

SERL Observatory project application overview 2025

- We recommend looking at the data documentation [here](#) before proceeding with the application
- Many of these actions can be done in parallel. They are listed below in the generally recommended order. Additional researchers can be added following project setup.
- We recommend emailing info@serl.ac.uk with any queries before beginning the process and we are happy to discuss details with applicants
- There are two routes available to access the SERL Observatory dataset (both detailed below) namely UK Data Service Secure Lab and University College London Dara Safe Haven. If you are not sure which route to take please contact info@serl.ac.uk

1. UK Data Service Route							
#	Action needed	Action required by	Format / task type	Estimated time for applicant	Estimated processing time	Detail/notes (if applicable)	Can be done in parallel
UK Data Service (UKDS) account set up							
1	Set up UKDS account	All team	Online form	10mins	n/a		Y
2	Create UKDS project, add SERL dataset	Project lead	Online form	15 mins	n/a	PhD students will need to add their supervisors to the project.	After 1
3	UKDS Secure User Agreement Form	All team	PDF form	15 mins	2-4 weeks (depends on institution procedure)	Authorised signatory at institution required, UKDS check form and signatory correct.	Y
Digital Economy Act (DEA) Accreditation and Safe Researcher training: DEA accreditation issued by Office for National Statistics (ONS) following ONS or UKDS training							
4	Application for Accredited researcher status	All team	Online form	10 mins	See 6 below		Y
5	UKDS/ONS Safe Researcher training	All team	Half day online training session	3-4 hours	See 6 below	UKDS 'Safe Researcher Training' recommended if possible	Y
6	Safe researcher training exam	All team	Online exam	1 hour	4 weeks for items 4-6	Turnaround time to book training, take exam, get results, UKDS/ONS to verify status.	After 5
Ethics assessments and SERL application: items in this section are assessed by UK Data Service team before being passed to SERL Data Governance Board (DGB)							
7	Institutional ethical approval	Project lead	Typically word form for institution REC	3 hours	3-4 weeks (depends on institution procedure)	Generally needed for research projects so not specific to SERL. Proof of REC approval required.	Y
8	SERL Data Governance Board project application form	Project lead	Word form	2-3 hours	6-8 wks for full UKDS triage & SERL DGB assessment	Key document giving details of data use. More detail here will ensure quickest turnaround.	Submit after 1-7
UKDS technical set up (post project approval)							
9	SecureLab Account Set Up form under "SecureLab Access" step in UKDS account.	All team	Online form/email exchange with UKDS teach team	20 mins	1-2 weeks depending on institutional IT dialogue needed	See UKDS technical set up tab. Please note additional requirements for working from home.	After 1-8

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2. UCL Data Safe Haven route

#	Action needed	Action required by	Format / task type	Estimated time for applicant	Estimated processing time	Detail/notes (if applicable)	Can be done in parallel
UCL Data Safe Haven Account Set Up							
1	Complete NHS Digital Data Security Awareness Course	All team	Online self-led course	1 hour	1 week	You will receive a certificate of completion. Please email to info@serl.ac.uk	
1	Set up UCL Data Safe Haven account	All team	Online form	15 mins	1 week	SERL team at UCL will set up this account and you will get an email when completed.	
2	Sign UCL DSH acceptable use agreement					As part of project set up	
3	SERL UCL User Agreement form	All team	PDF form	10 mins	2-4 weeks (depends on institution procedure)	Authorised signatory at institution required. Form signed by individual researcher and institution	
Digital Economy Act (DEA) Accreditation and Safe Researcher training: DEA accreditation issued by Office for National Statistics (ONS) following ONS or UKDS training							
4	Application for Accredited researcher status	All team	Online form	10 mins	See 6 below		Y
5	UKDS/ONS Safe Researcher training	All team	Half day online training session	3-4 hours	See 6 below	UKDS 'Safe Researcher Training' recommended if possible	Y
6	Safe researcher training exam	All team	Online exam	1 hour	4 weeks for items 4-6	Turnaround time to book training, take exam, get results, UKDS/ONS to verify status.	After 5
Ethics assessments and SERL application: items in this section are assessed by UK Data Service team before being passed to SERL Data Governance Board (DGB)							
7	Institutional ethical approval	Project lead	Typically word form for institution REC	3 hours	3-4 weeks (depends on institution procedure)	Generally needed for research projects so not specific to SERL. Proof of REC approval required.	Y
8	SERL Data Governance Board project application form	Project lead	Word form	2-3 hours	6-8 wks for full UKDS triage & SERL DGB assessment	Key document giving details of data use. More detail here will ensure quickest turnaround.	Submit after 1-7
DSH technical set up (post project approval)							
9	Access DSH using 2FA procedures outlined in email	All team	Online	30 mins	2 weeks to receive email from DSH	Online induction required to inform of password/login protocols etc.	N