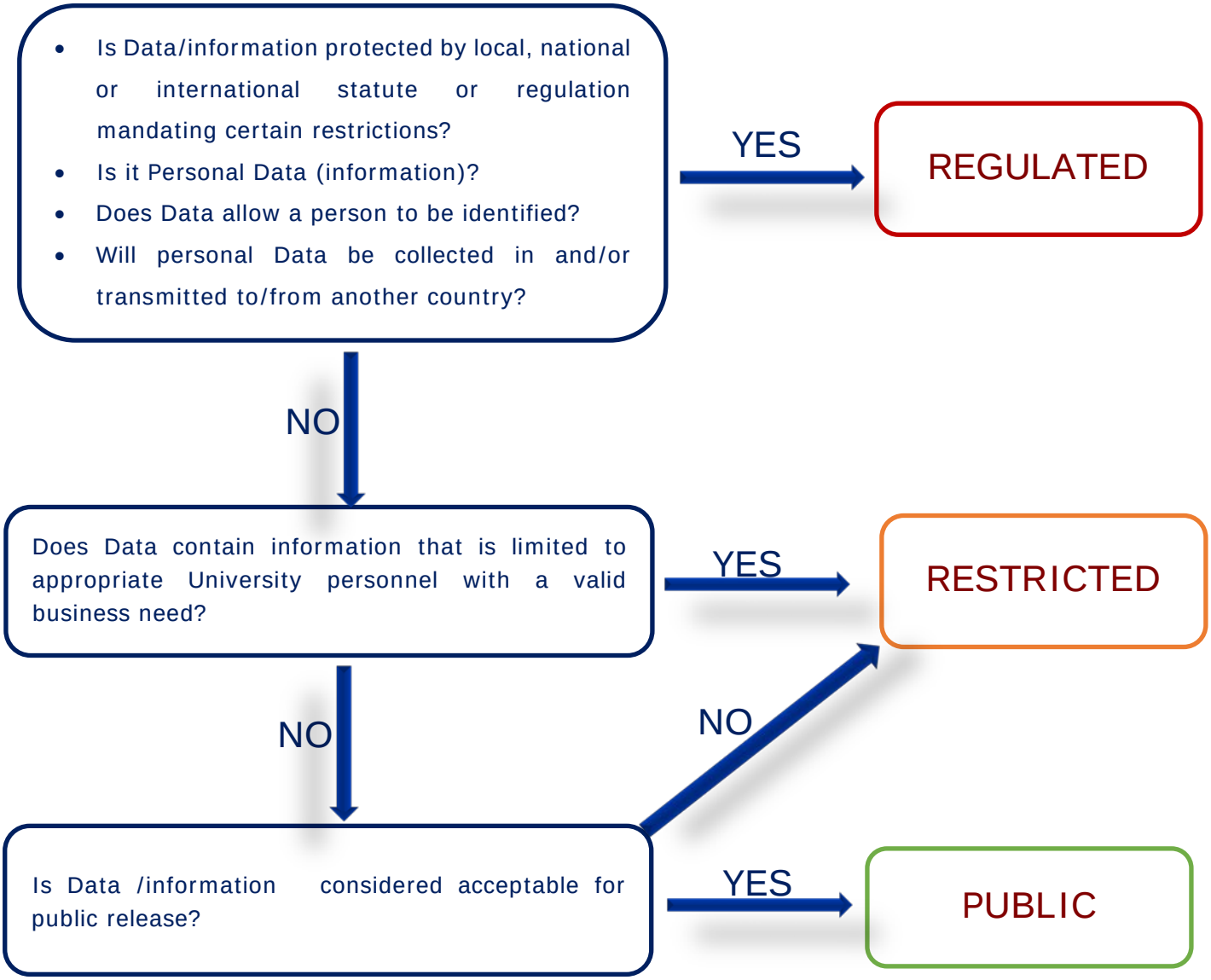
Practical Guide for Classifying University Data



Other Considerations

Intended for public disclosure?

You should ask yourself:

- Has the data come from an open, publicly-accessible source?
- Do I intend to publish the data 'as-is' in a publicly-accessible location?
- Is there anything confidential in the data?

Would the data present a safety risk?

You should ask yourself:

- If the data was accidentally disclosed, would it pose a risk to the data subject(s) personal safety? There are very many scenarios where research data could put personal safety at risk, but a few examples might be data containing:
    - The views of people living under politically unstable regimes and/or war-zones
    - Details of victims and/or perpetrators of crime
    - Interviews with domestic violence survivors

- If the data was accidentally disclosed, would it pose a risk to anyone else's personal safety? Again, there are many scenarios where this could be the case, but some examples are:
    - Risk to researchers or other staff from data disclosing too much specific detail of research into sensitive/emotive areas e.g. animal testing, counter-terrorism
    - Risk to users of university buildings from data disclosing too much detail of specific locations of sensitive/emotive research facilities

Does the data set include sensitive data?

You should ask yourself whether there is anything within the data set that makes it unsuitable for widespread access. This could include:

- Data that identifies individuals
- Subject matter such as:
    - Extremist or terrorist related material
    - Commercially-sensitive material
    - Video of traffic accidents

Does the data set include sensitive personal data?

You should ask yourself whether the data identifies individuals or enables identification of individuals to be derived and contains any of the following:

- Racial or ethnic origin
- An individual's political opinion (where not in the public domain?) or membership of trade union
- Religious, faith or similar beliefs
- Physical or mental health or condition
- Gender, sexual orientation etc
- Criminal offences, alleged criminal offences, convictions etc.

Are there any ethical or moral issues connected to the data?

Even where data is not protected by specific legislation, you should ask yourself:

- Does the data contain details that could be hurtful, distressing or offensive to individuals should it be disclosed? Examples of such data might be:
    - Specifics about cause of death of identified individuals
    - Sensitive personal data relating to deceased individuals

Is the data set subject to other contractual, legislative or regulatory conditions?

You should ask yourself:

- Is there a contract (e.g. data sharing contract) with specific restrictions on my handling of the data?
- Have we agreed that another organization may audit us as a condition of receiving the data?
- Is the data part of a commercial contract which might impose restrictions?
- Does the regulatory body of my research area impose restrictions on my handling of the data?