alleged to have been committed by the data subject, the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings;	Medical records of patients, employment (HR) records, criminal records, immigration records, social security and welfare records, details of membership of a trade union etc.
<b>Data Controller*</b>	Data controller is the individual (researcher) or the legal person (University) who controls and is responsible for the keeping and use of personal information on computer or in structured manual files.	As an organization UCD controls all personal data collected by its staff and students. Researchers who collect and store data for research purposes are <b>data processors</b> on behalf of the university.

Term	Definition	Examples
<b>Identifier</b>	Any information which can identify an individual person.	Biological material that contain human DNA (i.e. blood, saliva, human tissue etc.), video or voice recordings, person's full name, contact details, date of birth, ID number , online login details etc.
<b>Terms listed under Q17 &amp; 18 of Application Form (HR1)</b>		
<b>Anonymous data</b>	Data was collected without any identifiable personal information (identifiers)	Anonymous surveys and questionnaires
<b>De-identified data</b>	The data from which the identifiers have been permanently removed. De-identification is an irreversible process.	Transcripts of an audio recording, which do not bear any reference to identity of the person featured in the recording; medical records with all identifiers removed.
<b>Potentially Identifiable data</b>	Data from which identifiers have been replaced with a unique code or a pseudonym; however the data can be re-identified through an existing <b>master sheet</b> or a <b>key</b> containing names and/or contact details of participants and linking them to their unique code/pseudonym used in the data set. This type of data can be re-identified as long as the master sheet/key exists.	Coded data linked to a person through the existence of a master sheet or a key.  Data gathered during focus group sessions (may be identifiable to fellow focus group participants).  Visual or audio data which include characteristic elements of a person
<b>Identified data</b>	Refers to personal information, which can link the data to a particular person through identifiers.	Personal records, medical records, video recordings featuring human faces, human biological material (blood, saliva, tissue) or any data that includes identifiers.

\*definition from the [Data Protection Commissioner's website](#)