

HRB Policy on Management and Sharing of Research Data

Version 2.0

29 Jul 2025

For data gathered and generated in whole or in part from HRB-funded research, the following policy will be adhered to with effect from 1st of January 2020.

Introduction

The Health Research Board (HRB) supports and promotes research that will improve people's health, patient care and health service delivery. The primary output from the research grants funded by the HRB is often the data gathered and generated to support observations and validate findings. To ensure that this data is used to its maximum potential, data needs to be adequately managed from the earliest stage in the research process and should be preserved and made available for reuse beyond the original grant.

Good data governance and stewardship are fundamental to good research practice. The HRB supports the principle that research data should be Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR)¹.

This policy is intended to promote the responsible management and sharing of research data, and the software and materials that underpin its use, with as few restrictions as possible to maximise its value for research and for patient and public benefit.

This policy applies to all HRB-funded research where data is generated as a fundamental output of the research grant. Host Institutions who receive funding directly from the HRB are encouraged to align their own data sharing policies with the HRB's.

The HRB recognises that not all research data can be made open to maintain confidentiality and privacy, respect the terms of consent, as well as manage security or safeguard against other risks. For these reasons, the degrees of data openness may justifiably vary, including fully open, restricted / governed access or strictly confidential.

¹ The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship. *Scientific Data* (2016). <https://www.nature.com/articles/sdata201618>

Data in this policy is considered all research data, software and material outputs that underlie HRB funded grants.

Definitions

- **Research data²** are the evidence that underpins the answer to the research question and can be used to validate findings regardless of its form (e.g. print, digital, or physical).
- The primary purpose of research data is to provide the information necessary to support or validate a research grant's observations, findings or outputs.
- **The FAIR Guiding Principles¹** insist that all data be Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable.
- **Open research data²** are those research data that can be freely accessed, used, modified, and shared, provided that there is appropriate acknowledgement if required.

Policy Statement

Scope

1. Researchers are expected to maximise the availability of research data, and the software and materials that underpin it, with as few as restrictions as possible. As a minimum, the data underpinning published research should be made available to other researchers at the time of publication, as well as any other resources (e.g. original software, methodology or organisation of data collection) that is required to view datasets or to replicate analyses.
2. Applicants for HRB funding must consider their approach to managing and sharing expected data outputs at the research proposal stage in line with the National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment³.
3. The HRB requires a data management plan (DMP) supplemental to all approved grant applications where DMP requirements are specified within the grant call guidance.
4. The DMP will outline how the data for a specific grant will be collected, organised, stored, backed-up, preserved, shared, archived and disposed. It will outline legal and ethical requirements, the roles and responsibilities for data management and stewardship, including the co-ordination across partners, and for DMP implementation.
5. The HRB has defined a minimum set of questions that comprise a DMP and are required to be addressed. The HRB DMP template (accessible here: [HRB DMP Template](#)) is aligned with the Science Europe Core Requirements for Data Management Plans⁴.

² UK Research and Innovation (2016). Concordat on Open Research Data. [UKRI-020920-ConcordatonOpenResearchData.pdf](#)

³ National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment. (2019) [National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment - DETE](#)

⁴ Science Europe (2019). Practical Guide to the International Alignment of Research Data Management. https://www.scienceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/SE_RDM_Practical_Guide_Final.pdf

The HRB recognises that in some instances data cannot be made openly accessible, however it is required that all metadata underpinning the data must be made openly available in a discoverable and accessible manner. Justification for why data cannot be made openly available must be described in the DMP.

6. Researchers' approach to data management should be dynamic and DMPs should be updated throughout the life cycle of the grant. Researchers must ensure that their research outputs:
 - Are discoverable through quality metadata and use of searchable repositories,
 - Use recognised community repositories for data and other outputs where these exist,
 - Are citeable by means of a persistent identifier (e.g. DOI)
7. Host Institutions must sign a declaration ([HRB DMP HI Declaration Form](#)) that DMPs for grants have been completed in partnership with an institutional data steward or equivalent. The completed DMP and signed declaration must be submitted to the HRB as a primary deliverable (within 6 months of start date) for all grants. The DMP should be considered a dynamic, living document which is regularly updated throughout the grant's lifetime. A finalised version is required to be submitted with the grant final report. DMPs and signed declaration should be submitted to the HRB via DMP@hrb.ie, quoting the HRB grant reference number.

If Host Institutions fail to comply with this policy, the HRB will impose appropriate sanctions in accordance with the grant terms and conditions.
8. The HRB will take a proportionate approach to the assessment of DMPs to enhance key learnings and promote change in research data culture and practice.
9. Within grant applications, costs related to data management, FAIRification process, storage and archiving of research data in line with best practice of data management and stewardship and implementation of the FAIR principles that are incurred during the lifetime of the grant should be included. The HRB will not cover costs for the long-term preservation of data.
10. The HRB recognises and values a range of research outputs – including datasets, software and materials, intellectual property, policy influences as well as publications – in assessing the track record of researchers applying for funding⁵.

⁵ The HRB signed up to DORA (The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment) in 2018 which recognises the need to improve the ways in which the outputs of scholarly research are evaluated. [Read the Declaration | DORA](#)

11. For grant-holders, HRB will consider whether researchers have managed and shared their research data and underlying software and materials in line with our requirements, as part of the grant output reporting.
12. To ensure data-sharers receive full and appropriate recognition, HRB expects all HRB-funded users of research data to cite the source and to abide by the terms and conditions under which they were accessed.

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