

UK HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

Research data management is a hot topic for UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) due to a number of drivers from UK Government, Research Councils and the broader 'Open Science' debate. Many potential benefits to managing and sharing research data have been identified. These include evidence for the verification of scientific research results, greater visibility for research, improved citation, increased opportunities for collaboration, potential for the creation of new research not envisaged during the original investigation and avoiding duplication of data collection.

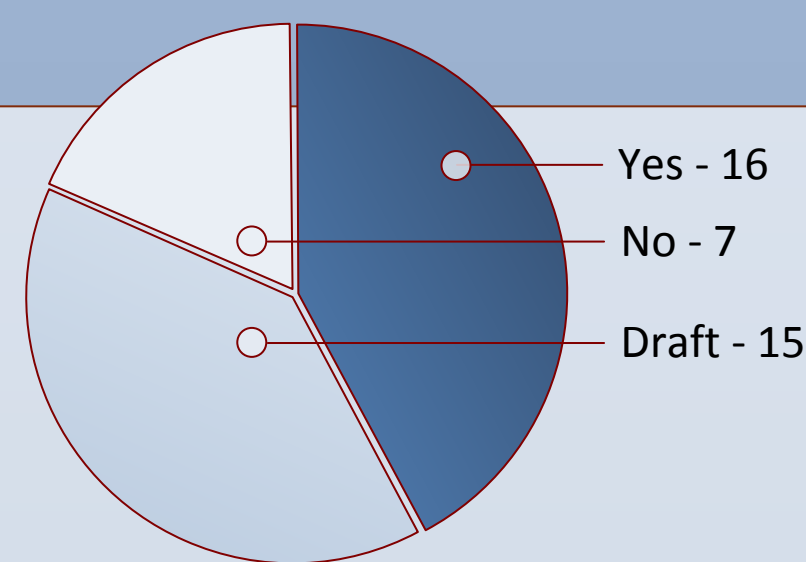
To gather a picture of progress in implementing RDM services, including infrastructure, systems and support, Loughborough University surveyed UK HEIs about their Research Data Management (RDM) activities in September 2013. A self-completion online questionnaire was developed which was promoted via a number of professional email lists, through Tweets and personal contacts, and by the Digital Curation Centre (DCC) through institutions it engages with.

Thirty-eight deduplicated responses were returned from a potential pool of 169 institutions (22%). The number of responses does not allow for generalisations across the sector.

The survey results showed that institutions were responding to RDM challenges at different rates. Devising a policy appeared to be one of the main priorities possibly to focus attention on the topic and as a reference point for driving the development of services and support. Many RDM services were understandably at the 'in development' stage with key decisions and financial support required for implementing full services. There was an indication that the scope of RDM services would favour the 'repository of last resort' concept with institutions encouraging deposit of data in external repositories or data centres before accepting deposit in their institutional data store.

For many institutions there is more work to be done before they are in a position to implement RDM services and support. This survey provides some interesting information on developments within the responding institutions, and complements the picture of the wider UK landscape emerging from institutional support provided through the DCC and JISC Managing Research Data programme.

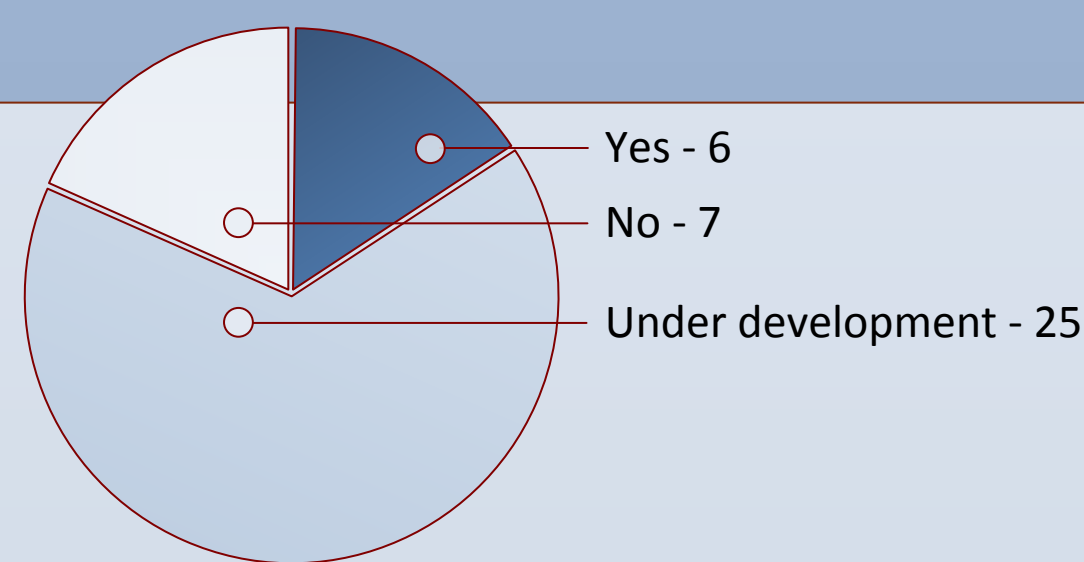
SURVEY RESULTS



Does your institution have a Research Data Management Policy?

Developing a policy for research data management can act as a tool for raising awareness of requirements and as a trigger for implementing services to support related activities. Policy can be implemented prior to service availability or in tandem with developing services. Most of the respondents have started with policy development, hence 82% of respondents having an RDM policy passed or in draft form.

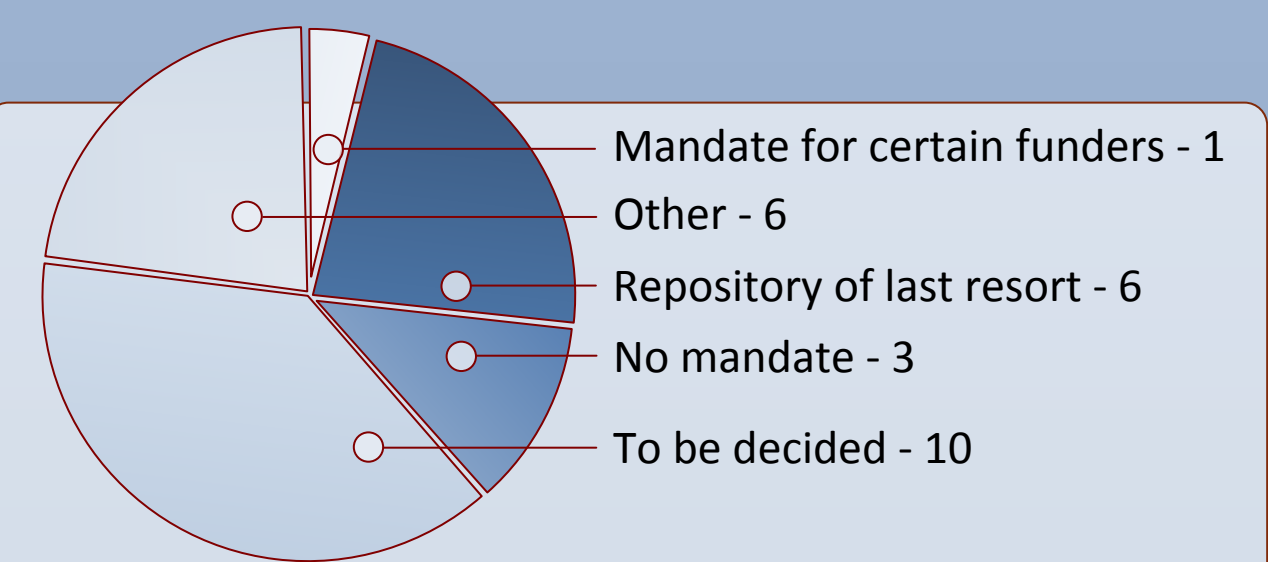
"Research Data Management at [University name] is primarily focusing on the policy, processes, training and metadata capture aspects before tackling the issue of where the datasets themselves should finally rest."



Does your institution have a Research Data service?

Elements of a research data service include recording data, storing data and training for data management. The processes involved in defining and delivering such services take time and this is evidenced by responses to this question. The vast majority of respondents noted that their data service was currently being developed. Typically, less capital-intensive aspects of service development, such as the provision of training and guidance, are addressed first while a case for funding is made.

"Aspirational at present. Steering Group in place with draft policy and action plan under way. Identified need for additional resources dedicated to RDM to ensure faster progress."



What is the scope of your Research Data service [for data deposit]?

The breadth of a service to support data retention might reflect the research environment at a institution and the requirements of research funders. The availability of funds and staff can also influence the scope of services. Among the survey respondents, data deposit in external facilities is preferred to housing data internally. However, many institutions were undecided on the options, suggesting a need for further guidance.

"Faculties will use different elements of the service and this will depend on discipline/funder requirements - the policy gives a framework for this engagement."

DISCUSSION

UK HEIs are engaged in the task of developing policy and services to support effective research data management. Some institution's offerings are more well developed than others, but few have policy and data service in place at this time.

A common theme through responses was that policy and services were in-development. One comment exemplifies the situation many institutions are in: "Like others we are in upgrading our offerings and expect we will have more staffing and more storage support within the next year."

The shape of the data services in place and under-development varied as did the available storage capacity. However, institutions which had already launched or were preparing a Research Data Service identified a significant resource requirement. Equipment (typically 0.5PB - 1PB of storage) and staffing (51 fixed and permanent FTE across the 38 respondents) were needed to implement and support the service.

An important element of a RDM services is the provision of information and training in all aspects of the data lifecycle. Responding institutions indicated that support was provided online, through formal sessions and on a one-to-one basis.

This survey provided valuable insights into the current development of policy and services for research data management across the UK HE sector. For more results and further analysis please visit Martin Hamilton's blog (<http://blog.martinh.net/2013/10/metadata-is-love-note-to-future-uk.html>).

Further research might address the particular aspects of the services being developed and implemented, their eventual uptake and attitudes to service and support offerings. There is an on-going need for dissemination and further evaluation of the benefits of specialist advice and expertise in research data management. In addition, comparison between the UK HE sector and other countries and sectors would be enlightening.

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