

Data Policy

Preamble

Creating an excellent, collaborative, and reliable research environment for doctoral researchers within RTG 2987 *Mobility Rights in the Global Context of Multiple Crises* (hereinafter: RTG 2987) requires coordinated research data management. The term “research data management” is currently being used to discuss how research data can be preserved in a sustainable manner and shared as freely as possible. Closely linked to this is the goal of increasing the transparency, traceability, and verifiability of scientific research, enabling meaningful reuse and further utilization by third parties, and ensuring that the highest standards of research ethics and data protection are upheld at every stage. Accordingly, this data policy governs the collection, documentation, storage, processing, sharing, and publication of research data.

With these guidelines on the handling of research data, RTG 2987 aims to provide current and future members with guidance on how to handle research data during and after the completion of research projects. In doing so, the guidelines take into account the DFG’s “Guidelines for the Handling of Research Data”¹ and “Ensuring Good Scientific Practice,”² the University of Göttingen’s “Research Data Guidelines”³ and the “Rules Governing the Safeguarding of Good Research Practice”⁴, as well as the German and European General Data Protection Regulations and the Lower Saxony Data Protection Act. “Research data management” generally includes various measures necessary to ensure that research data remains usable over the long term. The goal is to carefully organize and reliably store the research data generated during the research process, as well as to make it findable, accessible, interoperable, and, where possible, reusable in accordance with the FAIR principles. Data management is considered an integral part of the research process and the foundation of good scientific practice.

However, this data policy⁵ also serves to communicate where RTG 2987 currently stands in terms of data management and where it aims to go in the future. The recommendations are generally based on the view that data management has varying degrees of urgency depending on the academic discipline, method, or project focus, and that the practical implementation of data management requires different paces and directions. For this reason, the RTG has made it its mission to continuously review, evaluate and improve the research data management, as well as to integrate it into the core curriculum of the PhD program through various workshops and training sessions.

¹ Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (2015): DFG Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data. URL: <https://www.dfg.de/resource/blob/172098/guidelines-research-data.pdf>, latest access: 10.4.2026.

² Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (2025): [Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice. Code of Conduct](https://zenodo.org/records/14281892). URL: <https://zenodo.org/records/14281892>, zuletzt geprüft am 10.4.2026.

³ Universität Göttingen (2024): Research data policy of the Georg-August University Goettingen (incl. UMG). URL: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/488918.html>, latest access: 10.4.2026.

⁴ Universität Göttingen (2026): Rules of the University of Göttingen Governing the Safeguarding of Good Research Practice. URL: https://uni-goettingen.de/de/document/download/d3bdbba73b24e07356dee8f383168bf2-en.pdf/UGOE_OgWP_2026_EN.pdf, latest access: 5.5.2026.

⁵ This document took inspiration from the Recommendations for Handling Research Data and Materials at SFB 1171 Affective Societies dated April 20, 2022, as well as the guidelines and templates provided by the University of Göttingen’s eResearch Alliance.

1. Definitions

"Raw data" is defined as the data generated during data acquisition, that is not anonymized or pseudonymized and therefore might entail personal information (personal data).

"Meta-data" shall mean any data describing and documenting research data.

"Project" means an ongoing or completed research study conducted by the doctoral researchers of RTG 2987.

"RTG Members" include the listed participating researchers, the doctoral researchers (employed or associated), the Mercator Fellows and affiliated researchers, as well as student assistants.

"Long-term storage" means the storing of data for at least 10 years after publication.

"Storage" is defined as any data saving procedure.

2. "Research Data" at RTG 2987

These recommendations apply to all research data and materials that are generated and/or processed in the course of research work at RTG 2987. Given the range of disciplines represented in RTG 2987, it is not possible to work with a uniform definition of "data." For many humanities subprojects in RTG 2987, topics such as "research data" and "research data management" prove extremely challenging, particularly since they can only be applied to standard working procedures to a limited extent. Even in the social science subprojects, it often remains unclear what exactly is meant by the term "research data," at what stage of processing one can speak of "data," and whether qualitative and ethnographic data—due to their context-dependence, their connection to the respective researcher's personality, their relationality, heterogeneity, and multimodality, can even be adequately described using common terms such as primary and secondary data or raw data.

When working within the RTG, it is useful to distinguish between *data* and *materials*. Data refers to information that can be separated from the individual researcher and is specifically generated through both quantitative, standardized, and qualitative data collection methods. In some disciplines, such as cultural anthropology and sociology, the concept of data encompasses not only interview data but also observation and memory logs—that is, (mostly written) records created or initiated by the researcher, which are largely produced through qualitative methods (though not exclusively) in interaction with members of the group under study (research participants). These records then form the basis for further proceedings; they are evaluated, interpreted, and analyzed, and thus function as data. Research data may consist of paper or digital text (transcribed interviews, observation and memory logs, and field notes; a corpus of political, legal, or media documents; format: .txt or .docx), audio (MP3), and video files (MP4).

However, the understanding of data outlined here does not apply to some of the RTG's research projects, which do not specifically generate data through the use of certain data collection methods, but instead collect various materials that are relevant to their respective research topics (such as grey literature, policies and publicly available minutes, legal texts and commentaries, social media comments, newspaper articles, etc.). RTG 2987 explicitly distinguishes between data and materials, classifying the latter as all information gathered by researchers in relation to the research subject but not specifically elicited, rather existing independently (in written, visual, auditory, or audiovisual form, as well as in the form of physical artifacts).

The distinction between data and materials is rooted in the scientific methodologies of the disciplines participating in RTG 2987 and the associated processes of knowledge generation. Generated data and collected materials each require different forms of processing, contextualization, reflection on research ethics, and legal safeguards regarding archiving and potential reuse scenarios. The technical and organizational measures and recommendations listed below primarily refer to research data generated in empirical projects, but may also encompass collected research materials.

3. Scope and Responsibilities

- a. This document is intended for all members of RTG 2987.
- b. A Data Management Committee (DMC), consisting of the RTG's Data Management Officer and the Scientific Coordinator, is appointed by the executive board of the RTG 2987. The DMC establishes data standards and may make changes to this data policy and the data management plan.
- c. The data policy is adopted by the RTG 2987 executive board.
- d. The responsibility and authority for implementing appropriate research data management in individual projects lie with the doctoral researchers and, in particular, with the supervisors. Furthermore, researchers bear not only a personal responsibility and obligation toward science and society (open science), but also toward research participants (ethical responsibility).
- e. Doctoral researchers provide a detailed account of their research data management practices in their annual reports. The practicality and compliance with data management recommendations are discussed and reviewed in biannual meetings between doctoral candidates and the Thesis Committee. The Thesis Committee, in consultation with the DMC, decides on the appropriateness of data handling and documentation and may request changes from the respective data provider.
- f. Fundamental difficulties in handling research data can be discussed collectively in RTG 2987. If difficulties or conflicts arise regarding the individual or shared use of research data within research projects, the DMC will intervene as mediators and help find a solution. If the DMC is unable to successfully mediate conflicts, the Executive Board will take over the mediation.

4. Handling Research Data: Measures and Recommendations

4.1. Data Management throughout the Research Process

- a. RTG 2987 is integrated with the research data infrastructure of the University of Göttingen and the Göttingen Society for Scientific Data Processing (GWDG) and ensures the appropriate storage and processing of digital research data and materials. A suitable storage location for data/files has sufficient storage capacity, is part of a backup management system, allows access to all involved and authorized persons, and prevents access by unauthorized individuals. Since a large portion of the data collected by the RTG is classified as particularly sensitive and worthy of protection according to Lower Saxony's protection level concept⁶, the storage and processing of this data require special technical and organizational measures. These measures are described in detail in the *Integrated Concept for the Secure Processing of Sensitive Research Data* as well as in the *Data Management Plan for RTG Researchers* (Appendix A) and are binding for all members of RTG 2987.
- b. Members of RTG 2987 are asked to keep the RTG coordination team informed on an ongoing basis about new publications resulting from research conducted at RTG 2987. The bibliographic information will then be entered into a Zotero database. The goal is a) to centrally collect all new publications for the purpose of documenting scientific output and improving the RTG's public image, and b) to regularly and uniformly update the RTG members' literature database for internal knowledge exchange.
- c. RTG 2987 recommends that all members engaged in research use ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor Identification IDs). ORCID serves to uniquely identify academic authors. Using ORCID ensures that a person's publications, research data, or research software remain

⁶ Der Landesbeauftragte für den Datenschutz Niedersachsen (2018): Schutzstufenkonzept des LfD Niedersachsen. URL:

https://www.lfd.niedersachsen.de/startseite/themen/technik_und_organisation/schutzstufen/schutzstufen-56140.html, latest access: 21.3.2026)

uniquely attributed to them, even if their name, field of study, or affiliation changes, or if multiple people share the same name. Setting up an identification number is free of charge and easy to do via ORCID. Researchers who already use other identification services or profiles (Google Scholar profile, ResearcherID, etc.) can easily link these to their ORCID profile.

4.2. Long-Term Storage and Archiving

In line with the DFG, the RTG 2987 considers the storage of research results, as well as the underlying research data, to be part of good scientific practice in order to make research results transparent and verifiable (generally ten years). These should be retained, in accordance with the standards of the relevant discipline, for an appropriate period of time at the institution where they were generated, provided it does not harm informants or research relationships. RTG 2987 uses the digital and physical infrastructure and storing services of the University of Göttingen and the GWDG for the long-term, confidential, and reliable storage of research data and materials. Data is stored in open file formats. Responsibility for the storage of research data and materials lies with the respective doctoral researcher, with the primary responsibility resting with the supervising participating researcher.

The RTG acknowledges that there is no single standard or single purpose for archiving, and archiving can potentially cause harm. The diversity of data types and research contexts must always be taken into account.⁷ While in some cases it is – due to the characteristics of the people under study, the vulnerability of the groups being studied, or the scope of the information collected about individuals – not possible to anonymize the data without causing it to lose its scientific value.⁸ In accordance with the University of Göttingen’s Regulations on Good Scientific Practice (§ 7(2), sentence 2), shorter storage periods may be established in a transparent manner for research data that, due to its nature, cannot be retained for a period of 10 years in order to minimize risk. In the case of particularly sensitive data, doctoral researchers are not only entitled but, as guardians of the informants’ interests and rights, are even obligated to object to the archiving and disclosure of their data. For this reason, each research project shall carefully assess which data is absolutely necessary for the purpose of verifiability and which raw and pseudonymized data can be deleted. If secure storage options cannot be provided, the raw and pseudonymized data falling under Protection Level E must be deleted.

4.3. Data Publication and Reuse

The need to archive and publish the research data derives from the principles of verifiability and transparency, but primarily from the fact that researchers at RTG 2987 generally focus on unique and hard-to-access research subjects and fields, which makes the research material unique and irreplaceable. At the same time, there is a general responsibility—and, where applicable, an ethical obligation—to make research results and, where possible, research data accessible to the academic community, interested users, and, under certain circumstances, research participants. Research data and publications can be archived in online repositories and published through them.

⁷ See Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft 2020: “Stellungnahme des Fachkollegiums 111 „Sozialwissenschaften“ zum Forschungsdatenmanagement in der Soziologie, der Politikwissenschaft und der Kommunikationswissenschaft. URL: <https://www.dfg.de/resource/blob/174570/fachkollegium111-forschungsdatenmanagement.pdf>, latest access 4.5.2026.

⁸ See Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaften (o.J.): Stellungnahme der DGfE zur Archivierung, Bereitstellung und Nachnutzung qualitativer Forschungsdaten in der Erziehungswissenschaft, URL: https://www.dgfe.de/fileadmin/OrdnerRedakteure/Stellungnahmen/2017.09_Archivierung_qual._Daten.pdf, latest access 4.5.2026.

- a. **Publication of analyzed and anonymized data** (monographs, journal articles, or contributions to anthologies): RTG 2987 recommends that all members, whenever possible, publish their work as open access. Each publication should cite the RTG as the framework for the research and also include the following statement: „funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) – 516661009“
- b. **Publication of metadata**: RTG 2987 actively supports and encourages researchers to make their research data findable by publishing metadata through the University of Göttingen’s repository, GRO.Data. No later than upon leaving the RTG 2987, metadata regarding the entire research dataset or selected datasets will be published in accordance with common metadata standards and assigned a DOI.
- c. **Publication of data**: RTG 2987 actively supports and encourages researchers to share their research data with others, provided that the institutional, technical, legal, and ethical requirements for doing so are met. Researchers are encouraged to make their research data available, where possible, in an appropriate repository⁹ (preferably one that is discipline- or data-specific). The published data are released with a DOI and under a CC-BY license to ensure that authorship of the data is preserved. At the same time, RTG 2987 acknowledges that the provision of research data may not be possible under certain circumstances (e.g., due to data protection or copyright restrictions, lack of consent, the sensitivity of the content, the workload involved, etc.) or that the reuse of the data must be restricted (e.g., regarding the selection of data, protection periods, or the group of persons who may access the data).
- d. Because research at RTG 2987 is extremely diverse in terms of its disciplinary framework, methodological approaches, and ethical implications, the “**principle of voluntary data provision**”¹⁰ applies at RTG 2987. Accordingly, the decision regarding what happens to the research data must primarily be made by the doctoral researchers themselves in consultation with their supervisors, based on the research ethics principles embedded in the research and, under certain circumstances, in close consultation with research participants. In doing so, the additional effort involved must be weighed against the intended benefits. Unlike interview data, which can be separated from the respective researchers in anonymized form while respecting data protection and prepared for secondary use, recorded data in the form of transcripts and field notes are extremely closely linked to the researching subject. Preparing this data for secondary use involves a considerable additional investment of time and cost, and simultaneously deprives the data of a significant portion of its informative value. RTG 2987 therefore recommends that data suitable for secondary use be carefully evaluated and selected under the expert guidance of Qualiservice.
- e. **Publication of third-party data**: The researcher retains the right of first publication of the data. Publication of the data by other RTG members shall always be subject to the researcher’s consent and, where applicable, in accordance with the informed consent of the research partners. The rules of good scientific practice must be followed; if a DOI has already been assigned, the data must be cited in accordance with the applicable license.

⁹ The RTG 2987 has an agreement with the QualiService repository. Re3data.org – Registry of Research Data Repositories provides an overview of existing research data repositories. Available online at <https://www.re3data.org> (last checked on 31.3.2026).

¹⁰ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde (2018). Positionspapier zur Archivierung, Bereitstellung und Nachnutzung von Forschungsdaten. URL https://dgek.w.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/dgv-Positionspapier_FDM.pdf (last checked on 31.3.2026).

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