

Shaping a Research Data Management Policy through Researcher Engagement

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1. Introduction

Like many universities worldwide, Wageningen University & Research (WUR) has recently implemented a new research data policy. The aim of this new policy is to ensure that data are stored safely during research, and that after research, data are archived in a trusted environment.

Prior to the implementation of the new research data policy, the organisation had a (minimal) data policy in place. However, it was unclear to what extent this policy reflected existing data management practices by researchers. Regarding research data storage and archive, what did researchers do? What were their daily practices and their needs? And how could a new, more extensive policy relate to these needs, so that the implementation was most likely to be successful? Contact with researchers is important in setting up guidelines or regulations, especially where these will affect daily practices, as is the case with data management. For this reason, WUR decided to involve the organisation's researchers as much as possible in the establishment of its new policy.

This document outlines how the working group at WUR involved researchers in defining its new data management policy, and how it plans to continue this approach during the next step: communicating the policy.

2. Activities

Completed activities

1. Defining existing laws, guidelines and frameworks

Any data policy should be built on existing frameworks and regulations (e.g. the FAIR principles, the national academic Code of Conduct). These were therefore identified as the first criteria for the new policy: any regulations should be in accordance with these frameworks.

2. Defining the criteria for storage, archiving and registration

Further criteria were established for safe data storage, archiving and registration, and all were marked using the MOSCOW principles, i.e. as Must-have, Should-have, Could-have, or Won't-have. The outcome of this was an overview of which criteria were considered crucial to follow in data storage, archiving and registration (Must-haves).

3. Comparing the Criteria to use Cases' Data Management Practices

To ensure that the criteria would match the data practices and needs in the organisation, staff members from eight research groups were interviewed. Interview questions were based on the criteria. This resulted in an overview of how the criteria were (not) met by the use cases.

4. Combining the Criteria and Interview Results to Inform Policy

The storage and archiving practices used by the use-cases were used to inform the new policy. Those solutions that did meet the Must-have criteria were marked as 'mandatory' or 'allowed' in the new policy. Others were listed in the policy as possible solutions, if these would be approved by the Data Management Support team. This way, the guidelines covered all storage and archiving types mentioned in the interviews, thereby closely relating to researchers' data management practices.

Planned activities

Active communication about the new policy is planned for the second half of 2018. The plan is to continue the involvement with researchers to ensure that the roll-out of the policy goes as smoothly

as possible. We plan to conduct another series of interviews with researchers. The aim of this is to show other research groups examples of how the new regulations are already met throughout the organisation, or how groups are working towards meeting them. The interviews will be recorded on video, and snippets of these will be used to create one short film. In addition, blog posts based on the individual interviews will be written.

The planned activities are listed below, together with the time and budget required for them.

Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Conduct and record interviews		Create film	Distribute film, post blog posts	
We intend to take two months to conduct interviews with researchers. The aim of these is to discuss the policy and especially how the researcher/group currently meets the regulations. The interview should not be too heavily focused on the 'musts', but rather on showing that the policy is realistic and that it encourages good practices. Interviews will be professionally recorded.		The plan is to make one short film about data management practices throughout the organisation, in relation to the policy. The message of this film should be that the new policy is realistic and stimulates good data management practices, and while it can be challenging, many research groups are doing well in meeting the new regulations.	The film will be linked to on various internal and external channels. Blog posts will also be written about individual interviews, highlighting use cases and describing how their data management practices (will soon) meet the new policy. An example can be found here – more will be written based on the interviews in Aug./Sept.	
£ 850		£ 900	No costs	

Total: £ 1,750

3. Evaluation criteria

- feasibility: completed activities have proven to be feasible: a relatively small number of interviews have directly informed our policy. This indicates the planned follow-up interviews are feasible too.
- impact: the completed activities have led to an implemented policy that closely relates to researchers' data practices, thus have had significant impact already. We expect that the interview-based film will have a considerable level of impact, for it shows researchers how the policy is being dealt with by their peers.
- transferability: these activities can be carried out at any institution.
- value for money: considering the expected impact of the film, we expect that this investment will lead to a wider familiarity with the policy and an openness towards it; we are convinced that this is good value for money.

4. Beneficiaries

The planned communication has two clear beneficiaries:

1. Researchers at WUR, who can learn from how others are working towards meeting the policy.
2. The Data Management Support team, who can stay close to the researchers thanks to these interviews, learn about their practices and offer support, and make themselves visible to researchers through these films and blog posts.