The Senate of the University of Maribor Faculty of Health Sciences has on its 30th regular session on 16 June 2022 adopted a decision No. 034/2022/2774-10/902 confirming the Open Access Policy for Research Infrastructure at the University of Maribor.

Open Access Policy for Research Infrastructure at the
University of Maribor Faculty of Health Sciences

1. Definition

Research infrastructure[1] of the University of Maribor Faculty of Health Sciences (hereinafter referred to as RI UM FHS) denotes the whole of multi-purpose and multi-dimensional facilities, laboratory environments, research equipment, complex digital research systems and databases used for research purposes as well as dedicated research groups. RI UM FHS is a prerequisite for research work and, at the same time, essential for achieving excellence in research as well as wider social development.
RI UM may comprise fundamental RI (buildings, equipment, etc.) and/or RI for knowledge transfer (researchers, laboratories, databases, etc.).

2. Users

RI UM FHS is publicly accessible to researchers, research groups, or research organizations within the framework of UM research activities (employees, including researchers of different stages, postdoctoral researchers, technicians, and Doctors of Philosophy) and research activities outside UM (external users, such as researchers of various research organizations, commercial or other). Within the framework of research, users are involved in designing or creating new knowledge, products, processes, methods, and systems.
The UM may require external users to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to use the RI. When the external user does not have the required knowledge and skills for the professional operation of the equipment, the entity can provide complete service by employing its internal staff. The entity may also offer and provide training for new external users. The cost of such training is borne by the external user.
Users need to abide by relevant principles, strategies, directives, and other regulatory UM FHS documents in their collaboration or when using RI UM FHS.

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[1] According to the definition of the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), research infrastructures (RI) are facilities, resources or services that represent larger equipment or set of instruments and represent or complement knowledge sources such as collections, archives and databases.

3. Access

Access means a legitimate and authorized admission to interactions and use of RI UM FHS and the services provided by RI UM FHS to users.

RI UM FHS access modes comprise the excellence-driven access mode and market-driven access mode. The excellence-driven access mode is dependent on the scientific excellence, originality, quality, technical and ethical feasibility of the work. The market-driven access mode is possible in case of an agreement between the user and the RI, leading to a fee for access. This mode is also possible when there is a market need demanding technical or scientific solutions that can be achieved through access to RI. Both modes are granted based on application, evaluated internally or through peer review.

UM FHS is responsible for determining the scope of its own RI which is to be accessible to external users, under clear, transparent, and fair terms and conditions.

UM FHS offers users a certain amount of access, which is measured in access units defined by individual entities. Access units may vary depending on different types of RI. Some access units are precise values, e.g., hours of infrastructure operation, gigabytes generated and stored while conducting complex experiments, etc.

The processes and interactions involved in the access to RI UM FHS may vary according to different types of RI within individual entities (e.g., application, negotiation, evaluation, etc.) but the decisions on the access requests have to be clear and justified.

4. Costs and fees

Access to RI may be provided free of charge or may require payment. All terms and conditions associated with the use of RI have to be transparent and publicly available. In the case of paid access, the user is charged a fee that has to be clearly linked to the actual use of RI itself. Access fees may vary for different types of RI, but all have to abide by the following principles:

- Auditability.
- Traceability to the work done on the RI item, including maintaining appropriate records outlining access requests (successful and unsuccessful), reasons for declining access (if relevant), usage data, etc.
- Prohibition of duplicate funding.
- Compliance with all relevant national and EU funding terms and conditions and with competition legislation.

Market-driven access costs should be recovered at full commercial rates.
Unit of cost depends on the amount of use of a particular access unit.

5. Training and Education

The RI UM FHS open access policy encourages collaboration with other institutions and organizations that benefit from RI UM FHS for their research, education, and training.

6. Restrictions

Access to RI UM FHS can be limited by the national security and defense, privacy and confidentiality, commercial sensitivity, intellectual property rights, and ethical consideration following applicable laws and regulations.

7. Ethical conduct, research integrity, and non-discrimination

RI UM FHS open access policy follows the Code of Ethical Conduct of the University of Maribor as well as the eight principles laid down in The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity drafted by the European Science Foundation (ESF) and the European Federation of National Academies of Sciences and Humanities (ALLEA). The eight principles that researchers need to abide by, are honesty in communication, reliability in performing research, objectivity, impartiality and independence, openness and accessibility, the duty of care, fairness in providing references and giving credit, and responsibility towards the scientists and researchers of the future.

When considering granting RI UM FHS access to a user, the user should not be discriminated on any personal grounds.

8. Quality Assurance

Quality of the RI UM FHS open access will be ensured by establishing quality assessing mechanisms for RI access within individual entities. The mechanisms will follow the general principles defined by the European Commission. These principles are denoted in English by the acronym "RACER" (Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy, Robust):

- Relevant and closely linked to the objectives to be reached. They should not be overambitious and should measure the right thing.
- Accepted by the RI and the stakeholders. The role and responsibilities for the indicator need to be well-defined.
- Credible for non-experts, unambiguous, and easy to interpret. Indicators should be as simple and robust as possible.
- Easy to monitor at low cost and effort.
- Robust against manipulation.

The set mechanisms should include the following metrics:

- user metrics (e.g., user access, user base, and relevance to users),
- RI operational metrics (e.g., access provision, service, central management, reliability, visibility, user community size and evolution),
- strategic indicators (e.g., publications and other products, cross-disciplinarity, economic impact) and
- financial metrics (e. g. service, resources, cost, returns).

9. Research data management

The data management policy provides clear guidance on how and where to store the generated data for a reasonable period and on how the user should provide this data for reuse. Instructions may vary depending on the type of RI within each individual entity. The data should follow the FAIR principles (findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability). Research data management is laid out in a separate regulatory document.

The management of research data generated by the use of RI UM FHS is defined when the agreement on the use of RI UM FHS is concluded.

10. Transparency

The Department for Research and Art of the University of Maribor (ORUD UM) provides information on the RI UM open access policy, general information on RI UM and RI UM entities' contacts.

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