



Data Seal of Approval

Guidelines version 2014-2017
July 19, 2013

Data Seal of Approval Board

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Introduction

This guide supports repository self-assessment and peer review against the 16 Data Seal of Approval (DSA) Guidelines for the application and verification of quality aspects related to the creation, storage and (re-)use of digital data. The Guidelines have been designed with a focus on scientific and scholarly materials but may be applied to all types of digital information. These Guidelines serve as a basis for granting a 'Data Seal of Approval' by the Data Seal of Approval Board.

Fundamental to the Guidelines are five principles that together determine whether or not the digital data may be considered as sustainably archived:

- The data can be found on the Internet.
- The data are accessible, while taking into account relevant legislation with regard to personal information and intellectual property of the data.
- The data are available in a usable format.
- The data are reliable.
- The data can be referred to.

These principles are integral to the Guidelines, which focus on three stakeholders: the data producer, the data repository and the data consumer.

- The data producer is responsible for the quality of the digital data.
- The data repository is responsible for the quality of storage and availability of the data.
- The data consumer is responsible for the quality of use of the digital data.

Although the Guidelines address three different groups, it is the data repository which is responsible for enabling and supporting data producer and data consumer compliance with the Guidelines.

It is assumed that in the data lifecycle the repository may actually interact with a 'depositor' acting on behalf of the data producer.

A data repository is designated a Trusted Digital Repository (TDR) according to the requirements of the Data Seal of Approval if it meets Guidelines 4-13 and if it enables data producers and data consumers to adhere to Guidelines 1-3 and 14-16.

This Assessment Guide may also be used as a form for recording draft self-assessments before using the DSA online tool.

The Self-Assessment and Peer-Review Process

Once application details have been processed via datasealofapproval.org, the applicant can complete and submit a self-assessment against the 16 Guidelines.

A peer reviewer appointed by the DSA Board will either confirm the self-assessment evidence and compliance levels for each Guideline or reject them and provide relevant comments to be addressed by the applicant. The comment/response process will continue until the reviewer can decide whether to award the DSA. In the event of a dispute the applicant may appeal to the Board.

Outsourcing

In the original version of the DSA outsourcing to third parties was permitted for Guidelines 4, 6, 7, 8 and 13 as long as the outsource partner had a DSA or better level of trust certification.

To take account of the increasingly distributed and service-based nature of modern repositories, the DSA Board expanded the possibility of outsourcing to all Guidelines. This decision will be monitored over time and may be amended in future in cooperation with the DSA community. Applicant information relevant to outsourcing is requested in the 'Repository Context' section and must form part of the evidence for each applicable Guideline.

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Completing the Self-Assessment

Topics for discussion and inclusion are suggested in supporting text below each Guideline, but they are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

Abbreviations should be expanded the first time they are used.

The following fields appear below each Guideline:

Self-Assessment Statement:

Your self-assessment statement should directly address the Guideline and its supporting text. Your statement should indicate which documentation (linked or draft) provides support. Please mention why it supports your evidence statement and mention which section is applicable, especially for long documents or those with a broad scope.

If part of a Guideline is 'Outsourced' to a third party (where applicable) identify the partner and provide evidence for the parts of the process you are responsible for and for those the Outsource Partner is responsible for.

Linked Documentation and/or documentation deadline (English summary if applicable):

The self-assessment statement for each Guideline must be supported by a link to relevant publicly available documentation (preferably in English). If the documentation is not in English a short summary in English should be provided. If documentation is in draft and/or not yet publicly available a deadline should be provided which would be monitored in subsequent applications for the DSA. Self-assessed compliance levels would be expected to be lower if supporting evidence is only available in draft. These public documents are considered critical to the transparency of the DSA process.

Please add hyperlinks to public documentation used to support your self-assessment.

Each document here should have been mentioned in the self-assessment statement above.

Self-Assessed Compliance Level:

For each DSA Guideline there is a minimum level of compliance reflecting how mature repository practices should be to receive the Seal. As best practices emerge, the DSA Board will re-evaluate the minimum compliance level.

Peer Reviewers Comments:

This space will be used by the reviewers to add comments or ask for further clarification.

Reference for Peer Reviewers

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?

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- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

Liability

By starting the application process for the DSA you agree to the following terms:

All parties concerned including the DSA Board and designated reviewer will treat self-assessment evidence and compliance levels as sensitive until the DSA is awarded; after this time the final version of evidence, self-assessment levels and reviewer comments will be made publically available via the DSA Tool.

The DSA Board will handle all data provided with the utmost care but accepts no liability for any damage or losses resulting from the use of these data.

Guidelines

Guideline	Minimum requirement
0 Repository Context	N/A
1 The data producer deposits the data in a data repository with sufficient information for others to assess the quality of the data, and compliance with disciplinary and ethical norms.	3
2 The data producer provides the data in formats recommended by the data repository.	3
3 The data producer provides the data together with the metadata requested by the data repository.	4
4 The data repository has an explicit mission in the area of digital archiving and promulgates it.	4
5 The data repository uses due diligence to ensure compliance with legal regulations and contracts including, when applicable, regulations governing the protection of human subjects.	4
6 The data repository applies documented processes and procedures for managing data storage.	4
7 The data repository has a plan for long-term preservation of its digital assets.	3
8 Archiving takes place according to explicit work flows across the data life cycle.	3
9 The data repository assumes responsibility from the data producers for access and availability of the digital objects.	4
10 The data repository enables the users to discover and use the data and refer to them in a persistent way.	3
11 The data repository ensures the integrity of the digital objects and the metadata.	3
12 The data repository ensures the authenticity of the digital objects and the metadata.	3
13 The technical infrastructure explicitly supports the tasks and functions described in internationally accepted archival standards like OAIS.	3
14 The data consumer complies with access regulations set by the data repository.	4
15 The data consumer conforms to and agrees with any codes of conduct that are generally accepted in the relevant sector for the exchange and proper use of knowledge and information.	4
16 The data consumer respects the applicable licences of the data repository regarding the use of the data.	4

Assessment

Statement of Compliance	Means	Comments and/or URLs
0	N/A: Not Applicable.	Provide an explanation
1	No: We have not considered this yet.	Provide an explanation
2	Theoretical: We have a theoretical concept.	Provide a URL for the initiation document.
3	In progress: We are in the implementation phase.	Provide a URL for the supporting document.
4	Implemented: This guideline has been fully implemented for the needs of our repository.	Provide a URL for the supporting document.

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0. Repository Context

Applicant manual

Please provide a brief general description of the functions and activities undertaken by the repository with particular regard to specialised aspects of your repository and services that might not be familiar to a peer reviewer. Where possible refer to standard OAIS functions and terms.

Please provide a concise list of any Outsource Partners referenced in the Self-Assessment and their relationship (organisational/contractual, etc.) with your repository including whether or not they have the Data Seal of Approval or have undertaken some other Trusted Digital Repository assessment. List the Guidelines for which they provide all or part of the relevant functionality/service. Define the relationship with/control over the outsourced functions under the relevant Guideline including any contracts or Service Level Agreements (SLAs) which are in place.

Because outsourcing will almost always be partial, you will still need to provide appropriate evidence for functions under the Guideline which are not outsourced, for example, “documented processes and procedures for managing data storage” and “explicit workflows” for the parts of the data lifecycle which you control.

Reviewer manual

- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

1. The data producer deposits the data in a data repository with sufficient information for others to assess the quality of the data, and compliance with disciplinary and ethical norms.

Required statement of compliance:

3. In progress: We are in the implementation phase.

Applicant manual

As regards this Guideline, how do you support the data producer (and/or depositor) before and during submission to the repository?

Sector-specific quality criteria indicate to what degree the data are of interest to consumers. The assessment by experts and colleagues in a field is the main deciding factor for the quality of data. Transparency in terms of adherence to ethical norms in relevant disciplines facilitates the assessment of data content. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the data producer to provide sufficient information to enable data consumers to assess the data.

Does the repository define the full package of information that should be deposited to facilitate assessment? What is required and what is optional?

Does the repository ask for:

- A methodology report or other information regarding the methods and techniques used, including those for data collection and subsequent structural or content amendments?
- Information about official approval for data collection to confirm adherence to legal or ethical requirements?
- Evidence/confirmation that data collection or creation was carried out in accordance with legal and ethical criteria prevailing in the data producers geographical location or discipline (e.g., Ethical Review Committee or Data Protection legislation)?
- Data regarding, or references to, the data producer and/or their affiliated organisation(s)
- Evidence/confirmation that the data is based on work performed by the data producer (researcher or institution that makes the data available)
- Citations to publications based on the data?

How much of this information collected from the data producer is passed on to data consumers to let them make independent assessments?

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

2. The data producer provides the data in formats recommended by the data repository.

Required statement of compliance:

3. In progress: We are in the implementation phase.

Applicant manual

As regards this Guideline, how does the repository support the data producer before and during submission to the repository?

Various data formats exist for digital objects, and for all formats there is a risk that they may become obsolete, rendering data objects unusable. For storage of data objects preferred formats are used. Preferred formats are those that a data repository can reasonably assure will remain readable and usable. Typically, these are the de facto standards employed by a particular discipline.

- Does the repository publish a list of preferred formats?
- Are quality control checks in place to ensure that data producers adhere to the preferred formats?
- Are tools used to check the compliance with official specifications of the formats?
- What is the approach towards data that are deposited in non-preferred formats?
- Does the repository ask data producers to provide detailed information about their file formats and the tools and methods by which the files were created?

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
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- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

3. The data producer provides the data together with the metadata requested by the data repository.

Required statement of compliance:

4. Implemented: This guideline has been fully implemented for the needs of our repository.

Applicant manual

As regards this Guideline, how does the repository support the Data Producer before and during submission to the repository?

It is the responsibility of the data producer to provide the data with information about the context of the data (metadata). There is a distinction between descriptive, structural and administrative metadata. These must be provided in accordance with the Guidelines of the data repository.

- Descriptive metadata consist of information required to find data and add transparency to their meaning (definition and value) and importance. Examples of descriptive metadata are the data elements of the Dublin Core Element Set, [\(1\)](#) with fields such as creator, type, and date.
- Structural metadata indicate how different components of a set of associated data relate to one another. These metadata are needed to be able to process the data. When data are coded, the codebook will be a component of the structural metadata.
- Administrative metadata are required to enable permanent access to the data. This concerns the description of intellectual property, conditions for use and access and the preservation metadata needed for durable archiving of the data.

The data repository specifies the level of producer-created metadata required and provides the tools for its effective capture.

- If deposit forms are used which metadata do they capture?
- Are there other user-friendly ways for data producers to provide metadata?
- Does the repository have quality control checks to ensure required metadata are provided?
- does the repository provide standard, guidance or tools for the creation of metadata at the file level Are metadata elements derived from established metadata standards, registries or conventions? If so list the standards, and show the level of adherence to them.
- How are these metadata items relevant for the data consumers e.g. supporting resource discovery and secondary analysis rather than simply meeting the needs of the repository?
- What is the repository's approach if the metadata provided are insufficient for long-term preservation?

[\[1\]](#) See: <<http://www.dublincore.org>> [accessed July 19, 2013].

Reviewer manual

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4. The data repository has an explicit mission in the area of digital archiving and promulgates it.

Required statement of compliance:

4. Implemented: This guideline has been fully implemented for the needs of our repository.

Applicant manual

This Guideline relates to the level of authority which the repository has.

- Is there a Mission Statement which references digital preservation and archiving? Under whose authority (government, funding body, chief executive etc.) is the statement released?
- Is succession planning in place for your digital assets? If so, please describe the plan and reference if possible.
- How is the mission statement implemented?
- Do you carry out related promotional activities?
- If compliance to this Guideline is outsourced please provide compelling evidence that the third party complies to DSA or DIN/ISO standards.

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

5. The data repository uses due diligence to ensure compliance with legal regulations and contracts including, when applicable, regulations governing the protection of human subjects.

Required statement of compliance:

4. Implemented: This guideline has been fully implemented for the needs of our repository.

Applicant manual

This Guideline relates to the legal regulations which impact on the repository.

- Is the repository a legal entity? Please describe its legal/organisational status.
- Does the repository use standard/template/model contract(s) with data producers?
- Does the repository use standard/template/model contract(s) with data consumers?
- Are the repository's conditions or terms of use published?
- Are there measures in place if the conditions are not complied with?
- Does the repository ensure knowledge of and compliance with national and international laws? How?
- Are special procedures applied to manage data with disclosure risk?
- Are data with disclosure risk stored appropriately to limit access?
- Are data with disclosure risk distributed under appropriate conditions?
- Are procedures in place to review disclosure risk in data and to take the necessary steps to either anonymise files or to provide access in a secure way?
- Are staff trained in the management of data with disclosure risk?

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

6. The data repository applies documented processes and procedures for managing data storage.

Required statement of compliance:

4. Implemented: This guideline has been fully implemented for the needs of our repository.

Applicant manual

This Guideline relates to the ability of the repository to manage data.

- Does the repository have a preservation policy?
- Does the repository have a strategy for backup / multiple copies? If so, please describe.
- Are data recovery provisions in place? What are they?
- Are risk management techniques used to inform the strategy?
- What checks are in place to ensure consistency across archival copies.
- What levels of security are required and how are these supported?
- How is deterioration of storage media handled and monitored?

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

7. The data repository has a plan for long-term preservation of its digital assets.

Required statement of compliance:

3. In progress: We are in the implementation phase.

Applicant manual

This Guideline relates to the ability of the repository providing continued access to data.

- Are there provisions in place to take into account the future obsolescence of file formats? Please describe.
- Are there provisions in place to ensure long-term data usability? Please describe.

Reviewer manual

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- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

8. Archiving takes place according to explicit work flows across the data life cycle.

Required statement of compliance:

3. In progress: We are in the implementation phase.

Applicant manual

This Guideline relates to the levels of procedural documentation for the repository.

Does the repository have procedural documentation for archiving data? Provide references to:

- Workflows
- Decision-making process for archival data transformations
- Skills of employees
- Describe the types of data within the repository and any relevant impact on workflow
- Selection process
- Approach towards data that do not fall within the mission
- Guarding privacy of subjects, etc.
- Clarity to data producers about handling of the data

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

9. The data repository assumes responsibility from the data producers for access and availability of the digital objects.

Required statement of compliance:

4. Implemented: This guideline has been fully implemented for the needs of our repository.

Applicant manual

This Guideline relates to the levels of responsibility which the repository takes for its data.

- Does the repository have licences / contractual agreements with data producers? Please describe.
- Does the repository enforce licences with the data producer? How?
- Does the repository have a crisis management plan? Please describe.

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

10. The data repository enables the users to discover and use the data and refer to them in a persistent way.

Required statement of compliance:

3. In progress: We are in the implementation phase.

Applicant manual

This Guideline relates to the formats in which the repository provides its data and its identifiers.

- Are data provided in formats used by the designated community? In what forms?
- Does the repository offer search facilities? Is OAI harvesting permissible? Is deep searching possible?
- Does the repository offer persistent identifiers?

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

11. The data repository ensures the integrity of the digital objects and the metadata.

Required statement of compliance:

3. In progress: We are in the implementation phase.

Applicant manual

This Guideline relates to the information contained in the digital objects and metadata and whether it is complete, whether all changes are logged and whether intermediate versions are present.

- Does the repository utilise checksums to verify data integrity? What type?
- How is the integrity of data and metadata monitored?
- Does the repository deal with multiple versions of the data? If so, how? Please describe the versioning strategy.

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

12. The data repository ensures the authenticity of the digital objects and the metadata.

Required statement of compliance:

3. In progress: We are in the implementation phase.

Applicant manual

This Guideline refers to the degree of reliability of the original and to the provenance of the data including relationship between the original data and that disseminated, and whether or not existing relationships between datasets and/or metadata are maintained.

- Does the repository have a strategy for data changes? Are data producers made aware of this strategy?
- Does the repository maintain provenance data and related audit trails?
- Does the repository maintain links to metadata and to other datasets, and if so, how?
- Does the repository compare the essential properties of different versions of the same file? How?
- Does the repository check the identities of depositors?

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

13. The technical infrastructure explicitly supports the tasks and functions described in internationally accepted archival standards like OAIS.

Required statement of compliance:

3. In progress: We are in the implementation phase.

Applicant manual

This Guideline refers to the level of conformance with accepted standards. The technical infrastructure constitutes the foundation of a Trusted Digital Repository. The OAIS reference model,^[1] an ISO standard, is the de facto standard for using digital archiving terminology and defining the functions that a data repository fulfils.

- What standards does the repository use for reference?
- How are the standards implemented? Please note any significant deviations from the standard with explanations.
- Does the repository have a plan for infrastructure development? Please describe.

^[1] Details regarding the OAIS reference model can be found at: <<http://public.ccsds.org/publications/archive/650x0m2.pdf>> [accessed January 31, 2013].

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

14. The data consumer complies with access regulations set by the data repository.

Required statement of compliance:

4. Implemented: This guideline has been fully implemented for the needs of our repository.

Applicant manual

This Guideline refers to the responsibility of the repository to create legal access agreements which relate to relevant national (and international) legislation and the levels to which the repository informs the data consumer about the access conditions of the repository.

- Does the repository use End User Licence(s) with data consumers?
- Are there any particular special requirements which the repository's holdings require?
- Are contracts provided to grant access to restricted-use (confidential) data?
- Does the repository make use of special licences, e.g., Creative Commons?
- Are there measures in place if the conditions are not complied with?

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

15. The data consumer conforms to and agrees with any codes of conduct that are generally accepted in the relevant sector for the exchange and proper use of knowledge and information.

Required statement of compliance:

4. Implemented: This guideline has been fully implemented for the needs of our repository.

Applicant manual

This Guideline refers to the responsibility of the repository to inform data consumers about any relevant codes of conduct.

- Does the repository need to deal with any relevant codes of conduct?
- Does the repository need to deal with codes of conduct specifically pertaining to protection of human subjects?
- What are the terms of use to which data consumers agree?
- Are institutional bodies involved?
- Are there measures in place if these requirements are not complied with?
- Does the repository provide guidance in the responsible use of confidential data?

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.

16. The data consumer respects the applicable licences of the data repository regarding the use of the data.

Required statement of compliance:

4. Implemented: This guideline has been fully implemented for the needs of our repository.

Applicant manual

This Guideline refers to the responsibility of the repository to inform data consumers regarding the applicable licences.

The quality of the use of data is determined by the degree to which the data can be used without limitation by the various target groups, while complying with applicable codes of conduct.

The open and free use of data takes place within the relevant legal frameworks and the policy Guidelines as determined by relevant national authorities.

With regard to accessing information, the data consumer is bound by relevant national legislation. The data repository may have separate access regulations, which include restrictions imposed by the laws of the country in which the data repository is located. Access regulations should be based on relevant international access standards (e.g., Creative Commons) as much as possible.

Most nations have legal frameworks relating to the ethical use and re-use of data. These frameworks range from the statutory — which protect the privacy of individuals — to formal codes of conduct which inform ethical issues. Repositories must be aware of these local legal frameworks and ensure that they are taken into account when providing data for re-use.

- Are there relevant licences in place?
- Are there measures in place if these licences are not complied with?

Reviewer manual

- Does the self-assessment statement correspond to the Guideline in question? (Also refer to the supporting text for applicants below each Guideline.)
- Are the links to supporting documentation available publically?
- Do you agree with the self-assessed compliance level and is the overall evidence sufficient to award the DSA?
- Have abbreviations been explained?
- In responding to the self-assessment provide helpful comments rather than specific questions where possible.