RESEARCH DATA CENTRES PROGRAM

CONTRACT PROCESSING FOR COURSES CONDUCTED IN THE RDC

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1 Contract Processing for Courses Conducted in the RDC

1.1 Purpose:

Increasingly professors are interested in conducting courses in Research Data Centres. Typically these courses focus on longitudinal data analysis or a specific research question that can not be answered with other data sources[1]. There are four general types of courses in the RDC environment. The following steps outline the process by which course applications are evaluated. There are also recommendations for the types of support students will need and how to efficiently conduct confidentiality vetting.

Common characteristics for all course types:

- All students and instructors are deemed employees of Statistics Canada and have taken the Oath of Office
- A Microdata Research Contract is signed by course participants and instructors
- All use of Statistics Canada confidential microdata occurs in a RDC facility; no data are released from the RDC
- Students are supported by course instructors and teaching assistants in the RDCs. All assistants to students are deemed employees and listed as co-investigators on the Microdata Research Contract.
- All analytical output leaving the RDC is vetted for confidentiality issues.

[1] See 'Guide to Conducting Instructional Courses in a Research Data Centre' for more information on the required components of a course.

1.2 Course type 1: Full Semester course with student research papers:

Typically a professor is teaching a complex data analysis technique that can not be demonstrated fully with PUMF data. Students attend the classes in a demonstration room in the RDC weekly during one or two semesters. This course is different from other course types in that student proposals are institutionally reviewed and exist as separate projects in the RDC as they are governed by individual Microdata Research Contracts.

Step 1:
The course instructor must submit a proposal to the Chief of the RDC Program.[2] The proposal includes a description of the purpose for the course and the datasets required for instructional purposes. An Appendix C describes the terms of support for the course which will be amended to the Microdata Research Contract at a later date.

Step 2:
Statistics Canada will review the proposal. The primary objective of the review is to determine if there is appropriate use of confidential microdata and if the resources provided by the course instructor are adequate to support students while working in the RDC. Statistics Canada retains the right to refuse access to a course if the resources of the chosen RDC are not adequate.

Step 3:
The RDC Analyst drafts a Microdata Research Contract (MRC) to be signed by the course instructor, Principal Investigator (PI). Students of the course sign the contract as co-investigators. The contract must specify the deliverable (i.e., articles written by students, course materials, etc.).

Step 4:
Each student completes a security check, and oath of office as well as attends an orientation session.

Step 5:
Students are allowed a period of exploratory data analysis to define their research question. For this purpose they use the data sets listed on the course MRC. During this period of exploratory analysis, no output is vetted nor released from the RDC.

Step 6:
Students submit a one-page description of their proposed project including the dataset, research question, variables, methods, etc. they plan to use for their individual project. Students may propose to use datasets not listed on the original course Microdata

[2] See 'Guide to Conducting Instructional Courses in a Research Data Centre' for more information on the contents of the proposal and responsibilities of the course instructor.

Research Contract. These projects are a key component of the course. The description specifies the use of data sets required to answer the research question. These descriptions are institutionally reviewed by the providers of the data sets listed in each proposal. The primary objective of the review is to determine if access to detailed confidential microdata is required to complete the project. Each student signs a sub-contract allowing access to approved datasets. On the sub-contract, the student is the Principal Investigator and the course instructor is listed as a co-investigator. Being part of the research team is an expression of the course instructor's intent to support the student through the final stages of the research project.

Step 7:

Students continue data access but are restricted to their defined research question and to only those data sets specified in their proposal. Each student is working independently in their own project folder. Key time points for output to be released from the RDC are agreed upon by the course instructor and the RDC Analyst. At all times we encourage researchers to refrain from requesting releases of output until near the end of the course.

Step 8:

At the conclusion of the course there are options for deliverable products:

Option 1 – Finish

- Submit a completed article or paper to Statistics Canada.

Option 2 – Short-term extension

- Continue working on their article after the course has officially ended to finalize results. Students will sign an extension for their sub-contract of the original course contract. The duration of this contract will be up to a maximum of six months.

Option 3 – Long-term SSHRC proposal submission

- Expand their course term work into a major journal publication. Students will submit a full proposal consisting of a maximum of five pages by way of the SSHRC online evaluation process. The student is the PI of this contract and can list any other co-investigators they choose and specify any length of time necessary. The instructor of the course need not continue to be a co-investigator on the project but the research team should include an academic supervisor.

1.3 Course type 2: Full Semester course with student assignments:

Typically a professor is teaching a complex data analysis technique that can not be demonstrated fully with PUMF data. The focus of the course is on assignments rather than a research paper. Students attend the classes in a demonstration room in the RDC weekly during one or two semesters. This course is different from other course types in that student proposals are not institutionally reviewed and do not exist as independent projects in the RDC as they are governed by one Microdata Research Contract. No analytical work leaves the RDC.

Step 1:
The course instructor submits a proposal to the Chief of the RDC Program.[3] The proposal includes a description of the purpose for the course and the datasets required for instructional purposes. An Appendix C describes the terms of support for the course which will be amended to the Microdata Research Contract at a later date.

Step 2:
Statistics Canada will review the proposal. The primary objective of the review is to determine if there is appropriate use of confidential microdata and if the resources provided by the course instructor are adequate to support students while working in the RDC. Statistics Canada retains the right to refuse access to a course if the resources of the chosen RDC are not adequate.

Step 3:
The RDC Analyst drafts a Microdata Research Contract (MRC) to be signed by the course instructor, Principal Investigator (PI). Students of the course sign the contract as co-investigators. The contract must specify the deliverable (i.e., course materials, etc.).

Step 4:
Each student completes a security check, and oath of office as well as attends an orientation session.

Step 5:
Students are not required to submit a one-page proposal to Statistics Canada. The course exists as one contract in the RDC and students are restricted to the use of the approved data sets specified in the course proposal.

Step 6:
No output is released from the RDC at any time during the course. Papers and/or assignments are written in the RDC and the course instructor marks them in the RDC.

[3] See 'Guide to Conducting Instructional Courses in a Research Data Centre' for more information on the contents of the proposal and responsibilities of the course instructor.

On occasion, it may benefit the students to have sample syntax or programs that demonstrate the analysis technique. These programs can be vetted by an RDC Analysts and released.

Step 7:

The course instructor provides course materials and assignments to Statistics Canada at the end of the course to satisfy the requirements of the MRC. If students wish to continue their research after the conclusion of a course, they can apply to the SSHRC application process.

1.4 Course type 3: Short Term Training Course:

Typically a professor is teaching a complex data analysis technique that can not be demonstrated fully with PUMF data. Students attend the classes in a demonstration room in the RDC for a short period of time (i.e., one to two weeks). This course is different from other course types in that students are not working to produce a product but rather learn a data analysis technique.

Step 1:
The course instructor must submit a proposal to the Chief of the RDC Program.[4] The proposal includes a description of the purpose for the course and the datasets required for instructional purposes. An Appendix C describes the terms of support for the course which will be amended to the Microdata Research Contract at a later date.

Step 2:
Statistics Canada will review the proposal. The primary objective of the review is to determine if there is appropriate use of confidential microdata and if the resources provided by the course instructor are adequate to support students while working in the RDC. Statistics Canada retains the right to refuse access to a course if the resources of the chosen RDC are not adequate.

Step 3:
The RDC Analyst drafts a Microdata Research Contract (MRC) to be signed by the course instructor, Principal Investigator (PI). The contract must specify the deliverable (i.e., course materials, etc.).

Step 4:
Each student completes a security check, and oath of office as well as attends an orientation session.

Step 5:
The course is conducted and no analytical output is released from the RDC. On occasion, it may benefit the students to have sample syntax or programs that demonstrate the analysis technique. These programs can be vetted by an RDC Analysts and released.

Step 8:
The course instructor provides course materials to Statistics Canada at the end of the course to satisfy the requirements of the MRC. If students wish to continue their research after the conclusion of a course, they can apply to the SSHRC application process.

[4] See 'Guide to Conducting Instructional Courses in a Research Data Centre' for more information on the contents of the proposal and responsibilities of the course instructor.

1.5 Course type 4: Course exists outside the RDC but students are using an RDC:

Typically a professor is teaching a complex data analysis technique that does not require access to data in the RDC. Students attend the classes outside the RDC typically for one or two semesters. However, students require access to Statistics Canada confidential microdata to complete assignments for the course. Some or all of the students may be using the RDC. Students apply for access to Statistics Canada microdata through the SSHRC application system. We recommend a teaching assistant or course instructor work in the RDC with the students as a co-investigator.

Step 1:
The course instructor sends notification of the course to the Chief of the RDC Program.[5] The notification includes a description of the purpose for the course and a description of how the students will be supported while working in the RDC.

Step 2:
Statistics Canada will review the proposal. The primary objective of the review is to determine if there is appropriate use of confidential microdata and if the resources provided by the course instructor are adequate to support students while working in the RDC. Statistics Canada retains the right to refuse access to a course if the resources of the chosen RDC are not adequate.

Step 3:
Each student submits a 5 page proposal to the SSHRC application system. The application includes the dataset, research question, variables, methods, etc., they plan to use for their individual project. The project is a key component of the course. The description specifies the use of data sets required to answer the research question. These descriptions are institutionally reviewed by the providers of the data sets listed in each proposal. The description specifies the use of data sets required to answer the research question and the product to be submitted to Statistics Canada. Students also specify key dates for products to be submitted for course requirements. This description is institutionally reviewed by the providers of the data sets listed in each proposal.

Step 4:
The RDC Analyst drafts a Microdata Research Contract (MRC) to be signed by the student as the Principal Investigator and the course instructor as co-investigators. The contract must specify the deliverable (i.e., articles written by students, course materials, etc.).

Step 5:
Each student completes a security check, orientation session and oath of office.

[5] See 'Guide to Conducting Instructional Courses in a Research Data Centre' for more information on the contents of the proposal and responsibilities of the course instructor.

Step 6:
Students access data sets specified in their proposal. Each student is working independently in their own project folder. Key time points for output to be released from the RDC are agreed upon by the student, course instructor and the RDC Analyst. At all times we encourage researchers to refrain from requesting releases of output until near the end of the course.

Step 7:
The project exists in the RDC for as long as the student specified in the proposal. There is an option for short extensions at the end of the contract.