

# SHARE DATA WHERE POSSIBLE

Research data should be shared as much as possible. New WUR guidelines establish how.

Open science — in which research data are freely shared — is now standard practice, particularly for government-funded research. On this topic, WUR subscribes to the slogan ‘as open as possible, as closed as necessary’. What does that mean in practice? New guidelines flesh out the principles. Sharing data is standard practice. Grant-awarding bodies like the Dutch Research Council, the EU, and the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality require data to be open access. WUR recommends that researchers publish under the CC-BY licence. CC stands for creative commons, a licensing standard that determines under which conditions copyrighted work, including research data, can be shared. BY stands for the required citation of the original copyright holder. ‘WUR is expressly not choosing to use the CC-0 licence,’ says Jacqueline Ringersma, the data management coordinator for the Wageningen Data Competence Center and head of the team that formulated the guidelines. The rest of the group consisted of data stewards from the Science Groups and a few researchers.

## Citation

‘CC-0 is the most liberal type of licence and doesn’t even require a citation of the original researcher,’ Ringersma explains. ‘We think that citations contribute to our researchers’ scientific careers. It’s a

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‘CITATIONS CONTRIBUTE TO OUR RESEARCHERS’ SCIENTIFIC CAREERS’

guideline but it’s not compulsory.’ Most research data can be freely shared, but there are situations in which data can only partially be shared or must be restricted completely. Limited sharing might apply to cases where the data has to be paid for or if WUR has a strategic interest in not sharing everything. Institutions funding the research might also place restrictions on data sharing. Some data have to remain entirely under lock and key. ‘For instance, a nutritional study in which you can’t anonymize the data,’ suggests Ringersma. But even then, the metadata (general information about the dataset) does remain publicly accessible.

## Ownership

The new guidelines have created clarity regarding one old chestnut: data ownership. Ringersma: ‘All data produced by researchers under contract with WUR belong to WUR.’ But not all cases are so clear cut. What happens, for example, if a private sector party contributes to the research funding? ‘There’s no ready-made answer to that,’ says Ringersma. ‘You’ll have to negotiate a solution together. That doesn’t always happen now. The sensitivities tend to lie on the Wageningen Research side. The rule is that whichever party wants the firmest restrictions gets their way.’ The new guidelines go into effect

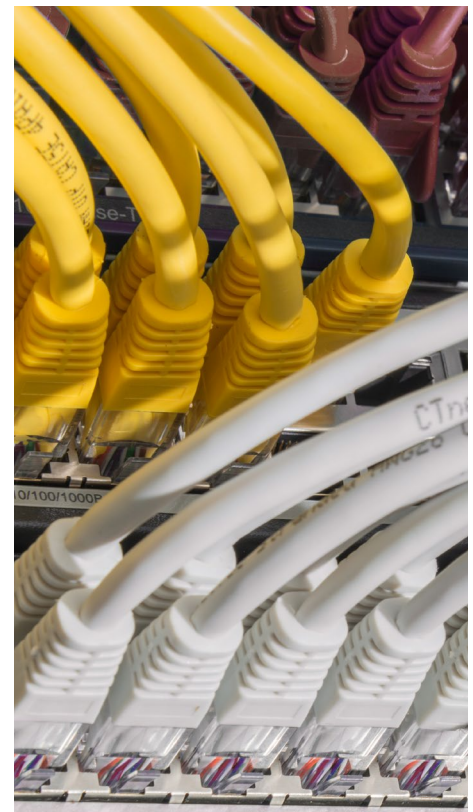


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immediately. Starting in the new year, there will be workshops with the data stewards in the research groups on how to interpret and apply the guidelines. These workshops will address the specific situations encountered in practice. RK