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Establish ORD expertise (e.g. data stewardship) as an independent career path at HEIs by 2028

Gap Analysis and Recommendations for the Higher Education Institutions

Context

As part of the [Programme Open Science I](#) and to implement Action Line B5.4 of the [National Action Plan for Open Research Data (ORD)](#), the [Delegation Open Science](#) of swissuniversities commissioned a project led by the University of Basel to examine the training and career paths of ORD specialists from October 2024 to June 2025.

Key findings and identified challenges

- The creation of distinct professional profiles and career paths for ORD experts, and in particular for Data Stewards, is linked to national initiatives. Countries that strongly foster Open Science and ORD have also enabled careers with clearly defined job profiles.

- ORD experts are still a young professional group in Switzerland. Most have only been working as ORD experts for two or three years, have an academic and scientific background, and are either still active in research or hold positions in libraries of higher education institutions. The majority appear to be affiliated with universities.

- Career paths and professional profiles are currently neither clearly defined nor firmly established. At present, it is difficult to make any statements about differences in career paths with regard to the various types of higher education institutions.

Recommendations

- Strengthening integration within the research community
    - building stronger ties and encouraging regular interactions with researchers. The relationship and/or career paths between ORD experts and researchers should be understood as a continuum, rather than entirely distinct or separate roles.

- Strengthening institutional recognition of ORD practices and roles
    - through sustainable and flexible funding to support ORD practices in research, through clear job titles and enhanced visibility within institutional hierarchies, by acknowledging RDM/ORD professionals as contributors to

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scientific publications, and/or by including awareness and ability to manage, share, and archive data in research assessment and career advancement

- Job security and clear, structured career advancement opportunities
    - o Structural reforms and dedicated career support mechanisms; long-term funding resulting in long-term working contracts for ORD experts
- Broad access to advanced and domain-specific training
    - o through structured, tailored onboarding programs, and (continuous access to) formal training opportunities; institutions should coordinate advanced training and advancement opportunities for ORD experts to reduce the burden on individual institutions and transform the current fragmented approach
- Coherence and strategic consistency across institutions
    - o by harmonizing the definition of data stewardship, establishing a nationally coordinated training program, and supporting a centralized platform for sharing training materials
- Supporting the career development of Data Stewards in Switzerland
    - o Policymakers and funders should provide strategic support, resources, and incentives to embed data stewardship in Swiss research and education, as the promotion of formal recognition of the data steward profession within the Swiss education system is crucial.

For more detailed information, please refer to the final report of the mandate.