

## **Should Data Management Plans be submitted as part of an ethics application?**

A data management plan (DMP) describes the data that will be collected during a research project and how it will be managed, both during and after the project. Although the University's ethics application form asks a number of questions about this, normally the DMP would cover these issues in more detail. Therefore, being able to consider the full Data Management Plan as part of an ethics application may be helpful to the ethics reviewers.

For several years DMPs have been a compulsory part of the grant application process by most major research funders to ensure that the research they are funding has well-managed data. Since October 2019 all postgraduate research students at TUoS have also been required to include a DMP in their confirmation review.

It is recommended that staff and PGR students include a DMP in their ethics application, especially where the research involves one or more of the following:

- Potentially particularly vulnerable participants;
- Potentially highly sensitive topics;
- Personal data classed as 'special category' data under the GDPR (<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/special-category-data/#scd1>).

The benefits to this approach include the following:

- Ethics reviewers will be better able to consider whether appropriate arrangements are in place to protect the participants' dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing, through consideration of the greater level of detail regarding the management of participants' data which is provided in a DMP;
- Ensuring that data management arrangements can be considered fully by the ethics reviewers minimises potential risks to participants, the researcher(s) and the University caused by poor data management (including loss of data and the implications/impact of this, GDPR breaches, loss of funding and having to retract research publications);
- Avoids the need for researchers to duplicate information provided in the DMP within the ethics application, and therefore reduces the risk of inconsistencies between the two documents.

Data management plan templates, advice and further information can be found at:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/rdm/dmp>.

Guidance on good research data management practice for taught students can be found at:

<https://librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/Assets/pdfs/research/rdm-taught.pdf>.