

# Checklist for a Generic Data Steward<sup>1</sup> Job Description within ETH-Domain Institutions

**Note:** The term Data Steward is used to refer to a professional who provides support for Research Data Management. This role may also be referred to as Research Data Management Specialist, Research Data Librarian, RDM Support Officer, Research Data Manager or similar. titles, depending on the institutional context.

## How to use this checklist:

This checklist is designed to guide the creation of a clear and comprehensive job description for roles related to research data and software management. It lists key responsibilities, skills, and tasks that can be selected and adapted to reflect the specific scope, level, and focus of the position. Choose relevant items from the list to ensure that the resulting job description accurately represents the required expertise, duties, and expectations.

## Key Responsibilities / Tasks

### Researchers Support & Advisory Services

- ☐ Advise & support researchers on RDM/ORD, FAIR, licensing, legal and ethical standards.
- ☐ Support the research lifecycle from planning (e.g., DMPs) to publication, preservation, and sharing, including metadata, quality control, and repository selection.
- ☐ Collaborate & coordinate with stakeholders to develop RDM processes, contribute to institutional strategies, and build sustainable support structures.
- ☐ Promote best practices & reproducibility through workflows, SOPs, and community engagement.
- ☐ Contribute to strategic projects & networks at institutional, national, and international level.

### Training & Education

- ☐ Design & deliver RDM/ORD training, workshops, and courses, including software and tools support.
- ☐ Organize and lead events to promote RDM best practices.
- ☐ Develop communication campaigns to raise awareness and support change management.

### Policy & Strategy

- ☐ Develop and implement RDM strategies, policies, and Open Research Data frameworks.
- ☐ Establish standards, SOPs, and guidelines for data handling, quality and compliance.
- ☐ Collaborate on institutional and community initiatives to shape strategy and shared practices.
- ☐ Ensure compliance and data quality in line with institutional and legal standards.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the definitions in the appendix the end of this document (page 4)

### Technical & Tool Support

- ☐ Develop, configure, and maintain RDM tools, platforms, and infrastructures.
- ☐ Ensure data and metadata quality, curation, and long-term accessibility.
- ☐ Evaluate tools, automate workflows, and provide user support.
- ☐ Contribute to repository and platform development and integration.

### Coordination & Networking

- ☐ Coordinate RDM activities and data management practices across teams and projects.
- ☐ Build and sustain national and international networks to harmonize RDM practices.
- ☐ Collaborate with data stewards, IT, legal, library, and research teams.
- ☐ Facilitate communication and act as liaison across stakeholders and initiatives.

### Legal & Ethical

- ☐ Support compliance with data protection and privacy laws (e.g., GDPR, nFADP).
- ☐ Provide ethical and governance advisory, guiding responsible data use.

### Communication & Outreach

- ☐ Promote RDM awareness through outreach and public relations initiatives.
- ☐ Communicate research effectively, sharing insights internally and externally.

## Skills

### RDM

- ☐ Deep expertise in RDM, ORD, and FAIR principles.
- ☐ Knowledge of the full research data lifecycle.
- ☐ Understanding of metadata, documentation, and versioning standards.
- ☐ Familiarity with repositories, ELNs, and collaborative platforms (e.g., Git, OSF).
- ☐ Awareness of policies, compliance, Open Science, and reproducibility.
- ☐ [Discipline-specific or technical expertise: specify if needed]

### Service Orientation & Communication

- ☐ Strong service orientation and user support skills.
- ☐ Excellent communication and collaboration across diverse audiences (researchers, IT, administration, students, scientific staff...)
- ☐ Experience designing and delivering training programs, workshops, or guidance materials.

### RDM Tools & IT

- ☐ Proficiency with tools and platforms supporting research data and software management, curation, and sharing.
- ☐ Technical skills: scripting, databases (SQL/NoSQL), APIs and reproducible workflows.
- ☐ Ability to translate research needs into technical and scalable solutions.

### **Project Management & Problem Solving**

- ☐ Experience in project and strategic management within research or technical environments.
- ☐ Strong organizational, planning, and analytical skills.
- ☐ Effective advisory, facilitation, and stakeholder communication abilities.

### **Legal & Funding**

- ☐ Knowledge of copyright, licensing, and data protection regulations.
- ☐ Awareness of institutional and funder policies, as well as ethical and regulatory requirements related to data and software.

## **Qualifications**

### **Education & Research Experience**

- ☐ Master's or PhD in relevant fields (data science, computer science, engineering, or data-driven discipline).
- ☐ Academic research experience, interdisciplinary collaboration, and hands-on RDM support.

### **Communication & Interpersonal Skills**

- ☐ Fluent English; French/German an asset.
- ☐ Strong interpersonal, advisory, and relationship-building skills.

### **Project & Organizational Skills**

- ☐ Organized, proactive, and adaptable with a structured, strategic, and service-oriented approach.
- ☐ User-focused, collaborative, and committed to continuous improvement.

## APPENDIX

**Comparison: Generic Data Steward and Embedded Data Steward**

**Definitions** (source: UNIL-SwissDS-ENV- <https://wp.unil.ch/swissds-env/action-1/>)

**Data Stewards** can be either generic or embedded.

**Generic Data Stewards** are located within a helpdesk or at faculty level, possessing general knowledge of research data management as well as an overview of the institutional situation, enabling them to answer all kinds of questions and redirect researchers to other competent institutional services if necessary

**Embedded Data Stewards** are often attached to a specific research unit/department and directly involved in the research being carried out. They have a solid knowledge of the working methods specific to their unit, which enables them to provide operational support to researchers, for example in the creation of code or scripts for data analysis, and also to translate institutional policies into operational measures in line with the realities of the field.

	Generic DS	Embedded DS
<b>Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad RDM expertise</li> <li>• Service orientation and communication</li> <li>• Familiarity with institutional tools and policies</li> <li>• Ability to deliver training to various audiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domain-specific knowledge (e.g., genomics, imaging, NLP)</li> <li>• Advanced IT and data governance skills</li> <li>• Experience with specialized tools (e.g., elabFTW, OMERO)</li> <li>• Strong analytical and visualization skills</li> </ul>
<b>Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise and support researchers on RDM, ORD, and funder requirements.</li> <li>• Deliver training and awareness campaigns.</li> <li>• Develop and enforce policies and compliance.</li> <li>• Evaluate tools and metadata quality.</li> <li>• Refer researchers to institutional services and resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support discipline-specific data collection, processing, and analysis.</li> <li>• Develop discipline-specific SOPs and DMPs.</li> <li>• Deliver tailored training and workflow automation.</li> <li>• Collaborate closely with researchers and IT teams.</li> </ul>
<b>Qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad academic background (e.g. PhD or Master's degree in data science, information science)</li> <li>• Strong communication and advisory skills</li> <li>• Familiarity with institutional RDM infrastructure and policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced degree in a specific research domain (e.g., life sciences, engineering)</li> <li>• Experience with domain-specific data and tools</li> <li>• Legal and ethical expertise tailored to sensitive data</li> <li>• Proven ability to translate policy into operational practice</li> </ul>