

The decision sheet — levels and tools

Data levels · UZH · 3 September 2026

		What it covers
öffentlich	<i>public</i>	Published, or explicitly cleared for publication. A preprint is public; a submitted manuscript is not.
intern	<i>internal</i>	The default for anything unmarked. Unpublished work, internal documents, drafts.
vertraulich	<i>confidential</i>	Personnel files, student data (exams, theses, coursework), personal research data, logs.
geheim	<i>secret</i>	Professional secrecy, art. 321 / 321bis Swiss Criminal Code — patient data, research involving human beings under the HRA; contractual NDAs; judicial files.

Three rules that settle most cases

1. **An unmarked document is at least *intern*.** There is no “unclassified”.
2. **Until publication, everything is at least *intern*.** Including your own work.
3. **Classification is inherited** across whole information holdings. One sensitive item pulls its container up with it.

And four things the level does not tell you

Classification governs **confidentiality**. It is silent on:

- **Contracts** — platform terms, NDAs, data transfer agreements, grant conditions. Data can be public by level and still contractually barred from going anywhere.
- **Professional obligations** — peer-review confidentiality, professional secrecy. These bind regardless of level.
- **Ethics approvals** — permission to *use* data for research does not reclassify it, and does not permit sending it to a commercial provider.
- **Local practice** — what your faculty, institute, supervisor or data steward requires.

► Which tool can hold it?

Verified at source 27 August 2026. It will change — check the ZI page before you rely on it.

Tool	Levels permitted	Hosting
Free AI tools — ChatGPT, Claude, DeepL, Copilot...	öffentlich only	worldwide cloud
M365 Copilot Chat (Basic)	öffentlich, intern	EU cloud
M365 Copilot (Premium)	+ vertraulich ¹	EU cloud
DeepL Pro Advanced	+ vertraulich	EU cloud
GitHub Copilot	öffentlich, intern	worldwide cloud
ScienceCloud (GPU research)	+ vertraulich ²	on premises
ScienceCluster (GPU research)	öffentlich, intern	on premises
Supercomputer (GPU research)	öffentlich, intern ³	cloud CH
LM Studio + Mistral	+ vertraulich	on device

¹ web search disabled · ² depends on usage context · ³ non-personalised scientific data only

Free AI tools are for *öffentlich* data only.

For *geheim* data there is no AI tool at all.

When something stops you: four exits, each with a price

Exit	What it costs
Anonymise / de-identify	time — and often <i>precisely</i> the signal you needed
Switch tool (local, or institutional)	model quality, sometimes feasibility
Do it by hand	months. For a large corpus, it means not doing it
Ask for infrastructure that does not exist yet	does not solve your problem this year

Two things about anonymisation, before assuming it is the easy exit. It is not free — fifty interviews of fifty pages is weeks of work by someone who understands the material, and you cannot hand it to the AI to do, because handing over the transcript *is already the transfer you were avoiding*. And sometimes it is impossible: in rare disease that patient may be the only case in the canton, so strip the name, the age and the hospital and the condition alone still identifies them.

Source: *Weisung zur Klassifizierung von Informationen (UZH, in force 01.09.2023) · Übersicht KI-Tools und Services, ZI UZH. **Orientation, not legal advice** — for a real case, ask your ethics committee, the data protection officer, or ZI.*