

Explanatory notes on the nestor Seal for Trustworthy Digital Archives

nestor Certification Working Group



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Introduction

The extended self-assessment process for digital archives developed and offered by nestor on the basis of the DIN 31644 standard offers digital archives a harmonised and practical method of checking whether they are trustworthy as defined in the "Criteria for Trustworthy Digital Archives ". If the assessment yields a positive result they are entitled to publicise this by using the nestor Seal for Trustworthy Digital Archives.

International Framework

The nestor procedure is more elaborate and its results offer greater accuracy than that of a simple self-assessment, yet it is less elaborate and is less accurate than an intensive audit conducted by external experts as part of a formal certification procedure. Within this context the nestor assessment procedure occupies a position in the middle of three assessment and certification options proposed as part of an EU initiative in the "Memorandum of Understanding" agreed in 2010. In this Memorandum nestor, the "Data Seal of Approval" and the "Repositories Audit and Certification" agreed upon three evaluation and certification levels¹. "Basic certification" under the Data Seal of Approval represents a simple self-assessment, the "Extended certification" represents a plausibility-checked self-assessment and "Formal certification" stands for an audit by external experts. Extended and formal certification are extensions of the "Basic certification" and both can be issued on the basis of DIN 31644 or ISO 16363.

The nestor procedure is based on the specifications contained in DIN 31644 and on the stipulations for "Extended certification" but does not constitute accredited certification.

¹ Memorandum of Understanding to create a European Framework for Audit and Certification of Digital Repositories. - 2010. http://datasealofapproval.org/sites/default/files/20100709_020_signed%20MoU%20to%20create%20a%20European%20Framework%20for%20Audit%20and%20Certification%20of%20Digital%20Repositories.pdf

Extended self-assessment procedure for obtaining the nestor Seal for Trustworthy Digital Archives

Object of the assessment

The DIN standard defines a digital archive as "an organisation (consisting of people and technical systems) which has assumed responsibility for the long-term preservation and long-term availability of digital data and its provision for a specified designated community." Accordingly, this assessment covers both organisational and technical aspects. Any digital archive which fulfils the above definition can be assessed, although not solutions which are exclusively software or hardware-based. Equally it is not possible to assess merely one part of a digital archive (e.g. only the archive storage).

The focus of the assessment is on the solutions used by the digital archive and not on the quality of the archived content. The assessment ascertains the archive's present state of development. Plans, future projects or former circumstances are not included.

Procedure

1. The institution wishing to obtain the nestor Seal notifies nestor of its assessment plans and nominates two contact persons for the procedure. It must also specify the object of the assessment precisely - in most cases this will be a digital archive within an institution. If an institution operates a number of mutually independent digital archives (e.g. one for its own output and one for submissions from external producers), these can either be assessed jointly (i.e. basically as "one archive") or separately (to obtain a number of different nestor seals). If multiple assessments are to be carried out within an archive, these should be weighted, described in full on the basis of the relevant criteria, and evaluated. The institution can include the services delivered by service providers in the evaluation (e.g. data centres for storage).
2. nestor confirms the start of the review to the institution, appoints one or more persons who are responsible for the review and sets the relevant processing deadlines for both sides. The entire audit should not take longer than three months.
3. The archive wishing to obtain the nestor Seal begins its self-assessment. The tools include an assessment form and the instructions and explanations regarding the

individual criteria. The appointed nestor person responsible for the review can be contacted with regard to questions of clarification.

The applicability of each criterion in the standard should first be checked for the case in question. Individual criteria can be excluded: sufficient justification must be given if a criterion is deemed not applicable.

Once the applicable criteria have been determined, the digital archive provides information on each one. It provides a sufficiently comprehensive written report on the implementation status of each individual criterion. It references documents in which the particular situation is documented, or appends these if they are not publicly available. The archive carries out its self-assessment, awarding points based on the following scale of fulfilment:

Not yet actioned	0	No fulfilment plans or documents exist yet for the criterion.
Planned	3	A written plan for fulfilment of the criterion has been drawn up. The plan not only draws upon approaches published elsewhere, it also refers to the specific situation in the archive.
Planned in detail	6	The plans have been prepared in detail. All the necessary information and approvals have been provided or obtained for implementation, which has already commenced.
Implemented	10	The plans have been implemented organisationally and/or technically. The measures have been incorporated into the archive's ongoing operations.

In the case of an assessment rating of 6 and 10 points, the documents will generally be authorised and in many cases published. If the documents cannot be published due to copyright, corporate secret or security reasons, they must be made available to the auditors. Confidentiality is ensured during the review. Working papers which

have been submitted for assessment but have not yet been published are sufficient for a 3-point rating.

In order to obtain the nestor Seal, criteria 1-12 may not be excluded and 10 points should be scored in each case. An average of 7 points must be scored for the remaining applicable criteria. These minimum requirements may change as advances arise in digital archiving. nestor updates the requirements at regular intervals.

4. At the end of the self-assessment the archive wishing to receive the nestor Seal presents its documentation to the relevant nestor contact person. The self-assessment and the documents submitted or referenced must be in German or English. The documents will then be submitted to a plausibility check by a nestor reviewer.

- Does the information provided meet the criteria and correspond to the related notes? Is it complete and up-to-date? Is it clear and comprehensible?
- Is the information presented in a logical form, is it internally consistent?
- Are the solutions appropriate in terms of the digital archive's targets and tasks?

If the reviewer reaches different conclusions regarding the situation to those of the digital archive itself, the archive will be requested to issue a statement. At the end of the audit, the reviewer will write a report and forward this to the second reviewer.

5. The second reviewer checks the work of the first reviewer and then, after consulting with the first reviewer, determines the final points total for the extended self-assessment. Finally the second reviewer decides whether the archive can be awarded a nestor Seal or not. A review report containing a summary of the results is written. This contains the following information: date of the review, object of the review, number of criteria applied, points attained in total and per criterion, justifications for excluded criteria. The archive and the nestor office are informed. If the archive does not agree with the decision, it can lodge an appeal with the nestor Certification working group. This adjudicates in all disputes and if any procedural aspects are unclear.

6. The Seal is valid subsequent to a positive assessment being issued once the digital archive has published the review report, its evaluation responses and all relevant documents together with the Seal in an easily locatable position on its website and once it has been added to the register of certified archives by the nestor administrative office. The Seal includes the year of issue. Formally, it is valid indefinitely. However, its relevance is likely to diminish after a number of years unless a further review is conducted. Nevertheless, there is no requirement to repeat the procedure.



nestor seal with year of issue