



Heritage Science
Data Service

HSDS VRE User

Access Policy

Version 1.1

Document Control Grid

Title:	HSDS VRE User Access Policy
File name:	HSDS VRE User Access Policy Version 1
Location:	Website:
Status:	Final
Version:	1
Last updated:	29 July 2026
Created date:	29 July 2026
Review due:	July 2027
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Maintained by:	HSDS Service Manager
Required Action:	None

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1. Introduction

The HSDS Virtual Research Environment (VRE) is a secure, custom-built online platform that acts as a central digital workbench for researchers and teams. It provides high-powered computing available virtually through your own PC. The VRE is intended to help users bring together tools, and complex and large-scale data into one location.

The VRE is free to use with access and use granted through an application process and administered as part of a 'project'. A project could represent the research of an individual or a team, who work within a shared project space where files can be stored and shared. This policy sets out the criteria under which access to the VRE will be granted.

2. Who can apply?

The HSDS is established to serve the UK heritage science and conservation research sector. Heritage science is defined by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as: “the application of scientific techniques and technologies to improve our understanding, conservation, management and engagement with cultural heritage.”¹

This interdisciplinary field ensures that heritage assets remain safe to view, display, handle, and study. It is therefore critical to the continued economic viability of the heritage sector and the long-term preservation of the UK’s cultural legacy.

The VRE tools have been designed to support those working or researching in the field of Heritage and Conservation Science but the HSDS recognises that these tools may have wider potential and benefits. There is therefore no thematic restriction on who may apply to use the VRE.

3. Geographical scope & language for applications

The HSDS welcomes applications to use the VRE from anyone working or researching worldwide with the following exceptions:

- Applications will not be approved from workers or researchers based in regimes subject to current UK sanctions.²

All applications must be submitted in English.

¹ The the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC): [Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science \(RICHeS\)](#)

² See [Current UK sanctions regimes](#)

4. Chronological scope

The HSDS does not define a chronological range and welcomes access requests to work with data from all periods of human history, from earliest hominids to the recent past.

5. Commercial use

Commercial users, such as archaeological consultants or contractors, are eligible to apply to use the VRE, including to assist in the completion of commercial contracts as part of wider projects. However, individuals or organisations must not offer to undertake chargeable stand-alone commercial services which are dependent on VRE usage to third parties without prior written approval from the HSDS, such approval may be subject to additional conditions, and such usage would normally be subject to a fee. For example, legitimate free usage might include calibration of radiocarbon dates as part of a wider fieldwork project, but would not extend to offering a for-profit consultancy service for calibration of radiocarbon dates which was dependent on the VRE.

6. Access & Usage Terms & Conditions

All use of the VRE must be in accordance with the STFC Hartree Centre's [User Registration Terms and Conditions and Acceptable Use Policy](#). If data is imported from the [HSDS Data Catalogue](#), users must abide by the licence terms for re-use of those data as displayed in the HSDS Data Catalogue. All users must agree to these terms and conditions as part of the onboarding process. Note that certain software applications hosted within the VRE are subject to academic-only or educational licences. Commercial users are prohibited from using academic-licensed software for any revenue-generating activities.

7. Deposition of resulting datasets

All VRE users are required to submit a data management plan (DMP) as part of the application process. It is a requirement that all datasets generated through usage of the VRE should normally be deposited with HSDS or an [approved alternate repository](#) within 3 months of the completion of the analysis, and made available under an open licence. Release of datasets can be subject to an embargo period of up to two years, to be noted in the DMP and agreed as part of the application process. There will be no deposit fee for the deposition of datasets in HSDS which arise from non-commercial use of the VRE, provided such datasets are deposited before 31 August 2029.

8. Incomplete applications

No access will be granted when applications are incomplete.

9. Help and advice

For all help and advice in relation to this policy, please contact help@hsds.ac.uk.