

QDAsoftware.org

The REFI-QDA Standard

The REFI-QDA Standard enables interoperability between Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS or CAQDAS) programs. Its purpose is to enable users to exchange processed data between programs. It is an open standard and any program can implement it, thus increasing the number of software programs that can ‘talk’ to one another.

Usefulness of the REFI-QDA Standard

An exchange format allows data to be exported from one software program and then imported into another. This will be useful to users and teachers of QDA software programs for several reasons, including:

- researchers may need analytic tools not provided by the software they are familiar with, and therefore need to transfer data to another program in order to accomplish those tasks
- researchers working on collaborative research projects may be in teams where different members use different software programs
- researchers working at an institution with a site license for one program may move to an institution with a different site license and need to continue working with their data
- a common standard maximizes the possibility of using project data in the future and for archiving purposes
- teachers illustrating differences between programs and ways of analysing qualitative data in different methodological contexts need to be able to show the same research project in different programs

More information and additional examples of the utility of the standard in the form of ‘user-stories’ can be found in Evers (2018).

Goals in creating the REFI-QDA Standard

The goals were to create a standardized, common, open exchange format, in order to:

1. Exchange projects in both directions (import and export) between all the software programs included in the Rotterdam Exchange Format Initiative (REFI).
2. Create an end product which is software-independent (i.e. open and accessible to other software companies) and is as software-neutral as possible.
3. Launch a website on which the exchange format is documented and promoted, and where developers can get assistance in supporting and implementing the standard.
4. Disseminate the outcome of the Initiative to different parties who might benefit from an exchange format (i.e. software users, research community, academic community, archives).

Please use #REFI-QDA on social media to talk about the REFI-QDA Standard

Disclaimer

All the software programs involved have different features. Therefore – as is the case in any software exchange endeavour – there will be some data loss when exchanging data from one program to another. In developing the standard we have worked hard to minimize data loss whilst reflecting the uniqueness of each software program.

Information about the elements that may be lost or modified when exchanging to a different program are made available by each QDA software program – either within the program itself or on the software developer website.

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