

This guidance document is primarily designed for qualitative research projects that involve interviews and biomedical research projects that involve retrospective chart review; however, the principles outlined within this guidance can be applied to other types of research projects as necessary.

For questions related to this guidance document, please contact the Office of Research Integrity at irb@une.edu for assistance.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a master list?

A master list is a document that links participant or subject identifiers to a unique code, pseudonym, or ID number to identify the participant or subject's data. The use of a master is deemed a best practice in research when personally identifiable information is collected from or about participants or subjects.

For qualitative research projects involving interviews, the master list is typically used to record personally identifiable information collected about participants during the screening/recruitment process and assign each participant a unique pseudonym or participant ID number. The transcribed interview will be stripped of personally identifiable information and the participant will instead be referred to by their uniquely assigned pseudonym or participant ID number. See [Appendix A](#) for master list examples.

For biomedical research projects involving retrospective chart review, the master list is typically used to record direct identifiers (e.g., subject name, MRN) and assign a unique study ID number to each subject. See [Appendix B](#) for an example.

2. What should you know about storing and securing the master list?

The master list must be stored **securely and separately** (e.g., in completely different location) from the study data to prevent a loss of participant or subject confidentiality. Access to the master list must be restricted. Only study team members who have a legitimate need to use it during the research project should have access to it.

3. What is coded vs. de-identified data?

When the master list is in existence, the data is deemed 'coded'. The study data is not deemed 'de-identified' until the master list has been destroyed (because the existence of the master list allows an opportunity for the participant or subject to be re-identified).

Any data collected, whether paper (e.g., interview notes) or electronic (e.g., interview transcripts, data abstraction form, electronic filenames) should be identified by the participant or subject's unique code, pseudonym, or ID number as assigned in the master list in place of the participant or subject's name or other identifying information.

4. When should the master list be destroyed?

Best practice dictates that the master list be destroyed at the earliest opportunity during the research project.

For qualitative research projects involving interviews, the master list is typically destroyed after all transcripts have been verified for accuracy.

For biomedical research projects involving retrospective chart review, the master list is typically destroyed after data abstraction has been completed for all subjects.

Appendix A

Master List Example 1 (qualitative – interview)

Participant Name	Participant E-Mail	Assigned Study ID #
Alice Reed	areed@une.edu	Participant 1
Bill Johnson	bjohnson2@gmail.com	Participant 2
Ozzy Smith	ozzys464@hotmail.com	Participant 3

Master List Example 2 (qualitative – interview)

Participant Name	Participant E-Mail	Participant Place of Work	Participant Assigned Pseudonym	Participant Assigned Work ID #
Joe Brown	jbrown9@une.edu	University of New England	Billy	Institution 1
Shelli Peters	speters2@mac.com	Western Illinois University	Martha	Institution 2
Andre Parker	aparker@gmail.com	University of Nevada	Simon	Institution 3

Appendix B

Example Master List (biomedical – retrospective chart review)

Study ID	Name	MRN
1	John Bloom	12-34-51
2	Daisy Moore	22-74-17
3	Philip Green	16-98-03
4	Stanley Smith	23-65-18

Example Coded Data Set (biomedical – retrospective chart review)

Study ID	Sex	Age	Triglyceride (mg/dL)	HDL (mg/dL)	LDL (mg/dL)
1	Male	29	130	62	125
2	Female	51	155	52	157
3	Male	44	141	80	119
4	Male	>90	221	41	172