



# Engaging Researchers with Data Management The Cookbook

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Connie Clare, Maria Cruz, Elli Papadopoulou, James Savage, Marta Teperek, Yan Wang, Iza Witkowska, and Joanne Yeomans, *Engaging Researchers with Data Management: The Cookbook*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0185>

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This is the eighth volume of our Open Report Series

ISSN (print): 2399-6668

ISSN (digital): 2399-6676

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-78374-797-9

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-78374-798-6

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-78374-799-3

ISBN Digital ebook (epub): 978-1-78374-800-6

ISBN Digital ebook (mobi): 978-1-78374-801-3

ISBN XML: 978-1-78374-802-0

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0185

Cover image: Photo by Johannes Groll on Unsplash, <https://unsplash.com/photos/mrIaqKh9050>

Cover design: Anna Gatti.

# 2.2. Engaging with Researchers through Data Management Planning at the University of Manchester

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*The University of Manchester illustrates how careful design of DMP templates and DMP policies allows staff to effectively engage with researchers through DMP review.*

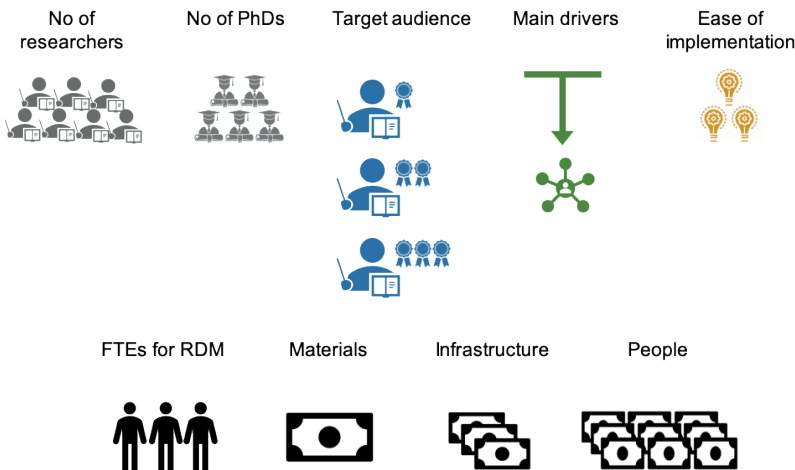


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Requiring an approved Data Management Plan (DMP) before allowing a research project to begin might work for smaller units within a university, but it might not scale up across a large research-intensive university. The University of Manchester has found a way to design their DMP template and DMP requirement process so that the library support team can potentially engage with all researchers at an early stage of their research. Focusing the engagement around the writing of the DMP means that they can offer advice when a researcher is beginning their project, but they can also learn first-hand whether the university's data management policies are practical.

At the University of Manchester, a DMP is required when applying for funding, ethics approval and/or IT storage. 'Between these you encompass most research at the university,' thinks Rosie Higman, Research Services Librarian. 'I'm not saying we've got it perfect but at least in theory, we're going to cover most projects through these routes.'

The University has DMP templates in the DMPonline<sup>3</sup> system that ask university-specific questions in the first section (see Fig. 2.2.1). These include questions about storage needs and whether the research is handling personal data using a tick-box format so that the questions are easier to answer. The University's Information Governance Office uses this part of the form as the asset register in accordance with the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The Research Data Management team (Fig. 2.2.2) in Research Services at the university library check this first section of every DMP and give feedback to the submitter.

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3 DMPonline tool, <https://dmponline.dcc.ac.uk>

# RDA project

Project Details

Plan overview

Write Plan

Share

Download

## University of Manchester Generic Template

This plan is based on the "University of Manchester Generic Template" template provided by University of Manchester. Template for Manchester researchers whose project is unfunded or whose funder does not have a DMP template.

### Instructions

This template is for University of Manchester researchers whose research project is unfunded or whose funder does not have a DMP template.

Write plan

#### Manchester Data Management Outline

- 1. Will this project be reviewed by any of the following bodies (please select all that apply)?
- 2. Is The University of Manchester collaborating with other institutions on this project?
- 3. What data will you use in this project (please select all that apply)?
- 4. Where will the data be stored and backed-up during the project lifetime?
- 5. If you will be using Research Data Storage, how much storage will you require?
- 6. Are you going to be working with a 3rd party data provider?
- 7. How long do you intend to keep your data for after the end of your project (in years)?

Fig. 2.2.1 Overview of the University of Manchester DMPonline template showing the Manchester-specific questions. University of Manchester Library, CC BY 4.0.



Fig 2.2.2 University of Manchester Research Data Management team. From left to right: Jess Naphthine-Hodgkinson (Research Services Officer); Clare Liggins (Research Services Librarian); Chris Gibson (Research Services Librarian). Rosie Higman has since started a new position at the University of Sheffield. University of Manchester Library, CC BY 4.0.

## What Do You Learn from Checking So Many DMPs?

‘You can certainly tell which DMPs are from people who have been to our training,’ Rosie is pleased to point out. ‘It’s helped us work out where we have lots of gaps, where the policy is unrealistic or the procedures are unsupportable.’ She gives an example: ‘There’s a university procedure for when a researcher makes a recording of a participant; it’s clear and well written and has been around for some time, but it suggests that every researcher should have access to an encrypted recording device and the university is only just working out what the cost of that would be.’

When talking to researchers about a DMP, you are therefore sometimes challenged, ‘how do you do that in practice?’ In the case of encrypted recordings, the Research Data Management (RDM) team, with the help of information governance and IT (Information Technology), has been able to draw up a list of practical steps a researcher can take, but this has raised difficult questions about whether the policy should stand. ‘It’s making our services more responsive to what researchers want,’ concludes Rosie.

## Avoiding Being a Victim of Your Own Success

Almost 20% of the submitters request a more detailed review of their DMP and most of these requests are from researchers dealing with personal data or ethical permissions.

Rosie and her team have some standardised answers, which an officer tailors to each case before drafting a response. One of three librarians will then review the officer's comments and enhance them with more discipline-specific suggestions. They aim to treat each plan in under an hour. 'We already spend significant time on this and every week meet to discuss the DMP review requests that have come in and how we can balance them with our other work priorities. If the demand increases, we're not yet sure how to address this,' admits Rosie.

One technique that they believe will save review time is to remove the option to allow free text and instead offer tick-boxes in answer to fixed questions. The use of pre-drafted comments for responses has also helped, but the time it takes to review a single DMP is still a challenge.

The use of DMPonline started in Manchester in 2018, when the European GDPR also came into effect. Although all researchers are required by university policy<sup>4</sup> to write a DMP, it's not clear what proportion of researchers are doing so. The university also has a system for tracking student progress in general, which requires students to have a conversation with their supervisor, during which there is a prompt to check that the student has a DMP. 'This is a good start, but obviously carries the risk that if a supervisor does not care about data management then students will not create a DMP,' says Rosie.

With just over a year of experience in using DMPonline in this way, the library team thinks it is a good time to review the level of compliance. They will do this by checking the institutional records to identify the proportion of research projects that have a DMP and expressing this as a percentage for the university, faculties and schools. The results, expected in late 2019, will be interesting to compare differences in behaviour and should give the team some idea of how demand for reviews might increase.

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4 University of Manchester Research Data Management Policy, <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=33802>

