DFG Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data

Research data is an essential foundation for scientific work. The diversity of this data reflects the wide range of different scientific disciplines, research interests and research methods. Research data might include measurement data, laboratory values, audiovisual information, texts, survey data, objects from collections, or samples that were created, developed or evaluated during scientific work. Methodical forms of testing such as questionnaires, software and simulations may also produce important results for scientific research and should therefore also be categorised as research data. The long-term archiving and accessibility of research data contributes to the traceability and quality of scientific work and enables researchers to carry on work begun by others. The Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany voiced its support for the long-term archiving of research data, open access to it and compliance with the conventions of individual disciplines in the "Principles for the Handling of Research Data", adopted in 2010[1]. The "Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data" put the framework stipulated by the Principles into a concrete form in the DFG's funding arrangements.

The following general guidelines apply for applicants submitting proposals to the DFG:

1. Project planning and submission of proposals

Applicants should consider during the planning stage whether and how much of the research data resulting from a project could be relevant for other research contexts and how this data can be made available to other researchers for reuse. Applicants should therefore detail in the proposal what research data will be generated or evaluated during a scientific research project. Concepts and considerations appropriate to the specific discipline for quality assurance and the handling and long-term archiving of research data should be taken as a basis. The relevant explanations must contain information about data types, discipline-specific standards (if applicable) and the choice of suitable repositories, if these are available for a given research area or particular data types. Details should also be provided on any third-party rights affected and preliminary planning for the data publication schedule.

2. Accessibility

Assuming that the publication of research data from a DFG-funded project does not conflict with the rights of third parties (in particular data protection or copyright), research data should be made available as soon as possible. Data should be made accessible at a stage of processing that allows it to be usefully reused by third parties (raw data or structured data). To make sure this is the case, it must be ensured that access to the data is still guaranteed when, through publication, the rights of use relating to research data are transferred to a third party, usually a publishing house.

3. Long-term archiving

In accordance with the rules of good scientific practice, research data should be archived in the researcher's own institution or an appropriate nationwide infrastructure for at least 10 years.

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[1] http://doi.org/10.2312/ALLIANZOA.019

The DFG offers the following assistance for the implementation of the guidelines:

1. Support and advice

The reuse of research data is playing an increasingly important role in nearly all scientific disciplines. At the same time, there are considerable differences between disciplines with regard to the current state of discussion and the available infrastructures. To help with the planning of research projects, information and suggestions for the handling of research data have been compiled here: www.dfg.de/proposal_process/research_data
A directory of research data repositories is available at: www.re3data.org
A summary of other, quality-assured infrastructures is available from the information portal RISources: https://risources.dfg.de

2. Costs for data preparation and for the use of existing infrastructure

Applicants may request funding for project-specific costs that arise in connection with a scientific project, for the preparation of research data for subsequent reuse and/or the transfer of research data to existing infrastructures as part of a proposal to the DFG. It is also possible to request funding for costs associated with the use of relevant infrastructures. Financial support is available for staff costs, project-related hardware and software, and usage fees.

3. Funding for the establishment and expansion of information infrastructures

Through the programme Information Infrastructures for Research Data, the DFG helps researchers to develop and implement structures for the improved handling of research data and repositories.
Further information you will find at: www.dfg.de/lis/en

The DFG makes the following appeal to the various sections of the scientific community:

1. Discipline-specific conversations

The handling of research data is largely shaped by the conventions of the different scientific disciplines. The DFG therefore calls on the various sections of the scientific community to reconsider their handling of research data and develop appropriate guidelines for the discipline-specific use of such data and, if appropriate, open access to it. Examples of subject-specific guidelines developed with the involvement of DFG review boards in the context of DFG funding can be found at: www.dfg.de/proposal_process/research_data/recommendations

2. Recognition of achievements in making research data available

The commitment and efforts of researchers to make research data available, for example the subject-specific further development of the discussion process or the technical possibilities of archiving, evaluating and networking research data should be given greater emphasis in the appraisal of scientific qualifications and achievements.

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