

DSA–WDS Partnership Working Group Catalogue of Common Procedures for Certification



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Abstract: The RDA Repository Audit and Certification DSA–WDS Partnership Working Group (WG) produced a two-part recommendation, one of which includes a Catalogue of Common Procedures for certification. The goal of the effort was to create a set of harmonized Common Procedures for certification of repositories at the basic level, drawing from the procedures already put in place by the Data Seal of Approval (DSA) and the ICSU World Data System (ICSU–WDS). These procedures are intended to support the implementation of the Catalogue of Common Requirements developed by the WG to harmonize the certification criteria previously established by the DSA and ICSU-WDS.

Keywords: Core Certification; Digital Repositories; Data Stewardship; Long-term Preservation; Data Sharing; Data Curation; Data Reuse; Data Seal of Approval; ICSU World Data System.

Language: English

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DSA–WDS Partnership Working Group Catalogue of Common Procedures

Introduction

This Catalogue of Common Procedures was developed by the DSA–WDS Partnership Working Group on Repository Audit and Certification, a Working Group (WG) of the Research Data Alliance (RDA)¹. The goal of the effort was to create a set of harmonized Common Procedures for certification of repositories at the core level, drawing from the procedures already put in place by the [Data Seal of Approval \(DSA\)](#) and the [ICSU World Data System \(ICSU-WDS\)](#). These procedures are intended to support the implementation of the Catalogue of Common Requirements developed by the WG to harmonize the certification criteria previously established by the DSA and ICSU-WDS.

In developing and implementing the Common Procedures, the Working Group decided to introduce shared practices gradually, with the first step being that both organizations will implement the Catalogue of Common Requirements within their existing systems, following agreed-upon procedures. However, the ultimate aims are to bring the organizations closer together, with tighter integration, and to collaborate on a certification framework that involves higher-level standards such as [nestor-Seal DIN 31644](#) (extended-level certification) and [ISO 16363](#) (formal-level certification).

Parallel Assessment Processes

DSA and ICSU-WDS will follow a shared assessment process when employing the [Common Requirements](#), which will be implemented within their own environments as a first step. Both organizations have agreed to these practices:

- In the evidence of compliance provided by applicants, URLs are strongly encouraged alongside a description of each link. This permits reviewers to validate the evidence.
- Assessments must be written in English (or an English summary provided).
- Applicants should assign a level of maturity rating as part of their response to each requirement.
- Two reviewers from a common pool of reviewers will review each application, with a third reconciling them if necessary (see additional procedures below).
- Completed assessment documents are linked to logos when awarded and are publicly accessible².
- Becoming certified through either organization means the repository is certified in the other. However, in the case of WDS, additional membership-related procedures and the signing of a Letter of Agreement follows certification.
- Renewal of certification is every three years, with the process ideally completed in a maximum of a further two years.

¹ See the [Case Statement for the RDA Working Group and the full set of Working Group members](#). Members of the Working Group that created this document included the following individuals representing the Data Seal of Approval and ICSU World Data System: Michael Diepenbroek, Ingrid Dillo, Rorie Edmunds, Françoise Genova, Li Guoqing, Wim Hugo, Hervé L'Hours, Jean-Bernard Minster, Mustapha Mokrane, Lesley Rickards (Co-Chair), Paul Trilsbeek, Mary Vardigan (Co-Chair).

² Some parts of the assessment may be removed/redacted in cases where public release of the information is considered a security risk to the organization, its host institute, or funding body.



To initiate the assessment process, the prospective applicant may choose from three entry points.

- (1) The [WDS website](#), where the applicant completes an Expression of Interest
- (2) The [DSA website](#), where the applicant creates a preliminary application
- (3) A new webpage on Core Certification of Repositories with this content:
 - Description of DSA–WDS partnership and history of the RDA WG effort to harmonize the two standards
 - Descriptions of DSA and ICSU-WDS, and links to each
 - Descriptions of nestor-SEAL and ISO 16363, and links to each
 - Reasons/rationale to apply for core certification
 - List of Common Requirements with guidance and maturity ratings system
 - Glossary

Needed

- Content and maintainer for new webpage

Sustainable Review Processes

For repository certification to gain traction worldwide, having a pool of qualified reviewers that is continually refreshed with new members is necessary. To that end, the WG recommends establishing a pool of reviewers composed of:

- DSA Board members
- WDS Scientific Committee members
- DSA General Assembly member representatives (each organizational member of the General Assembly has received the DSA and agrees to perform up to three assessments per year)
- Representatives of WDS Regular and Network Members

Common training will be provided to new reviewers to ensure consistency in review practices.

Upon submission of a DSA preliminary application or WDS Expression of Interest, one administrator from DSA and one from ICSU-WDS will pair reviewers with the repository for assessment either by putting out a call for reviewers (sending an email to the reviewer pool) or by assigning specific reviewers to the repository. In time, a shared tool that enables reviewers to see which repositories across the DSA and WDS systems they have agreed to assess will be implemented.

Reviewers will initially perform reviews utilizing both organizations' assessment tools, although it is anticipated that the organizations will converge on a single system in the future. Evaluations by the two reviewers will be conducted in parallel, with one of the administrators reconciling/consolidating them for communication to the DSA–WDS Certification Board for a final decision ultimately communicated to the applicant. If there are disagreements that cannot be resolved, a third reviewer will be requested to help the DSA–WDS Certification Board make a final decision about the assessment.

Needed

- New email list – reviewers pool
- Form for reviewer assignments
- Identified administrators for DSA and ICSU-WDS
- DSA–WDS Certification Board – formed from designated representatives of the DSA Board and WDS Membership and Certification Subcommittee
- Content and procedures for (online) training



Mutual Governance Processes

DSA and ICSU-WDS will continue their respective governance practices outside of those mutually agreed upon. The two organizations also agree to ongoing collaboration to ensure the smooth implementation and operation of the Common Procedures, with the goal of increased integration of the certification systems over time. Additionally, outreach to the nestor-Seal DIN 31644 and ISO 16363 communities is recommended so that all certification bodies are part of a continuing conversation on repository assessment.

To enable effective stewardship of the Common Requirements and Procedures the DSA–WDS Certification Board agree to meet online at least twice a year with these objectives:

- Review and update the Common Requirements and guidance; issue new versions
- Review and update the Common Procedures; issue new versions
- Review the performance of the partnership and the integration of the systems

Needed

- Regulations document specifying all procedures
- All governance and other relevant documents to be stored on the new website for Core Certification of Repositories and on the DSA and WDS websites