VU University Amsterdam – Research Data Management Policy

Introduction

VU University is strongly committed to the accessibility of research output, i.e. publications and data[1]. They are important to the visibility, verifiability and reusability of research[2].

This policy document summarizes the university-wide principles for careful handling of research data. At the level of the faculties, these principles are developed into faculty guidelines that comply with central policy and cover all departments and research institutes.

This document shows how the responsibilities in respect of research data are invested within VU University based on the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice, the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) Assessments for Research in the Netherlands 2015-2021, and the relevant legislation. In addition, it shows the facilities provided by VU University for managing research data. The document may be updated as developments require. It is complemented by an implementation plan.

Purpose of the Research Data Management Policy

This policy is intended to promote:

1. the careful handling of research data by researchers in order to:
    - enhance the impact of their research,
    - demonstrate the scientific integrity of their research,
    - comply with legal requirements, codes of conduct and funding bodies' demands regarding research data management;
2. awareness of the importance of research data management among researchers;
3. clarity about the responsibilities regarding research data management among researchers.

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[1] Research data are defined as recorded information that is necessary to support scientific research. Depending on the discipline concerned, this may involve, for example, text, images, sound, spreadsheets, databases, statistical data, geographic data, etc. Non-digitizable research data are outside the scope of this policy.

[2] VU University Stategic Plan Vision 2015-2020, p. 33.

Policy principles

1. VU University is strongly committed to the accessibility of research output, i.e. publications and data. They are important to the visibility, verifiability and reusability of research.

2. VU University subscribes to the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice, drawn up by Association of Dutch Universities (VSNU). On the subject of handling research data, this code includes the following clauses:
   - 2.1 The research data have indeed been collected. The statistical methods employed are pertinent to the acquired data. The selective omission of research results is reported and justified.
   - 3.2 The quality of data collection, data entry, data storage and data processing is guarded closely. All steps taken must be properly reported and their execution must be properly monitored (lab journals, progress reports, documentation of arrangements and decisions, etc.).
   - 3.3 Raw research data are stored for at least ten years. These data are made available to other scientific practitioners upon request, unless legal requirements dictate otherwise.
   - 3.4. Raw research data are archived in such a way that they can be consulted at all times at a minimum expense of time and effort.

3. Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) for Research Assessments in the Netherlands 2015-2021:
   - The assessment committee considers the research unit's policy on research integrity and the way in which violations of such integrity are prevented. It is interested in how the unit deals with research data, data management and integrity.
   - Self-assessment includes explaining how the unit deals with and stores raw and processed data.

4. Research complies with all relevant legislation and regulations, including:
   - the Personal Data Protection Act (Code of Conduct for Research & Statistics);
   - the Medical Scientific Research with People Act; - the Code of Conduct for Health Research; - the Experiments on Animals Act.

5. Ownership of the research data is subject to intellectual property laws (Copyright Act, Patent Act, Databases Act), the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities (Article 1(20-23)), and the regulations on *Knowledge, Intellectual Property and VU/VUmc Participation*, unless otherwise agreed with funding bodies.

Responsibilities

Researchers

1. Researchers are responsible for compliance with legal and ethical requirements regarding their research data, including review by ethics committees if necessary.

2. Researchers are responsible for ensuring that their research data are reliable, traceable and securely stored throughout the data life cycle[3].

3. Researchers are responsible for the archival of their research data for a minimum of ten years from the date of publication, unless legal requirements dictate otherwise.

4. Researchers are responsible for being able to share their research data for scientific use and verification, unless legal provisions prevent this.

5. Researchers who collect and process personal data in their research must notify the Data Protection Officer (DPO) of VU University (servicedesk.privacy@vu.nl). This is a legal obligation imposed by the Personal Data Protection Act.

Department heads

6. Department heads are responsible for making arrangements with researchers about managing their research data in the event of termination of their employment at VU University.

Faculties

7. Faculties establish their own Research Data Management policies which cover all their departments and institutes, including, where necessary, discipline-specific protocols.

8. The deans annually account for their faculties' Research Data Management policies at the PO meeting.

University

9. The university is responsible for providing basic research data management facilities[4].

10. The university is responsible for providing research data management training, support and advice to researchers.

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[3] The data life cycle encompasses the various components of dealing with research data in the different stages of the research process (design, analysis and conclusion): preparing, creating, collecting, processing, analysing, storing, publishing and reusing data.

[4] The current facilities can be viewed at the Research Data theme site.
Note that VU Library is currently implementing a 'Data Management' project, which focuses on archiving data after publication.

Facilities

1. VU University supports researchers in planning, managing, analysing and archiving research data. The Research Data theme site offers a summary of all relevant products and support services.

2. VU University has a data processing hotline and a data protection/privacy officer (servicedesk.privacy@vu.nl) for answering questions and receiving reports about research involving personal data.

3. For advice on the security of stored research data, researchers may consult VU University's Information Security Officer (vucert@vu.nl).