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Data Management Plan (DMP) –From FAIR to FAIRER

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Many universities have adopted the use of Data Management Plans (DMPs) for research teams to outline how their research data will be handled both during and after a project. DMPs support responsible data management in accordance with the **FAIR principles**: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable. The objectives are to contribute towards research integrity, reproducibility, and efficient reuse.

At the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, the requirement for a DMP was introduced in 2016. This was purposefully integrated into the university's research grant management system, so that Principal investigators (PIs) must complete and submit their project-specific DMPs within the system. Completion of their DMP is a prerequisite for financial account creation before PIs can access their grant funding.

NTU's DMP initiative began with the aim of supporting open science by encouraging researchers to plan for the sharing of their research data, especially as this becomes an increasingly common requirement by funders and journals. This includes making non-sensitive research data available on NTU's open access research data repository, thereby enhancing research transparency and increasing impact. Researchers who demonstrated exemplary practices of making their scientific contents, tools, and processes open and accessible are eligible to receive the NTU / Singapore Open Research Awards, which were presented in 2022 and 2024.

However, the research data management landscape within NTU has evolved significantly in recent years. This shift was driven primarily by internal factors such as internal audits, as well as external forces including geo-political developments and increased scrutiny on data security. Data protection issues are particularly pressing in collaborative projects involving commercial companies or governmental agencies. These have led researchers to resist data sharing, citing data protection concerns as a reason to withhold data sharing. This growing tension between the imperative to make research data open and reusable, and the need to protect sensitive data, highlights the need for a balanced and strategic response.

In light of this, NTU is revamping its DMP template to better support researchers in making their data FAIRER, where '**E**stands for **Ethical**' and '**R**stand for **Responsible**'. The new template will not only guide researchers in meeting FAIR data principles, but also to help them fulfil their ethical and institutional responsibilities under the University's new institutional data security framework. For example, the revised DMP questionnaire will direct researchers to using appropriate University-supported research data storage solutions for sensitive research data.

We present here our university's journey towards implementing a **FAIRER DMP** that reflects both openness and the evolving responsibilities of data stewardship.

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