



Service Agreement

Virtual Research Environment (VRE)

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1. Service description

The Virtual Research Environment (VRE) consists of a virtualized desktop environment, optionally supplemented with various extras such as servers, Dockers, databases, etc., fully tailored to the research, where researchers can conduct data analyses jointly and securely. In this environment, partnerships are possible with researchers from within the organization itself or from other institutions worldwide. These services (applications, data & extras) are available 24/7*. The virtual environment can be provided with additional memory, extra powerful processing facilities, and/or heavy graphics support as required. This environment can also be applied when restrictive requirements are imposed on data sets security, or when additional privacy measures are required.

2. For whom

The Virtual Research Environment is based on non-profit and is intended for work for everyone at universities affiliated with the VSNU and medical centers affiliated with the NFU. Initiatives and partnerships between universities, academic houses and third parties, both commercial and non-profit, are supported under the specific condition that the university or the academic center is the coordinator of the intended research.

3. Customer value

It is a place where researchers have full control over their data and results and the risks of data leakage are minimized. You can log in from an existing (own institution) federated account using multi-factor authentication. To ensure that there is no pollution or misuse of data, the internet cannot be accessed directly from the secure work environment. Working in this environment guarantees that your data remains secure, even if your laptop is lost or stolen. The federated account allows you to work safely on several studies at once. Each study has its own closed system, making any direct exchange of data between the studies impossible. The default application landscape is extensive, but specific applications can be incorporated if desired. It is possible to run various versions of the same application simultaneously. The virtual environment components are scalable in capacity if the basic or premium versions do not fulfill your needs. The integrity of the data and results is carefully monitored within the study. For this purpose, various roles are available for each study. A highly secured collaborative environment, role-based, specifically targeted at researchers who work with sensitive data. Great for researchers whose standard university workplace is insufficient and whose applications are not suitable for Linux HPC usage.

4. What do we offer?

The Virtual Research Environment: A reliable, innovative, and fast data analysis environment that considerably lightens the burden of work for researchers. Information can be found at <http://www.rug.nl/vre>.

5. Usage

Various research initiatives, studies and collaborations within the UG and the UMCG are using this service. VRE enables innovative, collaborative ICT environment while complying to data regulations.

6. Product Owner

H.S.K. Brouwers, telephone: 050-3639411, email: h.s.k.brouwers@rug.nl

* More information on support: <https://www.rug.nl/society-business/centre-for-information-technology/research/>

7. Security & privacy

Information security management is set up as a continuous process of planning and monitoring cycles (plan, do, check, act, PDCA), based on ISO27001. It is within these cycles that plans are drawn up and implemented. The results are evaluated and translated into new plans. Over time, processes and systems can change, but also the environment in which these systems operate, the threat landscape, and policies, guidelines and regulations are subject to change. Because of this, the PDCA-cycle is executed annually. Reference: 'Regulation annual information security and data protection plan. 20 March 2019'.

The following security and privacy measures are in place for the VRE:

- Zoning and isolation, backend services & network. The virtual research environment resides in a very trusted zone (UG Baseline Information Security 2021). By default, no direct inbound or outbound traffic will be allowed. No direct internet access;
- Multifactor authentication;
- Federated identity management: login and password management lie within the user's own institution;
- All data access is monitored and audited;
- Compliant to the GDPR privacy policy;
- Compliant to the UG Baseline Information Security 2021;
- Role based access for layered authorization.

Defined Research Roles				
Rights	Drive			Data Transfer within VRE
	H: (Home drive)	G: (Group drive)	I: (Global drive)	Upload/Download
Controller	R/W	R/W	R/W	U/D
Data Manager	R/W	R/W	R	U/D
Researcher+	R/W	R/W	R	U
Researcher	R/W	R/W	R	-
Reviewer	R/W	R	R	-

8. Storage & backup

By default, every user will have a 1 GB home drive and a collaborative group drive of 100 GB. These drives will be backed up in accordance with Service Level Agreement CIT Backup Services. Additional storage can be added on demand. A fair use policy is in effect regarding overuse. Please note that a home drive (H:\) is only used for personal data and OS user management, this is where we keep the personal OS and applications settings. See "Access and storage" for more information.

9. Account administration

Account & group registration will be handled by the DCC (UG). Users of the University of Groningen contact DCC of the University of Groningen: e-mail dcc@rug.nl or go to <https://www.rug.nl/digital-competence-centre/research-it/virtual-workspace>.

All requests will be registered in TOPdesk® and will be followed up with a personal intake if deemed necessary. Minimal information required per user:

- *Name study;*
- *Owner of the study (PI, responsible for study and first contact);*
- *Email (connected to the institutional account if applicable);*
- *First name;*
- *Last name;*
- *Mobile phone;*
- *Role (defined research roles);*
- *Project code (finance);*
- *Start date;*
- *Type of workspace: Basic, Premium (Default) or Custom.*

Users will be notified automatically by email when the account is activated and ready for use.

* Due to restrictions in the software, we use for auditing, monitoring and logging, we are bound by rules regarding the name of the study.

The naming convention (In basic including all English letters (A-Z, a-z) and digits (0-9)) for this is as follows:

- Maximum 40 characters;
- Use of any character for a name from the ASCII character set (48-122) is permitted, except for the following reserved characters:
 - : (colon) ; (semicolon) < (less than) = sign
 - > (greater than) ? (question mark) @ (add sign) [(fore square bracket)
 - \ (backslash)] (back square bracket) _ (underscore) ' (apostrophe)

10. Data transport

For secure data transport into the VRE multiple options are available. Data Managers are allowed to upload and download datasets directly into the VRE. We recommend this usage for smaller datasets only. For larger files, there is a SFTP/CopyServer (SAAS) environment available within a DMZ.

11. Desktop applications

Application installation requests are based on a fair use policy. For application requests which are highly time consuming a one-time fee and/or a custom quotation can be applicable. The VRE has a default set of applications available which are free of use and/or licensed for employees and students at the University of Groningen. For users outside the University of Groningen additional license fees and usage costs may apply.

12. Application License Policy

Software licenses are used within the service VRE. These are licenses that are available within the UG and/or the UMCG, they are licenses for which an UG and/or UMCG license is required.

Within the VRE, the study determines the use of licenses. If the UG or the UMCG is the coordinator of the study (organization PI of the study is leading), then the UG or UMCG licenses are used respectively. In practice, this means that UMCG employees and UG employees use their own organizational licenses. The federated accounts (SURFConext) within the study of which the UG or UMCG is the lead party, use the licenses of the lead party of that study. For studies/applications from organizations other than UMCG and/or UG (=PI does not work at UG and/or UMCG), licenses are explicitly requested at the intake, no UG or UMCG licenses may be used.

Schematic:

VRE Licenses		
PI Study	Researcher	License
UG	UG	UG
	UMCG	UMCG*
	External	UG
UMCG	UG	UG*
	UMCG	UMCG
	External	UMCG
External	UMCG	External
	UG	External
	External	External

* If present, otherwise the license passes to the organization of the PI.

In the event of ambiguities/questions, the product owner of the VRE service will decide. The VRE license policy is part of the UG licensing policy for software.

13. System management

The basic infrastructure environment is hosted, maintained, and managed by the CIT.

Specifically:

- Network infrastructure;
- System hardware;
- Virtualization services (VMWare ESX & Citrix);
- Server and Desktop OS;
- Middleware (e.g., Database management, IAM);
- Workspace management (EUM);
- User management;
- Data management;
- Application delivery services;
- Backup services.

The CIT provides the infrastructure for this system, consisting of hosting the virtual research environment on (virtual) hardware of the UG.

In addition, the CIT ensures:

- Technical system management, including incident and change management of the operating system and database, security and keeping the operating system of the system up to date, monitoring of the system, data storage and back-up of the data of the application systems;
- Linking to the data storage system and back-up system of the CIT and allocating the required storage space;
- The conclusion of a processing agreement between the University of Groningen and external parties, in the context of the General Data Protection Act (AVG);
- Communication and consultation with the customer of the system in the event of malfunctions and incidents.

14. Servicelevel & support

Servicelevel

Service Level A Regular (Monday – Friday 09:00 - 17:00).

Type of service

Basic service.

Support

The following support desks are available for incidents, disruptions, information and feature requests:

Research Support UG DCC:

Users of the University of Groningen contact DCC of the University of Groningen with questions, incidents, and disruptions e-mail dcc@rug.nl or go <https://www.rug.nl/digital-competence-centre/contact/>.

Support general CIT Incidents and disruptions:

CIT Service Desk, tel. 050-363 3232, e-mail citservicedesk@rug.nl.

15. Configuration & Performance

By design and regardless of type and quantity basic or premium every individual study includes 100 GB of free storage space for the Group drive(s) G:\ & I:\. We use by default Windows 11 as desktop operating system.

The following configurations and additions are available:

- Basic: The standard configuration is a highly available virtual workspace with 1 GB home drive, 4 vCPUs, 8 GB memory (no vGPU) that is always guaranteed. Most suitable for regular research, where demands are made on performance and / or functionalities;
- Premium (Default): The standard configuration is a highly available virtual workspace with 1 GB home drive, 8 vCPUs, 2 GB vGPU and 16 GB memory that is always guaranteed. Most suitable for advanced research, where high demands are made on performance and / or functionalities;
- Customization. Based on a personal intake, a quote can be given for desired capacity and performance. Custom-made VRE compared to option 1 & 2 where the following building blocks or a multiple thereof can be used: 1 GB extra Memory and / or 1 GB vGPU Frame Buffer (extra vGPU only possible with premium VRE);
- Additions. Only to be added to an existing study, optionally supplemented with various hard- and software such as servers, Dockers, databases, etc., all fully tailored to the research.

16. Finance

The VRE is a specific service with purchase based on concurrent use. Contract form: DVO Specific service
Contract duration: 1 year with tacit renewal. Notice period: 1 month before expiry date.

The Basic and Premium configurations are financed from the "Basispakket Eenheden". Except for customization, the VRE will not be charged directly to the faculty/end user. Customization is only possible based on the Premium configuration. Unless otherwise indicated, with every new request the Premium configuration will be made available to the costumer.

For pricing on custom work for both internal UG and external clients please contact the financial section of the CIT Management Support team. The financial section of the CIT is housed within the Management Support team of the CIT. For all financial questions, you can email financien-cit@rug.nl.

Monthly billing (afterwards) based on average consumption. The use of storage does not depend on the use of VRE. Any extra GBs compared to standard are billed every year.

In addition to the costs for the Virtual Research Environment, which is based on prices negotiated by the University of Groningen, other prices* might apply for other universities and medical centers (possibly combined with commercial parties). Agreements are made with all parties and recorded within an addendum on the generic Service Agreement or DVO for the VRE. A KPI is a standard part of this agreement.

** Additional (external use) license fees and/or special requests during intake such as applications and databases*

17. Terms of delivery

Depending on the desired functionality current processing times for VRE request:

- Once the VRE application form has been approved, the Basic and Premium VRE will be delivered within a maximum of 3 working days (priority medium).
However, in consultation with the customer a term is usually agreed upon when the VRE must be available;
- An urgent request for the Basic and Premium VRE can be delivered within 4 hours;
- Additions in consultation with the researcher;
- Customization.
 - o Extra requested software that is requested have a lead time of 4 weeks. Not all software can be installed on the VRE, this is always a part of the intake interview;
 - o Extra (large amount of) storage: within 3 working days.

Usage & Access

Upon activation of a VRE, it is actively checked whether the account is still being used. An account will be disabled if it has not been used for at least three months, nothing is deleted. After another three months, the account (and therefore the home directory) will be deleted. If the account is the last account of the study, the group drives are also deleted. After the data is deleted, the backup is retained for another 30 days. Because we use a federated account, deleting or disabling this federated account directly affects the use of the VRE. No longer have access to the federated account means immediately no more access to the VRE.

Duration

This service has a minimum duration of one month per user per study/research.

Termination

You can cancel your subscription by sending an e-mail to dcc@rug.nl, stating the user group, name (s) and date of termination.

18. Connected services

The following services can be used in conjunction or separate from the VRE but are by default excluded from this agreement. Different terms of usage may be in effect.

- Secure Data Landing Zone for file transfer (SFTP/CopyServer) On-premise SAAS;
- Secure User Databases (HA SQL);
- Clinical Trial Processor (CTP), a service for de-identifying and submitting of medical imaging data. based on DICOM standards, the international standard for medical images and related information;
- DCC support throughout the entire research (data) life cycle, from grant proposal to FAIR data archiving. See <https://www.rug.nl/digital-competence-centre> for more information.