L-Università ta' Malta

POLICY

Research Data Management Policy

POL-002-01

Approved by Senate on: 19.09.2025
Effective Date: 19.09.2025

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List of Abbreviations

DMP	Data Management Plan
DOI	Digital Object Identifier
PI/S	Principal Investigator/Supervisor
RDM	Research Data Management
UM	University of Malta
drUM	Data Repository of the University of Malta

1. Preamble

Research data generated at the University of Malta (UM) is a valuable institutional asset and the adoption of a Research Data Management Policy signifies the commitment to the implementation of Open Science principles and practices at the UM. Having a policy and a dedicated repository for research data, yields multiple benefits:

1.1 For UM:

(a) Collection, curation, storage, management, retrieval, re-use, sharing, archiving, preservation and access of research data generated by all UM researchers through its institutional data repository (drUM) in adherence with the FAIR Data Principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable).
(b) Enables the potential for indexing and monitoring the scientific output of the institution through international Open Archives Initiatives and search engines such as Google Scholar, Google Dataset, Figshare, DataCite, DataMed, Dimensions and PubMed LinkOut.
(c) Tracks the number of visits and metrics that are useful for institutional planning.
(d) Provides opportunities for the use and re-use of data for scientific purposes.
(e) Strengthens global collaboration and enhances the visibility of the UM on an international level.

1.2 For Researchers:

(a) Enhances the visibility of research.
(b) Facilitates the sharing of research data.
(c) Increases the usage and impact of research.
(d) Provides a centralised platform for collection, curation, storage, management, retrieval, re-use, sharing, archiving, preservation and access of research data.
(e) Secures a permanent link and a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) for each research data.

For these reasons, UM researchers are strongly encouraged to upload their research data on the UM Data Repository (drUM).

2. Introduction

2.1 Statement of Intent

2.1.1 The UM recognises research data as a valuable institutional asset which is pivotal for academic research and its contribution to society. To this effect, the implementation of a Research Data Management Policy is fundamental to ensure that research data is organised in a harmonised fashion throughout the entire research lifecycle which supports collection, curation, storage, management, retrieval, re-use, sharing, archiving, preservation and access of research data.

2.1.2 The UM also recognises that proper data management practices are crucial as they promote an efficient and effective research process which ensures the longevity and intelligibility of data in compliance with the required ethical and legal requirements. Furthermore, the preservation of research data, whether shared or not, is essential for maintaining research integrity and reproducibility of results. The sharing of data outputs can also help promote the work of researchers and foster future collaborations.

2.1.3 The UM is committed in ensuring that access to research data is *as open as possible and as closed as necessary,* and follows the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable) Data Principles, and promotes best practices regarding research data with the aim that it is:

(a) stored securely and preserved in order to ensure its continuing utility;
(b) appropriately identifiable, retrievable and available when needed;
(c) accurate, complete, reliable and coherent representation of the materials collected;
(d) kept in a manner that is compliant with legal obligations and UM policies;
(e) able to be made available to others in line with appropriate ethical, data sharing and open research principles, especially when the data underpins published research.

2.2 Scope

This Policy applies to research data generated by all who conduct or support research at, or on behalf of, under the auspices of the UM, hereafter referred to collectively as "Researchers" as defined in Section 3. All Researchers have a personal responsibility to contribute to the effective management of research data generated in accordance with the aims stated in Section 2.1.3 of this Policy.

3. Definitions

3.1 Data Management Plan

A Data Management Plan (DMP) is a formal document that outlines how research data is managed from the point of collection at the start of a research project all the way through to its analysis of results, and how it will be used beyond the original research project. Typically, a DMP will cover areas such as collection strategy, backup and storage of data, ethical and legal requirements, data sharing, data archiving, and data destruction (as may be applicable).

3.2 Data Repository

A data repository is a centralised archive which collects, preserves and when possible, disseminates research data. drUM is the UM's data repository, managed by the UM Library and is ISO 27001 certified. ISO 27001 is a globally recognised standard for Information Security Management Systems (ISMS) that helps organisations manage the security of their information assets.

3.3 Metadata

Metadata refers to informative data that explains and describes the characteristics, context and provenance of a dataset. To allow for findability, traceability and (re)usability, the metadata should follow the related FAIR Data Principles. This should at least include the name of the dataset's creator(s)/contributor(s); name or title of the dataset; date of collection or generation; date of publication; a unique and persistent identifier; a description of what the data contains; an explanation of how the research data has been created, collected or generated; a description of how it has been analysed, as well as, details of any licensing information, where applicable. This metadata provides other researchers with the information needed to understand, reuse and build further on the research data, as well as, makes research data more retrievable.

3.4 Principal Investigator/Supervisor

A Principal Investigator/Supervisor is a researcher with the overall responsibility for a research project, of any size, conducted for, on behalf of, or in association with the UM; or using UM facilities or funding. This responsibility can be delegated to another member of the research group, as long as this is formally done in writing by the Principal Investigator/Supervisor.

3.5 Students' Supervisor

A Students' Supervisor is the lead (first) supervisor who takes primary academic responsibility for guiding and supporting students during the preparation of their theses/dissertations.

3.6 Research

Research is a systematic investigation, such as research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to scholarly and/or generalisable knowledge. In this context, knowledge refers to research output that is published, disseminated, made available or retained so that it can form the basis of further study.[1]

3.7 Research Data

Research data is the recorded information that is gathered to answer the research question(s), which can be used to validate findings regardless of its form (e.g. print, digital or physical). This includes, but not limited to, quantitative information or qualitative statements collected by researchers in the course of their work by experimentation, observation, modelling, interview or other methods, or information derived from existing evidence. Research data may be raw or primary (e.g. direct from measurement or collection) or derived from primary data for subsequent analysis or interpretation (e.g. cleaned up or as an extract from a larger dataset), or derived from existing sources where the rights may be held by others. Research data may also be necessary for legal and/or regulatory compliance.

[1] UREC FAQs: Which activities are covered by Research Ethics & Data Protection Procedures? (https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/faqs/)

3.8 Research Data Management

Research data management (RDM) is a term that describes the organisation, storage, preservation, and sharing of data collected and used in a research project. It involves the everyday management of research data during the lifetime of a research project (e.g. using consistent file naming conventions which describe the type of data within the file, the initials of the Principal Investigator and date). It also involves decisions about how data will be preserved and shared after the project is completed (e.g. depositing the data in a repository for long-term archiving and access) and/or destroying the data after a specific time period.

3.9 Research Project

Any type of research conducted for, on behalf of, or in association with the UM; or using UM facilities or funding.

3.10 Researcher

A Researcher is the primary individual responsible for the preparation, conducting and administration of research under the auspices of the UM (e.g., Principal Investigator, Research Support Officer, UM Academic staff member, UM student), including anyone who conducts research for, on behalf of, or in association with UM, or using UM facilities or funding.

3.11 Sensitive Data

Sensitive data consists of special categories of data which require extra protection due to its potential for misuse or harm if disclosed which could lead to significant consequences for individuals or organisations, including financial loss, identity theft or reputational damage. Sensitive data includes, but is not limited to, racial or ethnic origin; political opinions; religious or philosophical beliefs; trade union membership; genetic data; biometric data (for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person); data concerning health; data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation; Personally Identifiable Information (PII); financial data, and confidential business information.

4. Policy Principles

This Policy sets out the fundamental guiding principles for effective research data management, thus ensuring, as much as reasonably possible, that integrity, accessibility and long-term value of scientific research endeavours are achieved.

4.1 Quality: Best efforts must be made to support the accuracy, completeness, authenticity and reliability of research data.

4.2 Research Data: Researchers are strongly encouraged to deposit their research data on drUM for preservation, and when possible, for consultation and reuse, as quickly as possible with an open data licence.[2] Data access should be as open as possible and as closed as necessary.[3]

[2] To explicitly allow for using, reusing and redistributing of the research data, the licence should conform to the Open Definition of the Open Knowledge Foundation. https://okfn.org/

[3] Balancing "as open as possible" and "as closed as necessary" https://www.cesaer.org/news/balancing-as-open-as-possible-and-as-closed-as-necessary-758/

4.3 FAIR Data Principles: It is recommended that research data deposited on drUM adheres to the FAIR Data Principles - data should be findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable.

4.4 Compliance: Rules and guidelines on complying with statutory, ethical, legal and contractual requirements relating to research data should be adhered to. Necessary measures should include, amongst others, respect for privacy and confidentiality, copyright provisions and the safeguarding of Intellectual Property Rights.

4.5 Planning: It is advised that a DMP is compiled for research projects that generate data considered as having long-term value, warrants preservation and shared when possible.

4.6 Responsibility: The Principal Investigator/Supervisor is overall responsible for the proper handling, depositing and, when possible, sharing of the research data on drUM. This responsibility can be delegated to another member of the research group, as long as this is formally done in writing by the Principal Investigator and accepted by the receiving party.

4.7 Accessibility: When possible, research data should be made available for consultation and reuse as quickly as possible. Published research data should include a statement on how to access and use any supporting data, documentation and related material. In the case of embargoes, the timeline when this data becomes available should be stipulated, if and when applicable. If and when possible, data uploaded on drUM in closed access should include a timeline indicating when and if it will be made publicly accessible.

5. Data Management Planning

5.1 In research projects that generate data that is considered as having long-term value, warrants preservation and has a potential for being shared, it is strongly recommended that a DMP is developed at the outset of the projects. The DMP serves as a guiding framework for managing data throughout the various stages of the research lifecycle.

5.2 DMPs are intended to address the collection, curation, storage, management, retrieval, re-use, sharing, archiving, preservation, data destruction, access of research data and the production of descriptive metadata to facilitate retrievability and reuse.

5.3 DMPs may require updating throughout the duration of a project. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator/Supervisor to determine if and when a DMP needs to be updated.

5.4 On completion of a project in which a DMP has been compiled, all research outputs, together with their location, are to be indicated in the DMP

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The UM:

(a) Shall be responsible for disseminating information amongst researchers on the requirements of this Policy. All Faculties, Institutes, Centres or Schools are expected to be proactive in disseminating these requirements within their respective communities, and encourage and facilitate compliance.

(b) Shall advise and support researchers on the implementation of this Policy and on the use of its research data management services and any related matters, ensuring adherence to the FAIR Data Principles.

(c) Shall provide advice, support, guidance and training to researchers on best practice in the creation, collection, management, and/or reuse of research data.

(d) Shall provide advice and guidance to researchers on the processing and management of personal data and special categories of data[4] in line with relevant legislation.

6.2 The Library:

(a) Shall provide and maintain a secure data repository - drUM, which Researchers are strongly encouraged to use to deposit and share their research data.

(b) Shall collect, preserve and, when possible, provide access to research data, via drUM, beyond the duration of a research activity and in accordance with specific retention requirements.

(c) Shall ensure that drUM supports methods for controlled access to personal data and special categories of personal data which must be protected from unauthorised access to safeguard the privacy or security of an individual or organisation.

(d) Shall provide support and training to Researchers on how to deposit and access research data on drUM.

(e) Shall provide guidance on the compilation of DMPs.

(f) Shall verify that the metadata submitted on drUM is compliant with international metadata standards and that descriptions accurately represent the research data being deposited.

(g) Shall be responsible for managing a website providing guidance for researchers on good data management practices.

6.3 Principal Investigators/Supervisors are strongly encouraged to:

(a) Ensure effective management of research data generated from a research project. This includes understanding and complying with the requirements of any relevant contract, consortium and/or grant agreement with the UM and/or external parties that includes provisions regarding the collection, curation, storage, management, retrieval, re-use, sharing, archiving, preservation and access of research data.

(b) Consider the compilation of a DMP for projects generating valuable data prior to the commencement of the research project.

(c) Determine if and when a DMP needs to be updated.

[4] For the purpose of this Policy, personal data and special categories of personal data shall have the meanings defined in the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation).

6.3.1. When depositing research data on drUM, the following steps are to be followed to support responsible data management and sharing:

(a) Assign and determine access and sharing rights for data deposited on drUM.
(b) Anonymise or pseudonymise sensitive personal data prior to being deposited on drUM.
(c) Assign an adequate data licence when depositing research data on drUM.

6.4 Researchers are strongly encouraged to:

(a) Develop a DMP, under the responsibility of the PI/S, for research data collected, processed, managed, stored, reused, accessed, and retained or deleted in line with this Policy and in line with other relevant UM policies.
(b) Maintain an accurate and comprehensive record of their research, including documentation of procedures for collection, processing, management, storage, (re)use, access, and retention or deletion of the research data. Where appropriate, this approach should include defining and documenting protocols, standards and responsibilities in any research project. Researchers are also advised to make use of identity recognised standards and to identify the processes and procedures used in the DMP.
(c) Collect, process, manage, store, re-use, access, and retain or delete research data with the appropriate security. This includes protecting confidential, personal and sensitive research data in accordance with legal and ethical requirements.
(d) Abide by licences or terms of use when using or sharing third party data.
(e) Provide research data in an appropriate digital format (i.e. in a format that is suitable for long-term retention), along with sufficient descriptive metadata on drUM in order to facilitate data retrievability and re-use.
(f) Provide a statement on how to access any supporting data, documentation or related material for data deposited on drUM.

Researchers must abide by licences or terms of use when using or sharing third party data.

6.5 Students' Theses/Dissertations/Research Projects/Long Essays:

(a) Where applicable, students and their Supervisors are encouraged to compile a DMP prior to the commencement of a research project. Research data collected, processed, managed, stored, reused, accessed, and retained or deleted are in line with Clause 5.4 of this Policy.
(b) Research data deposited on drUM must be in conformity with other relevant UM policies.
(c) Students are strongly encouraged to deposit data of enduring value generated from theses/dissertations/research projects/long essays on drUM, provided that endorsement by the related Supervisor is obtained in writing.

7. Related Policies

This Policy shall be interpreted in conjunction with other relevant UM policies, procedures and guidelines pertaining to research. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Open Access Policy
- UM Intellectual Property Policy
- UM Privacy Policy
- Policy regarding the Protection of Personal Data in Email and Electronic Communications
- UM Research Code of Practice
- UM Research Ethics Review Procedures

8. Guidance

The following UM entities can provide advice, support, guidance and training related to research data management:

- Library: https://www.um.edu.mt/library
- Research Support Services Directorate: https://www.um.edu.mt/rssd
- Corporate Research & Knowledge Transfer: https://www.um.edu.mt/knowledgetransfer
- Information and Data Protection Office: https://www.um.edu.mt/contact/opad
- Legal Services: https://www.um.edu.mt/legalservices
- University Research Ethics Committee: https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics
- Office for Professional Academic Development: https://www.um.edu.mt/contact/opad

9. Tools and Resources

Useful tools and resources for Research Data Management include:

- drUM: https://drum.um.edu.mt/
- drUM FAQs: https://www.um.edu.mt/library/openscience/rdm/drum_faqs/
- Research Data Management FAQs: https://www.um.edu.mt/library/openscience/rdm/rdm_faqs/
- drUM Copyright and Licences FAQs: https://www.um.edu.mt/library/openscience/rdm/drum_clfaqs/
- Research Data Management Toolkit: https://www.um.edu.mt/library/openscience/rdm/rdm_toolkit/
- Data Management Plans for Research at the University of Malta https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/research/urec/URECDataManagementPlan.pdf

Review Date:	19.09.2029
Target Audience:	Staff and Students
Access:	External
Policy administered by:	Academic Registrar
Policy Sponsor:	Director Library Services

Policy rendered obsolete on:

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Policy Document History

Version 1:	New Policy