

RELU Data Management Policy

1.0 Introduction to Data Policy

- 1.1 The RELU Data Management Policy will contribute to the achievement of the programme's aim and objectives. The overall aim of the RELU programme is to conduct research on the connections between rural economy and land use. The results will support the achievement of sustainable rural development, encompassing the social and economic vitality of rural areas and the conservation and protection of the rural environment. The programme has the following specific objectives:

Science Objective

To deliver integrative, interdisciplinary research of high quality that will advance understanding of the social, economic, environmental and technological challenges faced by rural areas and the relationships between them.

Capacity Building Objective

To enhance and expand capabilities for integrative, interdisciplinary research on rural issues.

Knowledge Transfer Objective

To enhance the impact of research on rural policy and practice by involving stakeholders in all stages of RELU, including programme development, research activities and communication of outcomes.

- 1.2 The Data Management Policy is particularly relevant to RELU's capacity building objective. The overall purpose of enhancing capabilities for interdisciplinarity through RELU is to improve the ability of the research community to: apply learning from one field to another; combine different methodological approaches and sources of information; cross-fertilise ideas and concepts; and understand scientific, technological and environmental problems in their social and economic contexts.
- 1.3 Data policy and management within RELU is based on the following principles:
- a) Publicly-funded research data are recognised as a valuable, long-term resource which has value within and beyond the RELU programme.
 - b) Data generated by RELU projects are to be well managed to enable both the originating project and other RELU projects to exploit them to the maximum extent possible.
 - c) RELU funded researchers are expected to make their data available in a timely manner for archiving.
 - d) RELU funds will be allocated to support data management during the life of the programme – including for appropriate cross-discipline support and training.
 - e) Long-term, post-programme data management will be the responsibility of the funding Research Councils - via existing data service providers where appropriate.

2.0 Research Council Policies and Issues

- 2.1 RELU is an inter-Research Council programme and must respect the data policies of individual Councils. The data management policies of the Research Councils have much in common and share basic principles, and these form the basis of the RELU Data Policy. There are some differences in practice between the Research Councils e.g. attention given to ethical and public interest responsibilities in data management; approaches to data archiving, and consideration of datasets that are not digital or computer-based. It is the aim of the RELU Data Policy to draw on current best practice within the funding Research Councils. Because RELU Data Policy raises inter-Research Council issues, the programme has a Data Management sub-group (a standing committee of the RELU Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC)) to keep these matters under review.
- 2.2 Each Research Council's data management policy is explicitly and implicitly oriented towards serving the needs of its research community. Thus the ESRC looks after social science data for the needs of the social science community, and NERC likewise for environmental science. This raises issues concerning, for example, servicing the data needs of members of other research communities. (e.g. environmental scientists may need assistance and training in accessing social science data). The principle to be adopted within RELU should be one of reciprocal privileges, in order to ensure equal access and mutual support for RELU researchers from the different research communities.

3.0 RELU Data Management Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Data Management Subgroup

- 3.1.1 RELU Data Management Policy is being developed and taken forward by the RELU Data Management sub-group.
- 3.1.2 The Data Management sub-group includes representation from the Programme Director's Office, the RELU Data Support Service, the RELU Programme Management Group (PMG), the SAC and the Research Councils' Data Centres (representatives of the Research Councils' Data Centres will attend as observers). Additional members will be co-opted to the group if the need arises. The group is chaired by a member of the SAC. The chair will report the advice and recommendations of the sub-group to the SAC (which advises the PMG on the overall development of the programme). The group will meet once or twice a year, when needed to consider important matters of data policy for RELU¹.
- 3.1.3 The sub-group will advise and make recommendations to the SAC on six key aspects of data management:
- a) Development and review of RELU Data Management Policy.
 - b) Development and review of RELU Data Management Plan.

¹ The RELU Data Management Subgroup will be serviced by the RELU Programme Management Group.

- c) Data management needs and implications from RELU calls (broadly, as well as specific projects).
- d) Progress, findings and implications of RELU Data Management Service Projects.
- e) Requirements for and development of broader RELU data management services and activities.
- f) Implications of broader developments in data and data management with a bearing on RELU, including Research Council and RCUK data policies as well as the interface between RELU and non-Research Council data developments.
- g) Issues and progress of cross-council working with respect to data policy and management.

3.1.4 The sub-group will review the RELU Data Management Policy in the light of experiences from Programme calls, the outputs from the specific projects commissioned to explore and advise on RELU's data management needs, and in line with the development of broader Research Council data policies.

3.2 *Data Support Service*

3.2.1 RELU supports interdisciplinary research projects involving the integration of both natural and social science data (crossing the remits of ESRC, BBSRC, NERC), and the Research Council's are therefore providing an interdisciplinary data support service. The support service's role will include the following:

- a) Reviewing the proposed data management plans of award holders funded under the first call and advising on the future development, finalisation and implementation of these.
- b) Providing data management advice to shortlisted applicants.
- c) Providing ongoing advice and support on data management to award holders, including issues of data acquisition, quality and archiving, and related issues such as ethics, confidentiality, data protection, copyright, intellectual property rights, freedom of information and information regulation in the light of Research Council policies.
- d) Reviewing and quantifying what data (both qualitative and quantitative) the award holders will produce, assessing the potential long-term value of the data, and advising on the data management resources required for the long term.
- e) Advising successful applicants under the second call on the development of data management plans.
- f) Providing cross-disciplinary training in data management and analysis as part of programme wide events and workshops.
- g) Where several projects need access to an existing external dataset, the data support service, in consultation with the data subgroup, will consider the case for negotiating access to this collectively on behalf of RELU award holders. Similarly, for key data providers of relevance to RELU (including Defra and the Environment Agency) the support service will work with the Programme Director to establish generic arrangements for data provision.
- h) The support service will establish a web-based RELU information portal containing information on data collected through the Programme. The portal will be linked to the RELU website

- i) Advising on the most appropriate place for data collected within the programme to be archived (the obvious candidates being the UK Data Archive, Qualidata and NERC Designated Data Centres such as the Environmental Information Centre).
- 3.2.2 The data support service is being commissioned by the ESRC on behalf of the Research Councils and will report to the PMG.
- 3.2.3 Staff from the data support service will work in close collaboration and partnership with the RELU Programme Director, Professor Philip Lowe, who has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Data Management Policy, and assisting in the establishment of mechanisms for quality assurance of data and the development of proposals for the dissemination of data sets and models during the programme.
- 3.3 *Award Holders*
- 3.3.1 During the lifetime of a project, proper data management is the responsibility of the award holder. Award holders will be assisted by the Data Support Service. Detailed below are award holders specific responsibilities:
- a) RELU award holders² will be required to prepare a brief *Project Data Management Plan* within one month of receiving an award letter. This will form one part of their broader Project Communication and Data Management Plan. This will be sent to and agreed by the Director's Office and RELU Data Support Service. A framework for the Data Management Plan will be provided, covering the following topics; data acquisition, data production, quality assurance, data backup procedures and data availability. Projects will also be required to provide a first point of contact for data management issues.
 - b) The Research Councils expect RELU researchers to be guided by the professional codes of conduct governing their fields of work. This includes consideration of the ethical issues involved in the collection and use of any dataset at the time of application or acquisition. The Research Councils will enforce conditions of confidentiality of collection or use of data on a case by case basis, and this will often be governed by law, as with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, or by the specific terms of supply of data to which the Research Councils have agreed with a data supplier, as with the 1991 Census data. The Research Councils expect applicants for research funds to fully anticipate and resolve any ethical issues involved in the proposed use or, in the case of primary data collection, acquisition of data.
 - c) It is important that all holders of data who receive requests from third parties for access to the datasets they hold should first establish, before they supply them, that they have a right to transfer the data requested (e.g. the copyright/IPR is not owned by some other party who has not authorised disclosure), and that the transfer is not compromising RELU's

² Excluding holders of Development Activity and Networking awards.

interests (e.g. the use of the data, and the Research Councils liability, are suitably constrained by licence agreements, and that the pricing, or zero-pricing, is appropriate). The advice of the Research Councils must be sought. The Research Councils will also provide advice and guidance on the Freedom of Information Act to ensure that RELU PIs are not disadvantaged in their research by the inappropriate release of information.

- d) Some of RELU's datasets may constitute 'environmental information' within the meaning of the Environmental Information Regulations 1992. These provide a right of access in a timely manner to such information, though it is important to note that 'freedom of access' need not imply 'free access'. There are circumstances under which such requests either may or must be refused (e.g. if the data contain personal information). Holders of RELU data who receive requests for access to them which specifically invoke the Environmental Information Regulations should in all cases seek the advice of the Research Councils. Furthermore, if such holders of data receive any requests (whether invoking the regulations or not) which they intend to refuse, they should seek guidance as to the lawfulness of their intention and discuss their grounds for doing so.
- e) Datasets (including model outputs) resulting from RELU research projects should be offered for archiving within three months of project completion (at the very latest), together with appropriate supporting information (metadata) and necessary software (i.e. in instances where data is of little value without associated software), in accordance with Research Council Data Archiving guidance and support.
- f) RELU supports the need for an appropriate balance between the protection of data originators' intellectual property rights and the potential benefits that may arise via data use by others within the programme, the wider research community and other interested parties. Individual scientists, principal investigator teams and participants in programmes will be permitted a reasonable period to work exclusively on, and publish the results of, the data collected by such individuals and teams. Anyone making use of RELU datasets before or after formal archiving is required to give due acknowledgement in any exploitation of the data. Due acknowledgment is considered to be co-authorship, specific reference to the data source or a share of any financial reward. PIs can request that data be embargoed for up to 1 year from deposition, allowing the PI and co-workers to exploit it in the first instance, though this is not an automatic right. Metadata would not be embargoed, to allow the wider community to be aware of work being carried out under RELU. After this point data will be made available to the RELU community and beyond. Data access requests after the embargo period (or within should there be a request), but before the end of the RELU programme, would be discussed with and under the control of the data originator, with the form of due acknowledgment agreed between the data originator and data exploiter. The advice of the RELU Data Management sub-group would be sought if major data transfers are involved, to avoid compromising the interests of other RELU programme participants. Data access after the RELU programme would be extended to users, either openly (for academic use) or

at the discretion of the data holding institution, with due acknowledgement of the data originators (in consultation with the originators in cases of commercial exploitation).

- g) Award holders are encouraged at their own discretion to explore the exchange of data with other RELU award holders earlier within projects and in advance of formal archiving, to help encourage the exploitation and availability of data acquired by the wider RELU community within the lifetime of the programme.
- h) Award holders must fulfil their data management obligations before the release of final grant payments.

4.0 Further Information

4.1 Projects

- 4.1.1 Some specific projects have been commissioned to explore and advise on RELU's data management needs.
- 4.1.2 It may be that experimental and novel approaches to combining and interrelating diverse data resources, and the processes for doing so will form a specific focus of RELU projects (and project clusters) and calls.

4.2 Contact Details

RELU Data Support Service

The Research Councils are commissioning the RELU data support service which will be in place in October 2004. In the interim, basic enquiries about RELU Data Management Policy and the submission of data management plans should be addressed to the Programme Director, Professor Philip Lowe.

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4.3 Key documents for further reference

ESRC Data Management Policy www.esrc.ac.uk/esrccontent/ResearchFunding/sec17.asp
NERC Data Management Policy www.nerc.ac.uk/data/policy.shtml
NERC Data Management Handbook www.nerc.ac.uk/data/documents/datahandbook.pdf

Joint Code of Practice for the Quality Assurance of Research issued by DEFRA,
FSA, BBSRC, NERC and the Devolved Administrations
www.defra.gov.uk/science/publications/2003/QACoP_V8.pdf