Guideline on Handling Research Data at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf from 18 August 2022

Convenience translation: Only the German original (Official Bulletin of HHU no. 43/2022)[1] is binding.

Preamble

HHU recognises the fundamental importance of research data and the documentation thereof in maintaining high-quality research and scientific integrity, and strives to achieve high standards in this regard. HHU further recognises that correct and easily findable research data form the material basis of each and every research project. They are essential in ensuring the verifiability and reproducibility of research processes and their results. Research data offer long-term benefits for research and science, as well as the potential for extensive reuse and dissemination in society. Guidelines on research data management support researchers in handling research data and contribute to ensuring a sustainable research environment.

1. Definitions

Research data include all analogue and digital data which form the subject, documentation or result of research processes. They include both data generated in the course of the research and reused data, as well as the metadata which describe the research data.

Typical examples of research data include measurement values, image data, texts, corpora, audiovisual recordings, survey data, data on methods, microdata, simulations, source code or protocols.

Research data management (RDM) involves the collection, recording, description, processing, storage and provision of research data in digital research infrastructures. The aim of managing research data is to ensure the access, use, reproducibility and quality assurance of all research data. In particular, RDM is committed to the FAIR principles (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable)[2].

Researchers are all members of HHU who are active in research, including students, employees and PhD students. People who are not direct members of HHU but who use its facilities for their research projects are also classed as researchers. Guest researchers and collaboration partners are also expected to observe this Guideline.

2. Scope

This Guideline on Handling Research Data is aimed at all researchers at HHU. This Guideline should also be observed as far as possible in the case of third-party funded projects. Specific agreements with third-party funding providers relating to data management shall take precedence over this Guideline.

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[1] https://www.fdm.hhu.de/fileadmin/redaktion/Forschungsdatenmanagement/2022_Forschungsdaten-Richtlinie.pdf

[2] Wilkinson, M., Dumontier, M., Aalbersberg, I. et al. The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship. Sci Data 3, 160018 (2016). https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18

3. Legal framework conditions

HHU encourages free access to research data and supports its researchers in publishing data, while observing ethical and legal framework conditions, in particular to ensure the protection of personal data and intellectual property, as well as compliance with export control provisions, funding provider regulations and contractual agreements.

Data should be published on an open access basis and with public licenses as far as possible.

Software that is part of the research itself and/or serves the transparency and verifiability of the research should be made available for further use under a free license insofar as this does not conflict with any specific reasons such as the business interests of HHU.

4. Handling research data

Research data management is committed to the principles of good research practice. In particular, research data are stored in a complete, unaltered and reliable way.

The FAIR principles also apply, i.e. research data are findable, accessible, interoperable and, where possible, available re-use.

Changes to research data shall be made in a transparent and verifiable way.

At the earliest possible stage, research data shall be stored in a suitable repository or archiving system, which adds persistent identifiers to the data.

The minimum retention period for research data is ten years following publication of the data/corresponding work or completion of the project.

Intellectual property rights or conditions stipulated by research funding providers within the framework of applicable statutory and contractual provisions may necessitate longer retention periods.

Where research data should be destroyed after expiry of the retention period or for legal/ethical reasons, this shall be realised and documented in a verifiable way.

5. Responsibilities, rights and obligations

Responsibility for research data management during and after the project lies with HHU and its researchers.

a. Responsibilities of researchers

Researchers shall:

i. Handle research data in compliance with the principles and requirements of this Guideline.
ii. Prepare research data and associated documentation in a way that enables (where necessary controlled) access and proper deletion, also in the event that the researcher leaves HHU. This shall also include the agreement of procedures and responsibilities with regard to the handling of the research data, in particular in joint research projects.
iii. Plan the further use of the data, in particular after completion of the project. This shall also include the definition of usage and exploitation rights after the end of the project, as well as the allocation of corresponding licenses.

iv. Undertake to observe the principle of data minimisation when processing personal data to ensure the protection of the rights and freedoms of data subjects. If it is not possible to anonymise personal data due to the purpose of the research, other state-of-the-art measures must be taken to ensure this principle is observed, e.g. pseudonymisation of data. This must be ensured for the entire storage period for the personal data.
v. Plan and document the handling of research data, for example by means of a data management plan (DMP).

In the case of research within the framework of dissertations and theses, supervisors must make students aware of this Guideline and advise them on how to apply it correctly.

b. HHU responsibilities

HHU shall provide appropriate means and resources for research data management in the context of research funding, advice, infrastructures and employee training.

6. Validity and entry into force

This Guideline shall be updated every three years.

This Guideline shall enter into force on the day following its publication in the Official Bulletin of HHU, replacing the Guideline of 26 November 2015 (Official Bulletin no. 36/2015).

Düsseldorf, 18 August 2022

The President of

Heinrich Heine University

Düsseldorf,

Anja Steinbeck

(Univ.-Prof Dr. iur.)