



Terms of Reference for the World Data System Transition Team

The ICSU World Data Centers (WDC) and the Federation of Astronomical and Geophysical data analysis Services (FAGS) systems have served the international scientific community for the past 50 years. Over the years, they have accumulated a wealth of expertise and insight about international exchange of data, long term data archives, data treatment and data management systems and procedures, with a special focus on data and data analysis needs of major scientific programs. Some of this expertise is unique to WDCs and FAGS, and is reflected the *Bylaws, Constitution, Statutes, the Principles and Responsibilities of the WDCs and conditions for a service to be a FAGS Service*. The new ICSU World Data System (WDS) will replace the framework within which the current WDCs and services of FAGS are currently organized. If it is approved by ICSU General Assembly, the new WDS would function under the oversight of a new WDS Scientific Committee (WDSSC), which would therefore replace the current Panel on World Data Centers and FAGS Council. The transition period before the implementation of the WDS might be as long as 12 months. In order to avoid any interruption in the coordination of the data centers and analysis services and in order for the new WDS to best take advantage of this accumulated wisdom and expertise, a WDS Transition Team (WDSTT) has been formed, with the following purposes:

1. The WDSTT shall develop a white paper of the priority principles, best practices, duties, responsibilities which will be recommended to provide a foundation for the WDS mode of operations.
2. As testament to the usefulness and timeliness of the WDCs and the FAGS, there are many current expressions of interest in developing new WDCs and new data analysis services. The WDSTT shall encourage these efforts to continue in parallel with the development of the WDS. It is anticipated that well-conceived new and planned data activities will be strongly endorsed for WDS membership.
3. As an ongoing effort spearheaded by the WDC Panel, the process of *certification* of the WDCs is entering its second phase while the FAGS Council has an annual review of the FAGS Services. ICSU encourages the continuance of this effort and expects new WDS to consider carefully the certification criteria applied to current WDCs and FAGS Services as part of their application for membership in the WDS. The WDSTT shall complete this task in order to provide a strong basis for revised certification criteria to be developed and adopted by the WDSSC.
4. In addition to task 3 above, the WDSTT will propose formal mechanisms for the evaluation and review of WDS membership applications, both for existing WDC and FAGS Services and for new candidate centers and services.

5. The WDCs and the FAGS Services currently have in place, or are developing, web mirror/partner sites, web portals, common on-line directories, and interoperable data systems. These activities should continue uninterrupted during the transition, insofar as they would be provide valuable input to the WDSSC as it conceives the new system. The WDSTT shall encourage continuance of these activities and will summarize the results for the WDSSC.
6. There is wide consensus that the Unions, Associations, Interdisciplinary Bodies, and other members of ICSU need to become stakeholders in the WDS. The WDS will be developed to address many of the data and data analysis needs of ICSU's programs, but also, it is hoped, the needs of new international programs such as GEO/GEOSS. A concerted effort to engage ICSU members in the WDS must therefore begin now and continue through the transition period so that all ICSU partners can be involved with the initial development of the WDS. The WDSTT shall actively promote the beginning of the development of a community of practice for data activities within the ICSU members.

WDS Transition Team

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