

Electronic Laboratory Notebook (ELN) Policy and Standards

1. Purpose and Scope

Electronic Laboratory Notebooks (ELNs) are secure digital systems used to document, organize, store, and share research records. Clemson University currently uses **LabArchives** as its supported ELN platform to replace or supplement traditional paper research notebooks.

This policy applies exclusively to the use of ELNs for research purposes. Use of ELNs in laboratory courses is governed by the applicable course syllabus.

An ELN may be used for research across disciplines, including laboratory-, field-, computational-, qualitative-, and/or theoretical-based work. Records created in the format of an ELN are considered official University research records and are subject to institutional, legal, ethical, and funding requirements.

Use of an ELN for projects involving regulated research data—including Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI), export-controlled information, sponsor-restricted information, or information not approved for public release—must align with Clemson University’s Research Security, Export Control, and Regulated Research compliance requirements. The availability of LabArchives or other ELN software does not, by itself, authorize the storage or processing of regulated research data.

Best practices associated with paper research notebooks, such as clarity, completeness, contemporaneous documentation, and regular updating, also apply to the use of ELNs, including LabArchives.

2. Eligibility and Access

2.1 Authorized Users

All Clemson University faculty, staff, and students are authorized to access LabArchives. Access is provided through Clemson University single sign-on credentials.

Users are responsible for using LabArchives in accordance with this policy and all applicable University policies.

Authorization to access LabArchives does not imply authorization to store or share all categories of research data. Users remain responsible for ensuring that data stored in LabArchives is permitted under applicable project, sponsor, regulatory, and institutional requirements.

2.2 External Collaborators

Clemson researchers are encouraged to use LabArchives to collaborate with researchers outside the University, provided that such use complies with applicable data use agreements, contracts, and sponsor requirements.

- Clemson researchers may invite non-Clemson collaborators to access specific notebooks or sections of notebooks as needed.
- Notebook ownership may not be transferred to a non-Clemson collaborator.
- External collaborators may be granted:
 - Read-only (“guest”) access for an extended period, or
 - Read–edit access for a limited duration (up to 60 days).

Researchers must ensure that external collaborators are granted access only to information necessary for their role and that all sharing complies with institutional and contractual obligations.

3. Data Management and Record Integrity

Research data and documentation recorded in LabArchives are University research assets and must be managed responsibly throughout the research lifecycle.

LabArchives supports good research practices by:

- Automatically recording dates, authorship, and version history;
- Retaining historical versions of entries and files;
- Preventing deletion or retroactive alteration of saved content; and
- Providing an auditable record of research activity.

Researchers are responsible for ensuring that LabArchives records clearly document:

- Data sources, methods, and analytical decisions;
- Data ownership and stewardship;
- Ethical approvals and compliance requirements;
- Data access and sharing conditions; and
- Retention and archiving expectations.

4. Secure Storage and Data Classification

LabArchives is a cloud-based platform approved by Clemson University for the storage of many types of research data when used in accordance with University policies and security standards.

4.1 Data Appropriate for LabArchives

Most research data, procedures, observations, and documentation generated at Clemson may be stored in LabArchives unless restricted by sponsor terms, export control regulations, federal cybersecurity requirements, or University policy.

4.2 Data Requiring Caution or Additional Guidance

Some data may be inappropriate for storage in LabArchives or may require prior review and approval by the Office of Research Compliance, including but not limited to:

- Certain categories of **Highly Sensitive data**, such as full Social Security numbers or credit card information;
- **Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI)** subject to federal cybersecurity requirements (e.g., DFARS, CMMC, or similar sponsor mandates);
Export-controlled information subject to U.S. export control laws and regulations (e.g., ITAR, EAR);
Sponsor-restricted or contractually limited data, including information designated as *not for public release* or subject to dissemination controls;
Federal Contract Information (FCI) or other pre-publication or work-in-progress materials subject to access or distribution restrictions;
Other regulated research data governed by project-specific agreements, Technology Control Plans (TCPs), or institutional determinations.

Researchers working with regulated or restricted research data must consult the appropriate Clemson offices (e.g., Export Control & Research Security, Research Compliance, or Information Security) to determine whether LabArchives is an approved storage and documentation platform for their specific project.

5. Notebook Ownership, Roles, and Continuity

5.1 Notebook Ownership

At Clemson University, any authorized user may create or own a LabArchives notebook. Ownership may be transferred to another Clemson user with a LabArchives account.

For regulated or controlled research projects, notebook ownership **may be assigned to a designated University office or role**, rather than the Principal Investigator, when necessary to support compliance with export control, research security, sponsor, or contractual requirements.

In such cases, the designated notebook owner is responsible for administering access, enforcing sharing restrictions, and ensuring alignment with approved TCPs and institutional determinations regarding internal and external data sharing.

As a best practice, notebooks supporting a research project or laboratory should be owned by the faculty member supervising the research. This ensures continuity of access and compliance with institutional data ownership requirements.

Clemson recommends one of the following approaches:

- **Preferred option:** The PI or primary faculty member creates and owns the notebook and assigns lab members appropriate user roles.
- **Alternate option:** Lab members create notebooks and transfer ownership to the PI or primary lab faculty member.

Notebook administrators may be designated to grant most ownership privileges, excluding the ability to transfer ownership.

5.2 Personnel Departure

Clemson University policy mandates that research data produced at Clemson remain with the University.

When a student, postdoctoral scholar, faculty or staff member leaves Clemson:

- Control of LabArchives notebooks remains with the research group and University.
- Departing personnel may not remove or transfer ownership of notebooks outside the institution.
- Copies of notebooks may be provided only with appropriate approvals.

Researchers who are leaving the institution must transfer notebook ownership to the appropriate Clemson faculty member, department head, or supervisor prior to departure.

6. Retention, Archiving, and Public Data Sharing

LabArchives provides durable digital records suitable for long-term retention and archiving.

6.1 Retention and Archiving

When research projects are completed or inactive, LabArchives notebooks must be retained in accordance with University retention schedules and sponsor or regulatory requirements.

6.2 Public Sharing of Data

LabArchives is **not** a public data repository at Clemson University. The University has disabled:

- Public notebook sharing;
- Generation of public URLs; and

- Generation of Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) within LabArchives.

Researchers wishing to make datasets publicly available should use appropriate disciplinary or institutional repositories. The Clemson University Libraries provide tools, repositories, and consultative services to support data curation, sharing, and compliance with funder requirements.

Data subject to export control, sponsor restrictions, or not approved for public release must not be shared publicly without appropriate review and authorization, regardless of technical platform.

7. Research Integrity and Oversight

LabArchives supports responsible research practices but does not replace active supervision and sound research management.

Faculty research supervisors are responsible for:

- Providing appropriate training and oversight in the use of LabArchives;
- Periodically reviewing records for completeness and accuracy;
- Ensuring protocols and documentation remain current; and
- Supporting accurate reporting and verification of research results.

Please also note that in the event of an allegation of research misconduct, data housed in LabArchives may be used as evidence for resulting investigations by the Office of Research Compliance in accordance with University policy. You can learn more about this at the following link: <https://clemsonpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=13847&PageId=474426>

Version Control

Version	Date	Description	Author/Office
1.0	3/6/2026	Initial policy release	Graduate School