

DATABASE MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. POLICY PARTICULARS

DATE OF APPROVAL BY RELEVANT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:
Information Technology Steering Committee, 28 May 2004

DATE OF APPROVAL BY SENATE: 3 September 2004

DATE OF APPROVAL BY COUNCIL:

COMMENCEMENT
DATE: 1 June 2004

REVISION HISTORY: n/a

REVIEW DATE: Every three years: first revision due during 2007

POLICY LEVEL: All persons developing or utilising University databases and datasets

RESPONSIBILITY

- IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING: Data Management Unit
- REVIEW AND REVISION: Information Technology Steering Committee

REPORTING STRUCTURE: Data Unit Manager → Registrar, Finance → Registrar → Senate
→ Council

2. REASON FOR POLICY

2.1 The student data is owned by the Registrar and financial data is owned by the Registrar of Finance. The University has recognised the need for ensuring accuracy of data that is increasingly requested by various bodies which may be internal or external to the University. The Database Policy should be viewed as a document that will ensure accuracy and on-going development in an ever-changing Information Technology environment. The policy should not be platform- or current technology- dependant but should oversee the management of data at Rhodes University.

2.2 Over time the University data set has increased in an attempt to computerise more than just financial and student processes. Some of this computerisation has been done on the central server and some not. In some cases not having centralised data has led to data problems when trying to link the various data sets. Although a Data Manager was appointed in 2003 to, among other duties, ensure consistency and accuracy in the generation of University data, the Data Management Unit is encouraged to satisfy the needs of the owners of the other datasets, with the needs and protocols of the Registrars Division and Finance taking priority.

2.3 External requests stem mainly from the Department of Education, SAQA, CHET, CHE, SAUVCA, HSRC, NRF and ECHEA. Internal requests for datasets come from all areas of the campus such as the Registrars Division, Finance, Estates, Human Resources, Information Technology, Dean of Students Division and the Residences to name but a few.

2.4 The Data Manager is tasked with providing a data structure that allows and ensures accurate and adequate flow of data through the University and out to external parties. In order for the Data Manager to be able to assess all data requirements knowledgably and advise with solutions to all, it is necessary for the Data Management Unit to be made aware of and play a role in the development of all datasets. This does not necessarily mean that all development will be done in-house or that it shall all be housed on the same platform. In fact, the data will be viewed as critical and non-critical to University administration, and advice will be affected by whether the dataset is viewed as a necessary part of the University dataset, urgency, platform requirements, long-term plans for project, staff resources, as well as current knowledge within the Data Management Unit. The user needs and Registrar and Registrar of Finance data requirements will all need to be considered when advice is given. If the recommendation of the Data Manager is considered inappropriate an appeal can be made through the Registrar of Finance and the Registrar.

2.5 Requests for data will continue to be serviced provided the request is in keeping with the Information Acts. If the Data Manager deems it necessary to clarify the data request with a member of Senior Management, the matter will be referred to the relevant individual or committee. As the Registrar is the Chief Information Officer at the University, most cases will be referred to the Registrar.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 POLICY DECLARATION:

In order to ensure that information collected and provided, both internally and externally, is consistent and valid and to ensure that data is accessible where necessary, the University wishes to regulate the development of *databases housing datasets* used for the administration of the University.

3.2 POLICY OBJECTIVES:

The Policy aims to regulate the development of databases by allocating primary responsibility to the University's Data Management Unit, and ensuring that all persons involved in developing databases or datasets follow a standard, centralised procedure in order to conform with current Information Acts.

3.3 DEFINITIONS:

Data: Isolated Facts

Information: Organised or summarised data

Database: A collection of interrelated data items

DBMS: Database Management System – systems software that facilitates the management of a database

Dataset: The result of a query on the database that provides a subset of the data housed in the database

Platform: The computer technology (hardware and software) used by and to access the database

4. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 THE ACTIONS AND PROCESSES BY WHICH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY WILL BE ACHIEVED:

In order to attempt to control duplicate datasets on campus, all Rhodes staff requiring a database to assist with **administration of students, alumni, residences, staff management or financial accounting** should proceed in the following way:

- 1) Contact the Data Manager and discuss your requirements. If necessary an appointment will be set up to discuss the database further.
- 2) The Data Manager will assess the request and determine whether the data should be centralised.
- 3) Should the Data Manager recommend the data should be centralised, development will be done by the Data Management team on a platform that is currently being supported within the University. If the database already exists, access to the relevant datasets will be provided.
- 4) Should the Data Manager decide that it is not necessary for the data to be centralised, a documented reason will be provided and where necessary the Data Management Unit should be involved in discussions with a third party service provider. This will ensure that if necessary the data is accessible within the University at a future date. Data Management Staff resources, University Administration data requirements and requirements of individual making the request will be taken into consideration when a recommendation is made.
- 5) Transparent documentation will be kept on the nature of each request and the reason for each recommendation.

Data Requests from Centralised Data managed by the Data Management Unit

- 1) All emailed requests must be made by emailing dmu@ru.ac.za
- 2) Telephonic requests are suggested if discussion with the Data Management Unit is required before the request can be formalised.
- 3) Data requiring personal details rather than aggregated data may be referred to the Registrar for authorisation before being provided.
- 4) The Chief Information Officer (Registrar) in keeping with the Information Acts needs to be informed as to how and where the data will be used before the data can be provided. The Data Manager, acting as an agent, will require the same. Although the Data Manager is empowered to use discretion and release certain data without the permission of the Chief Information Officer this data should be in line with what the Chief Information Officer would find acceptable. If there is any concern that confidentiality and/or the Information Acts are being breached, the request will be referred to the Chief Information Officer.
- 5) All requests for information other than that of a routine nature must be made to the Registrar.

This policy will be communicated to all academic and administrative departments by the Data Management Unit, as well as sent individually to all known developers and users of University datasets.

4.2 REVIEW PROCEDURE:

The Information Technology Steering Committee will, at its last meeting of 2006, review the effectiveness of the policy and recommend any revisions to Senate and Council for implementation from 1 January 2007.