



## Research Data Management at Tampere University

**Tampere University implemented an Open Science Policy and Action Plan including an institutional approach to Research Data Management.** Both documents were developed in 2018 during the creation of the university, following the merger of the University of Tampere and Tampere University of Technology. They provide a framework for doctoral candidates, other researchers and the research support staff on how data should be managed, curated and shared. **Moreover, the Library of Tampere University developed two courses addressing RDM and FAIR data practices, which are delivered by the Doctoral School.**

The development and implementation of the Open Science Policy and Action Plan were driven by staff members. Recognising the absence of a legal framework that could institutionalise RDM, they initiated the creation of the new policy documents, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the merger in terms of redefining the objectives and strategy of the new institution. New training activities at the doctoral level also originated after the merger, with the establishment of the Research Data Services network, the university's central contact point for RDM coordinated by the Library. Both initiatives were introduced to support the research community in complying with the new mandates of the Open Science Policy.



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**Use case:** building staff capacity and creating new training activities as support actions for the implementation of institutional policies

**Type of initiative:** institutional Open Science Policy and Open Science Action Plan and two training courses

**Organiser of the initiative:** Tampere University and its Doctoral School

### Scope and objectives

The Open Science Policy and the Open Science Action Plan of Tampere University were created in 2018 during the merger of two institutions: the University of Tampere and the Tampere University of Technology. Tampere University of Applied Sciences also belongs to the Tampere Higher Education Community resulting from the merger.

The Open Science Policy states that all data produced by the new university's research activities need to be compliant with the FAIR principles and identifies all researchers as responsible for practicing good RDM. The Action Plan aims to turn the general guidelines of the Policy into concrete steps to follow, ensuring that all the members of the academic and research community are aware of their responsibilities regarding the good management of their research data. Among the key actions identified by the Action Plan is the integration of RDM and FAIR data teaching and training in the curricula of the university, from the bachelor to the doctoral level.

**Both policy documents have the objective of institutionalising a FAIR-compliant management of research data in the university.** Interviewees from Tampere University highlighted how RDM and FAIR data practices were already common before the merger, among the research support staff of the pre-existing universities. However, a new framework was needed to include Open Science as a priority of the new university and to provide a formalisation of these voluntary practices, ensuring that RDM and FAIR data would become the standard way of producing scientific knowledge.

Training activities have been implemented in support of the new policy framework to ensure that doctoral candidates and other researchers have the right skills and tools to comply with the mandate for FAIR research data set by Open Science Policy and Action Plan. **The Doctoral School of Tampere University offers its doctoral candidates two courses that address, to different extent, RDM and FAIR data: Managing Research Information and Research Data Management: Survey and Interview Data.**

### Implementation

As mentioned in the previous section, the implementation of the Open Science Policy and the Action Plan took place during the creation of a new institution. Interviewees from Tampere University highlighted how the merger facilitated the development of the new policy framework, as it gave them the opportunity to bring emerging requirements for Open Science practices to the attention of the leadership during a broader process of rethinking the objectives and strategy of the new university.

Interviewees highlighted how ensuring the support of the leadership was key not only in terms of receiving the formal approval of the policy documents, but also to sustain the implementation of Open Science practices in the institution with a longer-term perspective. In particular, this was instrumental in providing a commonly agreed framework that would justify the need for future actions and activities related to research data to the eyes of the leadership.

The institutionalisation of FAIR research data practices is an ongoing process at Tampere University, which has recently moved to the higher institutional level. At the beginning of 2021, the university created a new Board for Research Data Management, chaired by the Vice President for Research. While still at an early stage, interviewees highlighted how the new Board will have the crucial role of identifying and setting the university's priorities in the field of research data, contributing to support the guidelines and objectives set by the Open Science Policy and Action Plan. The implementation of the two RDM courses followed a different dynamic. While they share the same objectives, they have a different development history within the new institution. The Managing Research Information course built on a course that was already existing before the merger as part of the University of Tampere's training offer, dating back to 2017. The Research Data Management: Survey and Interview Data course was instead a direct result of the Open Science Policy and was implemented in 2020, after the merger was completed.





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### Capacity

Both courses are part of the training offer of the Doctoral School of Tampere University. In terms of financial capacity, the funding belongs to the existing university's budget, which is made available for activities organised within the Doctoral School.

While the coordination of the courses is a responsibility of the Doctoral School, the development of the content and their delivery are managed by the university's Library within its role in the Research Data Services. The Research Data Services are the Tampere University's central point for all issues and activities related to research data, aiming at coordinating tools and training in different phases of the research data lifecycle. The Services are coordinated by the Library, with the participation of the university's IT, research and legal services and the Finnish Social Science Data Archive.

### Impact

The evaluation of the courses is coordinated by the Doctoral School, which collects feedback from participants and submits them to members of the Library who were responsible for the lectures. Over the years, the courses received good feedback and a participation rate deemed satisfactory by the university.

Interviewees from Tampere University highlighted that more can be done to broaden the impact of these activities. In this regard, they identified the voluntary nature of the courses as one of the biggest challenges in reaching more participants among the doctoral candidates, who should all be aware of how to practice good RDM in order to be able to comply with the mandates of the Open Science Policy and Action Plan. At the same time, **the decision to integrate basic concepts related to RDM and FAIR data in the Doctoral School's mandatory course in Research Ethics and Integrity proved to be a strategic action in ensuring that all doctoral candidates are at least aware of these topics and the role they can play in their research activities.**

Plans are being discussed at Tampere University to develop new training activities targeting students at the Bachelor and Master level. This is also one of the priorities identified in the Open Science Action Plan of the university. New developments are still at a very early stage, however, interviewees presented this as an example of the type of support that is granted by the policy documents, which are seen as an important leveraging tool for the Library when presenting their case to the leadership.

The decision to formalise the commitment to FAIR RDM at the higher level, through the establishment of the Board for Research Data Management is also a clear indicator of the impact that the implementation of the Open Science Policy and Action Plan had in influencing the strategic focus of the university towards research data.



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#### About this use case

This use case is part of a collection describing how FAIR education is being embedded in educational programmes and presented in the "[Good Practices in FAIR Competence Education](#)" report.

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