

Introduction

Many institutions are developing research data management (RDM) policies and guidance to assist their people in following developments in good practice and increasing expectations from funders and other bodies.

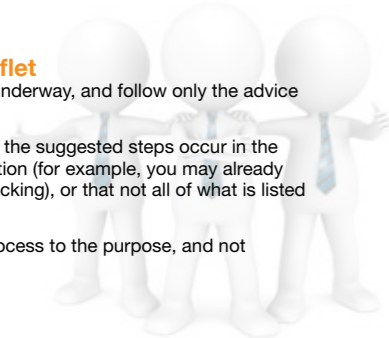
This guide suggests a number of steps that could be useful when thinking about formalising data management practices via a policy, whether at institutional, faculty or departmental level.

How to use this leaflet

Read it all before getting underway, and follow only the advice that works!

You may find that some of the suggested steps occur in the wrong order for your situation (for example, you may already have senior managerial backing), or that not all of what is listed here is relevant for you.

Remember to tailor the process to the purpose, and not vice versa.



List of Steps

1. Map out the existing regulatory framework
2. Develop a table of contents
3. Get managerial backing
4. Consult, draft, revise
5. Approve and implement

1. Map out the existing regulatory framework

Numerous different types of regulation are relevant to research data policy development. Depending on your circumstance, in descending order of criticality these might be:

- **Laws**, e.g. the Data Protection Act. These are ‘must-haves’ - failing to adhere to the laws of the land will leave the institution open to serious consequences.
- **Funder/publisher** requirements/expectations. Failing to meet these may jeopardise future funding bids. You may wish to concentrate on your major funders’ requirements first of all: the research support office (or equivalent) should be able to produce a list of the most important funders over recent years. Bear in mind that there may be funders from which your institution does not currently receive much funding, but whom you may be targeting for future funding bids. Your senior champion (see point 3, below) should be able to provide a strategic view here.

- **Related institutional policies.** Are there existing policies already covering data? Which units are responsible for implementing these policies? Do you need a new policy, or could you integrate research data coverage/guidance within an existing policy? If you need a separate policy, how do you intend to link them all together?
- **Professional/learned societies.** Some of these bodies have particular requirements for accreditation or recognition. It may be appropriate to factor these into your policy, or alternatively to address them in specific departmental guidelines.

2. Develop a table of contents

There’s little sense in developing detailed text at this stage, especially if you haven’t yet sought senior support. Instead, examine other internal policies to find out whether there is a standard shape and size for new policies. How long do your institution’s policies tend to be? What level of detail do they go into? What supporting materials or guidelines typically accompany them?

You’ll probably want to benchmark against peer institutions that already have policies in place. The DCC maintains a growing list of policies at <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/policy-and-legal/institutional-data-policies/uk-institutional-data-policies>

If there’s no standard structure, you might want to consider the ten sections on the next page as a starting point.

A sample policy template

- I. HEADER INFO: document title, institutional logo, etc.
- II. TITLE OF POLICY
- III. AIMS
- IV. PRINCIPLES
- V. SCOPE/COVERAGE: Institutional? Faculty? Departmental? Covering all research, or just externally funded research? Just staff, or staff and students? Does it cover non-digital data?
- VI. POLICY TEXT (N.B. consider numbering the paragraphs for ready reference)
- VII. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (list)
 - a. The institution
 - b. Principal investigators
 - c. Research assistants
 - d. Research support staff
- VIII. APPROVAL AND PERIODIC REVIEW: this may be performed on a regular basis, which may be externally defined, or based upon need. Include key dates, and list the changes in each revision.
- IX. FOOTER INFO: page number, version number, status etc.
- X. ANNEXES: (e.g.) definition of research data; excerpts from/links to relevant funder policies or expectations; list of related institutional policies (with links)

About the DCC

The Digital Curation Centre (DCC) is the UK's national centre of expertise in digital preservation and data management.

Digital curation involves maintaining, preserving and adding value to digital research data throughout its lifecycle. The active management of research data reduces threats to its long-term research value and mitigates the risk of digital obsolescence and data loss.

Developing a data management policy is a way to formalise processes and standards across the data management lifecycle, ensuring that all stakeholders in the research process have clearly articulated expectations and roles, and assuring funders and other bodies of a firm institutional commitment to good data management practice.

The DCC provides services, training and tools to help you and your institution with all aspects of data curation and management. We organise regular events around the UK and an annual international conference. For more information on the DCC and our activities, sign up for our monthly newsletter via our website, www.dcc.ac.uk

3. Get managerial backing

Find out your institution's approval route for new policies. Many institutions require policies to be steered through a committee approval structure, and this is more likely to succeed with a credible senior figure driving the process. (You might also wish to address this stage first, before thinking about regulatory detail and policy contents etc.)

In other institutions the process may be less transparent, but senior approval will almost certainly be needed nonetheless. Taking a ready-made case to your identified senior champion, together with a draft idea of the policy's proposed contents, may help to get them onboard.

Be aware that you may need to meet fixed dates in order to submit your policy to internal meetings which happen only infrequently, e.g. once per semester. Think about the timeline early in the development process. Your senior champion should be in a position to advise on areas where consultation might be necessary or beneficial.

4. Consult, draft, revise

- **Draft:** you might wish to capture requirements before you start writing the policy text, or you might already have a good feel for what's required and will be consulting with stakeholders with a view to finessing the finer points. So you can start this stage at either Draft or Consult.
- **Consult:** think about stakeholder groups. It is common for RDM policies and their underlying services to be developed by steering groups or task forces featuring researchers, research students (if covered by the policy), research support staff in the Library, the Research and Enterprise office, Computing Services, etc. It will often be wise to involve records managers and/or Freedom of Information officers, particularly if these roles intersect with existing, related policies. You may want to form an advisory, action or steering group earlier in the process.
- **Revise:** discuss any substantial suggestions with the senior champion, and make the necessary changes. (N.B. You might need to go through this cycle more than once!)

5. Approve and implement

When you're submitting your draft for approval, you'll probably want to accompany the policy with a concise covering document to brief the approving body on the implications of approval (or, indeed, rejection.) It can be useful to include facts and figures here, alongside a summary of competitor activity in this area, links to web resources, related procedures, and training resources. The DCC website (www.dcc.ac.uk) provides helpful information in each of these areas.

Post-approval, you'll want to continue to develop your supporting guidance and resources. These will typically change more frequently than the policy, being reviewed in line with changes in good data management practice or relevant legislation. You'll also need to raise awareness of the policy and its implications for different stakeholder groups (researchers, support staff, management, etc), training sessions and online materials.

Useful resources

- The Australian National Data Service (ANDS) has produced a useful guide to developing RDM policies, including a document template: www.ands.org.au/datamanagement/policy.html
- ANDS also ran a webinar on Data Management Policies (2012): www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnQK26QPTjE
- DISC-UK and DataShare (2009) "Policy-making for Research Data in Repositories: A Guide": www.disc-uk.org/docs/guide.pdf
- The DCC also maintains a Research Data Policy Briefing for the UK: www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/resource/policy/DCC_policy_briefing_2011.pdf
- For more detail on how to build the infrastructure and resources that underpin an RDM policy, see the DCC's How-To guide on developing RDM services: www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/how-guides/how-develop-rdm-services



DCC 'QUICKSTART' LEAFLET

FIVE STEPS TO DEVELOPING A RESEARCH DATA POLICY

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