

# Guidelines for the Handling of Research Data within the Max Weber Foundation

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2023

## Research data at the Max Weber Foundation

The Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad (Max Weber Stiftung – Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland (MWS)) is one of the leading agencies supporting German research in the humanities abroad. Functioning as a vital link between the host countries and Germany, they assume a significant role within the global academic community. The institutes are distinguished by, among other things, the diversity of focus of the research, the arrangement of the research projects with regard to duration, scope, methods and funding providers as well as the career stages of their scholars.

A central concern of the MWS is, in keeping with statutory stipulations as well as recommendations by grant providers and science policy bodies, to make the research results produced by its scholars permanently findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable on a low-threshold basis in accordance with the FAIR principles<sup>1</sup>. As a result, research results become both comprehensible and verifiable. Extensive research data management (RDM) that is structured from the outset is indispensable for this, the bases of which are described by these Guidelines. The Foundation-wide research data management (RDM) concept follows the following documents:

- Guidelines of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) on the Handling of Research Data<sup>2</sup>
- Act for the Promotion of Electronic Government Administration (Gesetz zur Förderung der elektronischen Verwaltung (EGovG)), Section 12a (Open data of the Federal Government, power to issue statutory ordinances)<sup>3</sup>
- The Foundation's agreement on targets with the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)) in the field of digital transformation<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson, Mark D., Michel Dumontier, IJsbrand Jan Aalbersberg, Gabrielle Appleton, Myles Axton, Arie Baak, Niklas Blomberg, inter alia "The FAIR Guiding Principles for Scientific Data Management and Stewardship". Scientific Data 3 (15 March 2016): 160018. <https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18>.

<sup>2</sup> See [https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen\\_dfg\\_foerderung/forschungsdaten/guidelines\\_research\\_data.pdf](https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen_dfg_foerderung/forschungsdaten/guidelines_research_data.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See [https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/egovg/12\\_a.html](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/egovg/12_a.html).

<sup>4</sup> Agreement on targets between the BMBF and the MWS 2021-2025, p. 3-5, Section II: "Digital transformation: developing infrastructures and new methods".

- MWS Principles on Open Science and Open Access in accordance with the signing of the Berlin Declaration<sup>5</sup>
- MWS Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice<sup>6</sup>
- The MWS sustainability concept, which makes far-reaching demands on digital research<sup>7</sup>

The procedures and responsibilities for the management of research data (RD) that result from these Guidelines are specified in greater detail in the "MWS Best Practice Handbook on Research Data Management"<sup>8</sup>. Research data are understood to be (digital) data that are created or analysed in the context of scientific work. In the humanities, these include, among other things, material sources (e.g. documents, inscriptions and/or their metadata), enriched or specially created forms of representation (e.g. texts, transcriptions, translations, visualisations, audiovisual information), knowledge collections (e.g. prosopographies, bibliographies, inscription database) as well as the underlying methodology (e.g. questionnaires, annotations, vocabulary) and software (e.g. programming code, algorithms).<sup>9</sup> For further definitions of terms, reference is made to the glossary in the Best Practice Handbook.

## Scope of application

These Guidelines together with the accompanying Best Practice Handbook are binding Foundation-wide and apply to all researchers of the MWS as well as all research projects (co-)financed out of MWS funds. It is incumbent upon the institutes to adopt in conformity with the statutory stipulations appropriate provisions regarding the RD arising from the projects. The state of affairs under Section 12a EGovG, according to which publicly financed research projects have to make their RD available via publicly accessible networks free of charge upon completion, must be complied with, as the data are collected within the scope of employment relationships using MWS funds and therefore fall under the publication requirement. Insofar as they operate within the scope of these Guidelines, the institutes of the MWS may adopt extended provisions for their scope of application.

## Handling of research data

The MWS and its researchers are committed to managing RD on a correct, complete, genuine and reliable basis. The integrity of the RD is guaranteed at all times throughout the research process. To

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<sup>5</sup> The MWS Principles on Open Science and Open Access, [work in progress, will be added in the following version].

<sup>6</sup> MWS Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice, based on the GSP of the DFG of 2019, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10228420>.

<sup>7</sup> The MWS Sustainability Concept <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10220844> (only available in German), in particular p. 7 et seq. therein.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://projects.academiccloud.de/projects/fdm-praxis-in-der-mws/wiki/fdm-praxishandbuch-mws> (so far only available in German).

<sup>9</sup> This definition is based on the DFG "Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data" (2015), p. 1, [http://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/antragstellung/forschungsdaten/richtlinien\\_forschungsdaten.pdf](http://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/antragstellung/forschungsdaten/richtlinien_forschungsdaten.pdf) as well as the Leibniz Institute for European History (Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte (IEG)), Mainz, Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data at the IEG (2022), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6396572> (only available in German).

ensure their interoperability, long-term readability and the connectivity of the Foundation-wide research to national and international research infrastructures<sup>10</sup>, open standard formats and generic or subject-specific standards are to be chosen. It is recommended that descriptive metadata be already linked to the RD during the research process. Insofar as legally possible, open and widespread licences are used to ensure re-use of the RD published. In the case of data, a Creative Commons (CC)<sup>11</sup> licence is recommended as standard; in the case of the source code, an OSI-approved licence such as the GNU General Public Licence<sup>12</sup> is recommended.

RD that are the basis of scholarly findings are published in a suitable repository unless this is precluded by copyrights or data protection rights, statutory stipulations, ethical aspects<sup>13</sup> or rights of third parties. Where there are understandable reasons for not making certain data publicly accessible, this is documented accordingly. It is incumbent upon the responsible project managers to select the RD to be published.

In keeping with Section 12a EGovG, the following features are of key importance for the decision on a suitable repository for publishing the data:

- infrastructure publicly accessible and free of charge
- guaranteed continuity of the offer
- possibility of open licensing
- unique referencing of the resources by means of persistent identifiers (PIDs)
- supporting of relevant metadata schemes
- integration into generic search infrastructures and aggregators

For RD generated within the MWS, the Foundation maintains with the publication platform [perspectivia.net](https://perspectivia.net)<sup>14</sup> a repository that meets the aforementioned requirements. For RD that are considered as data publication, the [perspectivia.net](https://perspectivia.net) editors select a repository corresponding to the requirements. In this case, the responsible project managers then initiate a referencing entry on [perspectivia.net](https://perspectivia.net). A separate publication platform is available for research projects with an editorial focus.<sup>15</sup>

## Legal aspects

When creating and handling their data, the scientists of the MWS observe all organisational, statutory and contractual stipulations of the MWS as well as the statutory provisions in Germany

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<sup>10</sup> At national level, reference is made in particular to the National Research Data Infrastructure (Nationale Forschungsdateninfrastruktur (NFDI)), at international level to the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and OpenAIRE.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/?lang=de>. Except where precluded for compatibility reasons, Creative Commons is, in particular, provided in the variant CC-BY-SA 4.0.

<sup>12</sup> The use of GNU licences is recommended: <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-3.0.de.html>. Regarding OSI cf. <https://opensource.org/licenses>.

<sup>13</sup> MWS Ethics of Research Committee Rules of Procedure, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10231163>. See entry "CARE Principles" in the glossary of the Best Practice Handbook. For further details, cf. German Data Forum (Rat für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsdaten (RatSWD)), research ethics. Recommendations on observing ethical principles in empirical research, 29 June 2022, <https://www.konsortswd.de/ratswd/themen/forschungsethik/>.

<sup>14</sup> See [www.perspectivia.net](https://www.perspectivia.net).

<sup>15</sup> See [www.qed.perspectivia.net](https://www.qed.perspectivia.net).

and in the respective host nation. This relates to legal aspects in particular; i.e. the Copyright Act (Urheberrechtsgesetz (UrhG))<sup>16</sup>, rights of use and exploitation, ownership of rights and data privacy in Germany (GDPR) and the host nation, but also ethical concerns are of key importance.

## Responsibilities

The MWS scholars conduct research data management in accordance with the stipulations of the Foundation's GSP, which are put in concrete terms by these guidelines. They bear the responsibility for the appropriate handling of their data during the whole term of the project. To this end, the researchers use as early as possible, but no later than at the beginning of the project, a platform for recording the needs and creating a data management plan (e.g. RDMO<sup>17</sup>). At the same time, the MWS recommends the creation of a personal persistent identifier (PID, e.g. via orcid<sup>18</sup>). In the ongoing research process, the institutes provide the IT infrastructure necessary for the daily handling of RD. Each institute designates a contact person as the first port of call for questions around RDM. The Central Office offers services and advice for Foundation-wide RDM. The responsibilities ensuing from these Guidelines are set out in detail in the document "RDM Best Practice Handbook of the MWS" and are continually updated.

## Validity

These Guidelines for the Handling of Research Data were adopted by the Foundation's Board of Trustees on 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2023. They are reviewed regularly, at least every two years, by the Central Office in coordination with the working group DH in terms of whether they are up-to-date.

## Current version of the Guidelines

Version	Publication	Comments/changes
1.0	30.11.2023	First publication, adopted by the Board of Trustees on 17 <sup>th</sup> of November 2023

## Licence

These RDM Guidelines are issued under the licence Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

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<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/urhg/UrhG.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://rdmo.maxweberstiftung.de/>.

<sup>18</sup> See <https://orcid.org/>.

# Citation

Max Weber Foundation - German Humanities Institutes Abroad, Guidelines for the Handling of Research Data within the MWS, version 1.0, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10225705>.

## Related documents

- Federal Data Protection Act (Bundesdatenschutzgesetz (BDSG)), <https://dsgvo-gesetz.de/bdsg/>.
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), <https://dsgvo-gesetz.de/>.
- DFG, Subject-specific Recommendations on the Handling of Research Data, 2015-2022, [https://www.dfg.de/foerderung/grundlagen\\_rahmenbedingungen/forschungsdaten/empfehlungen/index.html](https://www.dfg.de/foerderung/grundlagen_rahmenbedingungen/forschungsdaten/empfehlungen/index.html).
- DFG, Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data, 30.09.2015, [https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen\\_dfg\\_foerderung/forschungsdaten/leitlinien\\_forschungsdaten.pdf](https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen_dfg_foerderung/forschungsdaten/leitlinien_forschungsdaten.pdf).
- DFG, Guidelines for Ensuring Good Scientific Practice. Code, 2019, corr. version 1.1 04/2022, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6472827>.
- DFG, Handling of Research Data. Checklist for planning and describing the handling of research data in research projects, 21.12.2021, [https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen\\_dfg\\_foerderung/forschungsdaten/forschungsdaten\\_checkliste\\_de.pdf](https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen_dfg_foerderung/forschungsdaten/forschungsdaten_checkliste_de.pdf).
- Working Group Data Centres of the association Digital Humanities in the German-speaking World (Digital Humanities im deutschsprachigen Raum (DHd)) - position paper on securing the long-term availability of research data, Hamburg 2017, <https://zenodo.org/record/1134760>.
- forschungsdaten.info. The information portal in the German language relating to research data management.
- forschungsdaten.org. Information wiki around the handling of digital research data.
- Act for the Promotion of Electronic Government Administration (Gesetz zur Förderung der elektronischen Verwaltung (E-Government-Gesetz, EGovG)), <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/egovg/>.
- MWS, MWS Principles on Open Science and Open Access, [work in progress, will be added in the following version].
- MWS, MWS Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice, based on the GSP of the DFG of 2019, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10228420>.
- MWS, Sustainability Concept of the MWS, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10220844>.
- MWS, MWS Best Practice Handbook on Research Data Management, <https://projects.academiccloud.de/projects/fdm-praxis-in-der-mws/wiki/fdm-praxishandbuch-mws>.
- MWS, MWS Ethics of Research Committee Rules of Procedure, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10231163>.
- German Council for Scientific Information Infrastructures (RfII), "Definitions" report of the editorial committee to the RfII (RfII reports no. 1), Göttingen 2016, <https://rfii.de/?p=2039>.
- German Data Forum, research ethics. Recommendations on observing ethical principles in empirical research, 29 June 2022, <https://www.konsortswd.de/ratswd/themen/forschungsethik/>.