

Boston College Office for Research Protections
Research Data Policy

ORP has a classification system for storing human subjects data. This 3-level classification system is designed to apply to the three types of human subjects data that we typically see at Boston College. The idea is that as the risk posed by the research project increases, so do the requirements for maintaining human subjects data.

If you have questions about the IRB requirements for storing and protecting your human subjects data, it is best to contact ORP. ORP works with [Research Services](#) regarding data resources. PIs are encouraged to contact Research Services of their [TCs](#) for more specific information on how to access and work with these tools.

| Level I | Level II | Level III |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Information that is de-identifiedInformation that is considered public informationInformation that is non-sensitive and benign (disclosure will not cause harm to human subjects) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Information that has identifiersInformation that is confidentialInformation that is sensitiveInformation that is protected by state or federal lawsPHI (Protected Health Information)Information that requires a data security agreement | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Information that is highly sensitive and the disclosure of the information would cause harm to human subjectsProtocols that require full board review would typically meet Level III classification |
| Data storage options: ➤ Departmental servers | Data storage options: ➤ Departmental servers ➤ RedCap ➤ Linux Cluster | Data storage options: ➤ Departmental servers ➤ We recommend that you also check with Research Services before submitting an IRB application |

Departmental Servers

In all situations, the preferred method of storing any kind of data is through the secure departmental servers. Please contact your TC or Research Services if you need help getting one set up for your data. Students need a faculty sponsor to use a department server. You can restrict permissions on these folders, indicating people on your research team who should be allowed to access the data. BC backs up these folders multiple times per day.

Google Drive

Google drive is no longer considered an acceptable place to store research data.

RedCap

[RedCap](#) was originally developed by researchers, for researchers. It was meant to function as a data repository. It can be used for data entry, creating surveys, and storing data. PIs can upload data from an Excel spreadsheet. BC's installation of REDCap is on a BC owned server behind the BC firewall. It is backed up regularly.

Linux Cluster

The [Linux Cluster](#) can be used for secure, larger pieces of restricted data that fall under license agreements. It sits behind a firewall at BC.