

# Research Data Policy

of the University of Mannheim



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Contact person: Dr. Irene Schumm  
E-Mail: [forschungsdaten@uni-mannheim.de](mailto:forschungsdaten@uni-mannheim.de)

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## Preamble

The University of Mannheim is distinguished by its strong research reputation, excellent teaching and learning conditions, and robust interdisciplinarity among its core fields: economics and social sciences, humanities and law, as well as computer science and mathematics. In all disciplines, theory-driven, empirical, and quantitatively oriented research, along with the application and further development of empirical methods, play a crucial role. Thus, the competent and efficient handling of research data forms a fundamental basis for excellent academic and research performance among the university's scientists and students.

The University of Mannheim is committed to sustainability and social responsibility in its actions. This includes a responsible approach to research data that takes into account ethical and legal aspects as well as considerations of sustainability and reproducibility. Such responsibility is a prerequisite for transparent, trustworthy, and high-quality empirical research. Trustworthy science is of paramount importance as it forms the foundation for reliable knowledge, which in turn serves as the basis for informed societal discourse and development.

With this research data policy, the University of Mannheim aims to provide its members with guidance in handling research data and to establish efficient structures for research data management. The goal is a future-proof, institutional research data management system that effectively supports Mannheim's academic disciplines and contributes to the sustainable visibility and excellence of their results.

The policy is based on the general guidelines of the German Research Foundation (DFG) on the handling of research data<sup>1</sup>, the FAIR principles<sup>2</sup>, the guidelines for good scientific practice at the University of Mannheim<sup>3</sup> and the Open Access Policy of the University of Mannheim<sup>4</sup>. Subject-specific standards for handling research data<sup>5</sup> must also always be taken into account.

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<sup>1</sup> DFG (2015): Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data.

<https://www.dfg.de/resource/blob/172098/b08fcad16f1ff5ddca967f1ebde3a8c3/guidelines-research-data-data.pdf>. Accessed on 09.01.2024.

<sup>2</sup> FAIR Principles (o. J.): FAIR Principles. <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>. Accessed on 09.01.2024.

<sup>3</sup> Senate of the University of Mannheim (2023): Code of Good Research Practice at the University of Mannheim. [https://www.uni-mannheim.de/media/Universitaet/Dokumente/Forschung/Code\\_of\\_Good\\_Research\\_Practice.pdf](https://www.uni-mannheim.de/media/Universitaet/Dokumente/Forschung/Code_of_Good_Research_Practice.pdf). Accessed on 09.01.2024.

<sup>4</sup> Rectorate of the University of Mannheim (2017). Open Access Policy of the University of Mannheim. <https://www.bib.uni-mannheim.de/en/teaching-and-research/publishing-and-open-access/open-access-policy/>. Accessed on 09.01.2024.

<sup>5</sup> DFG (2023). Subject-specific Recommendations on the Handling of Research Data. <https://www.dfg.de/en/basics-topics/basics-and-principles-of-funding/research-data/recommendations>. Accessed on 09.01.2024.

## 1 Scope of Application

The research data policy of the University of Mannheim applies to researchers, lecturers and students as well as visiting researchers, guest lecturers and cooperation partners. Hereinafter collectively referred to as “researchers”. For research projects, specific agreements with third-party funders on data management have priority.

## 2 Legal Aspects

The assignment of intellectual property rights or rights of use to research data can result from a variety of legal sources and considerations in individual cases. These include copyright and other intellectual property rights, the employment contract or employment relationship, contractual duties of loyalty and care, funding, project and cooperation agreements, confidentiality obligations, data protection law, general personal rights, the rules of good scientific practice, especially when dealing with generative AI models, and academic freedom.

Particularly in funded research projects, which often involve researchers from multiple institutions, as well as in commissioned research, the rights of use are typically held by the institution to which the researchers are affiliated (in this case, the University of Mannheim). This institution makes suitable agreements with the other institutions and in consultation with the participating researchers regarding the rights of use. This also applies in the event that participating researchers change their institutional affiliation.

Insofar as statutory, contractual and other legal regulations do not conflict or take precedence, the researchers who collected the data are primarily entitled to use it. They shall make suitable (written) agreements on the rights of use of third parties at the earliest possible point in time.

The researchers who have collected the data decide to what extent third parties should be given access to the data, taking into account this policy and the guideline on good scientific practice at the University of Mannheim. In doing so, they consider the complex legal situation and inform themselves in advance about the relevant regulations, especially in the case of personal data or the use of commercial or other data obtained from third parties. Personal data must be pseudonymized and, where possible, anonymized, insofar as this complies with the relevant subject-specific research standards.

The University of Mannheim offers its researchers advisory services on all legal and ethical aspects of the creation and use of research data.

## 3 Handling Research Data

Research data should be handled on the basis of the FAIR principles, i.e. data should be findable, accessible, interoperable and, if possible, reusable. Subject-specific conventions as well as data protection and ethical aspects should be taken into account.

### 3.1 Project Planning and Data Collection

A responsible approach to handling research data begins with the careful planning of research projects in which data is created or used. The university recommends that you obtain information about the institutional framework as early as possible and, if necessary, plan the required resources in coordination with the central infrastructure facilities of the university. For suitable third-party funded projects, it should be checked whether material and personnel resources for research data management can be applied for from the third-party funder.

To ensure transparent research data management throughout the entire project lifecycle, the early creation of a data management plan is advisable. In addition, sufficiently detailed documentation of the data collection methods, the data preparation and analysis steps and the research data itself should be ensured. Standards, e.g. for metadata, should be taken into account as early as the planning stage and suitable persistent identifiers for data, methods and software should be used.

### 3.2 Publication of Research Data

In accordance with its Open Access Policy, the University of Mannheim explicitly recommends that its researchers make their research data and research software available to the global scientific community and the general public under an open license (e.g. Creative Commons). If legal or ethical reasons prevent unrestricted publication, sharing data with restricted access may be an alternative. In general, it should be ensured that no exclusive rights of use are granted when publishing research data.

### 3.3 Storage of Research Data

Research data that forms the essential basis of published findings or that is relevant for a large target group and/or can only be reproduced with great effort should be archived long-term in a trustworthy repository, provided that the legal framework allows this. Suitable options include the university's own repository, MADATA, or services such as the GESIS Data Archive or NFDI services. According to the university's guideline on good scientific practice, the standard retention period is 10 years after public access is established (or the project is completed). If the data is to be stored for less than 10 years, an appropriateness check with comprehensible documentation is required. If the data is archived in a repository managed by the University of Mannheim, it may be deleted after 10 years if further storage does not appear to make sense based on a cost-benefit analysis and taking into account legal, ethical and technical aspects.

Since carefully prepared research data can represent a scientific achievement in its own right, the University of Mannheim encourages its scientists to include it in a suitable bibliographic system of the University of Mannheim (currently MADATA), regardless of where it is stored and the degree of accessibility, and thus make it visible worldwide as a research output of the university.

### 3.4 Research Data in Teaching

The methods of handling research data (data literacy) should be appropriately integrated in teaching and training. The university recommends and supports the development and expansion of a corresponding range of courses.



## 4 Responsibilities

**Researchers** at the University of Mannheim are guided by this policy on handling research data. They are responsible for

- the legally compliant collection of research data, its secure storage and processing in accordance with established subject-specific standards;
- the comprehensive planning and documentation of the entire research cycle, including the tools and procedures used;
- the selection of suitable services for the long-term archiving and availability of research data, including the definition of rights of use for third parties through appropriate licenses;
- the appropriate integration of methods of subject-specific handling of research data in teaching and training.

The university's **infrastructure and service facilities** support researchers in implementing this policy by providing a comprehensive range of services and consultations. They are jointly responsible for

- coordinating the range of services and consultations on handling research data at the university;
- establishing and maintaining an information platform about these services;
- initiating updates and improvements to the research data policy as needed.

The **University Library and University IT** are additionally responsible for providing appropriate technical infrastructure to support the entire research data lifecycle.

The **University Library and the Center for Teaching and Learning** support faculty and students in developing and teaching data literacy to students.

The **faculties and research institutions** can set up further support services for their members if required. In this case, they are responsible for incorporating these into the coordination of the infrastructure and service facilities.

The **university administration** is committed to creating the necessary structural and technical frameworks to meet the requirements for research data management set out in this policy. In addition, it is committed to regularly evaluating and updating this research data policy.

## 5 Validity

On 26.06.2024, the Rectorate of the University of Mannheim adopted the research data policy, which comes into effect immediately.

## 6 Glossary

### **FAIR Principles:**

The FAIR principles refer to guidelines for the findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability of data and resources (e.g. software or methods). These principles aim to ensure that data is findable, accessible, interoperable across systems and reusable in order to maximize their utility in science and research. The FAIR principles focus on improving the management, integration and use of data to support scientific progress.

### **Research Data:**

Research data is information or records that are collected or generated during scientific research. This data can exist in various forms, such as text, figures, images or measurements. This also includes software used to collect, process and analyze data. Additionally, metadata is considered part of research data.

### **Research Data Lifecycle:**

The research data lifecycle encompasses all phases that research data go through from their creation to their potential archiving. This includes the collection, processing, analysis, publication, archiving and reuse of data. The lifecycle emphasizes the importance of structured measures along these phases to ensure the integrity, accessibility and traceability of research data.

### **Research Data Management:**

Research data management involves the transformation, selection and storage of data to ensure its long-term accessibility and reusability. Through structured measures throughout the research data lifecycle, the scientific quality of the data is maintained, access for third parties is ensured, and the traceability of the data is guaranteed.

### **Infrastructure and Service Facilities:**

Infrastructure and service facilities include all organizational and technical resources that support teaching, research and administrative operations. This includes physical facilities such as lecture halls, laboratories, libraries and computer rooms as well as IT services, network infrastructure, research support, administrative services and other support facilities. These structures play a crucial role in ensuring the smooth functioning of teaching and research and in providing the necessary resources to students, researchers and faculty.

### **Metadata:**

Metadata refers to additional information that provides context and descriptions of data. In relation to research data, metadata includes details about data collection, formatting and interpretation. It serves to improve the comprehensibility, traceability and reusability of data by providing a framework for its origin, structure and meaning.