

AHRC Technical Plan compliance rubric

A check-list / marking rubric to be used when evaluating Technical Plans for compliance with the AHRC data policy

Author(s)

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Documents used

- [AHRC technical plan guidance](#)
- [Reflections from an AHRC reviewer](#) – pointers shared by Brian Aitken, Digital Humanities Research Officer, June 2015

Notes

A technical plan is required where digital outputs or digital technologies are an essential part of the planned research outcomes. A digital output or technology is defined as an activity which involves the creation, gathering, collecting, and/or processing of digital information. This does not include conventional software such as word processing packages and email.

The draft rubric is available at:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17r7AjOqw1iAZMBirSUWrqW7qTg4Cq1LJ6h-uCX9WcbE/edit#gid=0>

Performance Criteria	Performance levels		
	Detailed	Addressed but incomplete / unsatisfactory	Not addressed
1. Summary of digital outputs and technologies	<p>Plan provides a clear description of the digital output or digital technology and the type of access envisaged e.g. 'freely available online'</p> <p>The summary explains how this will be achieved technically so reviewers can assess whether plans are appropriate.</p>	<p>There's a partial description for example an explanation of the data but not the access plans, or too little information given the scale and importance of the digital output. There is insufficient information to assess whether the overall plans are sound.</p>	<p>It is unclear what will be created or how.</p> <p>The proposal indicates that significant digital outputs will be created but the technical plan doesn't match this.</p>
2a. Standards and formats	<p>Relevant statistics are provided to explain the size, quantity and duration of the data.</p> <p>An explanation is given about which formats and standards will be used and why. This demonstrates an understanding about which formats are appropriate to each purpose e.g. to provide access or to archive data.</p>	<p>A data volume is stated, but it's difficult to interpret how many files that pertains to or how large and complex the dataset is.</p> <p>Formats and standards are named but it is not clear that these are understood and that choices have been made for valid reasons.</p>	<p>The description misses important information and doesn't give a clear sense of sounds decisions regarding the technical methodology.</p>
2b. Hardware and software	<p>It is clear what (if any) additional hardware and software will be required. The additional kit is clearly necessary and aligns with statements in the justification of resources.</p> <p>If nothing is required, the plan should clearly state this is not applicable.</p>	<p>The suggested resources seem unconvincing (e.g. items that should already provided by the institution or software that doesn't seem necessary for the proposed digital output).</p>	<p>The plan does not state that this section is not applicable.</p>
2c. Technical methodology	<p>There is a full description of the development process from data capture to delivery of a digital resource. Key issues such as quality control and backup are covered for all the research environments / circumstances e.g. in-house procedures and fieldwork.</p> <p>There is a clear timetable for technical delivery that relates to the overall project milestones in the case for support.</p>	<p>Certain information is missing e.g. how quality will be cheked if a number of assistants are transcribing and documenting resources.</p> <p>Backup is not explained for all circumstances in which data will be collected or stored.</p> <p>A timetable is missing, so it is unclear how the technical work aligns with the research activity.</p>	<p>There is no clear technical methodology or plan for how the data will be acquired, processed and used.</p>

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	Detailed	Addressed but incomplete / unsatisfactory	Not addressed
3. Technical support and expertise	<p>The plan explains what skills are needed and demonstrates that the team has access to these, identifying key individuals.</p> <p>It is clear that advice has been sought, potentially drawing in external partners from outside the institution where needed.</p> <p>The quality and robustness of the technical plan as a whole reassures the reviewer about access to technical support and expertise.</p>	<p>Some information is provided but not enough, for example the role of system developer may be clearly identified and resourced but the responsibilities for creating and managing the data are blurred across partners.</p> <p>The project may seem over-reliant on one key member of staff and the associated case for support doesn't deal with the risks of losing them.</p>	<p>The plan fails to provide details and says these issues will be addressed by technical partners during the project.</p>
4a. Data preservation	<p>A clear statement is given about which digital outputs will be preserved, where and for how long. This is proportionate to the value and significance of the digital outputs and represents good value for money.</p>	<p>Some information is provided about preservation plans, but more is needed. For example it may not be clear where the data will be deposited or who will be responsible to ensure they are preserved for a minimum of 3 years.</p>	<p>The plan does not state that the digital outputs will be preserved for 3 years.</p>
4b. Access and sustainability	<p>There is a clear plan to ensure the digital outputs remain publicly accessible and usable for at least 3 years beyond the end of funding.</p> <p>Sound justifications are provided if access to the outputs is not to be sustained or if open public access is not envisaged.</p> <p>The reviewer is convinced by the institutional commitment or other resource plans to ensure the costs of sustainability can be covered.</p>	<p>The sustainability plans fail to address one or more of the five key elements – what is to be sustained, where, how, for how long, or how the costs will be covered.</p> <p>The plans are not well-justified, for example access may be restricted to 'bone fide medieval historians' with no sound reason.</p> <p>More information is needed to be convinced that access will be sustained.</p>	<p>The plan does not state that the digital outputs will be made available (ideally with open public access).</p>