

## **Q&A: Trusted Research and Innovation**

### **Q1: What is Trusted Research?**

A: Trusted Research is a cross government, cross research and innovation sector term for protecting the UK's intellectual property, sensitive research, people and infrastructure from potential theft, misuse and exploitation, including as a result of hostile activity by state and other actors. Consequently, UKRI has brought together work on research and innovation under a single work programme, Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&I).

### **Q2: Why has UKRI developed the TR&I work programme?**

A: UKRI has launched the TR&I work programme to further support and help protect all those working in our thriving and collaborative international research and innovation sector.

The TR&I work programme brings together and builds on existing work across both UKRI and the wider UK sector. UKRI recognises that Trusted Research is a shared responsibility and have therefore incorporated collaboration and sector-engagement in order to align and coordinate approaches, where appropriate, and to minimise the duplication of effort.

### **Q3: Why establish the TR&I programme now?**

A: The TR&I work programme was launched in response to the ever-changing dynamics of international research collaboration, coupled with increasing scrutiny and technical guidance. This work programme recognises and helps respond to the UK government's [Integrated Review](#), which acknowledged the need to 'better protect our intellectual property and sensitive research', and will in turn help the UK government deliver the upcoming National Resilience Strategy.

UKRI has a long-standing commitment to effective international collaboration in research and innovation and is equally committed to ensuring that this takes place securely, with integrity and within strong ethical frameworks, by building on and strengthening initiatives already underway across the sector. To ensure that research and innovation in the UK continues to thrive, international collaboration must be safeguarded and remain as open as possible but as secure as necessary.

### **Q4: What is UKRI doing towards TR&I?**

A: This is an evolving work programme. UKRI will continue to update its approach to reflect best practice and policies. We have already initiated a number of activities to help support our staff, projects and physical infrastructure as well as sector teams, discoveries and innovations. These include (but are not limited to):

- Updating Council fEC and training grants' [Terms and Conditions](#), as well as Innovate UK Terms and Conditions, to clarify expectations and reflect best practice across the sector.
- Published a set of [Principles](#) outlining UKRI's expectations of organisations and universities funded by UKRI in relation to due diligence for international collaboration.
- Establishing a programme of training and communication to inform and support colleagues to establish a collective understanding and approach and working across the sector with other bodies to coordinate training and align advice.
- Developing and implementing effective risk assessment protocols to identify proposals that may be high risk and manage these appropriately and efficiently.
- Developing an overarching TR&I Framework to guide UKRI's approach moving forward.
- Collaborating with key international partners to promote and contribute to a robust and trusted global research and innovation ecosystem through the sharing of knowledge and best practice.
- Reviewing internal policies to ensure institutes, centres and laboratories are best placed to identify and manage issues efficiently and effectively.

**Q5: What is happening in the wider UK sector regarding TR&I?**

A: Across the sector, a range of activities and policies have also been established to support trusted research. These include (but are not limited to):

- The UK government has established a [Research Collaboration Advice Team \(RCAT\)](#), which will be regionally based across the UK, and will work with their local organisations to help protect their work from hostile activity.
- A number of UK universities are establishing the first Export Control Group to foster greater collaboration and dialogue between the sector and government and increase national resilience across export control and dual use. The group will meet three times per year and will link to the Universities UK Security Group.
- An [Academic Technology Approval Scheme \(ATAS\)](#) certificate is required for international students and researchers (apart from exempt nationalities) studying or researching subjects or research areas where knowledge could be used in programmes to develop Advanced Conventional Military Technology (ACMT), Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) or their means of delivery. This Guidance was further updated in September 2021 to reflect high application numbers and processing times.

The UK government has also passed the [National Security and Investment Act \(2021\)](#), which provides the government with powers to scrutinise and intervene in business transactions (including by higher education and research organisations), such as takeovers, to protect national security. Accompanying [Guidance](#) on the implementation of this Act has also been published.

Updates are also being made to the Official Secrets Acts, with the proposal of a Foreign Influence Registration Scheme, which would establish a government-managed register of declared activities that are undertaken for, or on behalf of, a foreign state.

Consultation on a number of wider initiatives that will have implications for trusted research remain ongoing. These include the upcoming National Resilience Strategy and the Bureaucracy Review, as well as additional work looking at financial sustainability. UKRI continue to be engaged in the development of these initiatives and is working with stakeholders across the sector and across government to shape these activities to ensure they are both effective and beneficial for the sector.

**Q6: What are the roles and responsibilities of the wider UK R&I sector around TR&I?**

A: In general, the sector's primary responsibility is to continue to identify and mitigate the risk of hostile interference. This must sit within the remit of the research organisation or business making the application for funding or access to UKRI facilities.

All stakeholders have an important role to play in ensuring good and trusted research and innovation management, with shared roles across the sector. Some responsibilities are embedded in conditions, whilst others may be given to different stakeholders through legislation.

**Q7: What are the implications for UKRI?**

A: UKRI has an important role in supporting and promoting trusted research within the UK system, and contributing to a robust and trusted global science ecosystem more broadly.

Where UKRI is the risk owner for its own staff – for example where UKRI's own staff are conducting research or UKRI specialist scientific facilities are being used – or has responsibilities to ensure that others are taking responsibility for their role in managing the risk, it will develop clear and consistent policies and processes as well as guidance and support, building out from existing arrangements. For example, due diligence checks on financial and export controls processes.

In parallel, UKRI are also working with stakeholders across the sector to engage in wider policy considerations and development – as mentioned above – to help inform the broader sector approach and foster international collaboration in a way that isn't overly bureaucratic.

**Q8: Will this impact what research UKRI funds, and who it collaborates with?**

A: UKRI remains committed to working in partnership to fund excellence-based research and innovation, wherever our collaborators are based in the world. The focus of TR&I is to help ensure that all collaborative research is delivered in a way that is safe, secure, and transparent. The TR&I work programme therefore seeks to complement UKRI's broader approach toward [Open Research](#).

**Q9: Is this directed towards a particular country or research area?**

A: UKRI's Trusted Research and Innovation work programme is country agnostic: it is not targeting a particular country or group of people. Rather, it is aimed at protecting the UK's research and innovation investments, irrespective of the source of the risk.

All research organisations and universities need to manage risk, however some organisations and universities will need to manage more significant risks, notably those working on certain sensitive research areas or topics. UKRI's actions are therefore designed to identify these at the outset to ensure sufficient measures are taken to manage these effectively. As such, support to ensure compliance with particular country-specific requirements may be provided as needed.

As part of its consultation under the National Security and Investment Act, the UK government has identified [17 sectors](#) which are most likely to give rise to national security risks, and which may provide a reference point for organisations and individuals with their respective risk management.

Should further guidance be made available, UKRI remain connected to BEIS, technical agencies and other departments and are working closely with the sector about how best to proportionately strengthen its approach.

**Q10: What changes specifically have been made to UKRI Terms and Conditions?**

A: Additional conditions have been added to require appropriate due diligence be taken in advance of activities or collaborations between parties commencing. More details can be found at: <https://www.ukri.org/news/update-to-ukri-fec-grant-and-training-grant-terms-and-conditions/>

**Q11: Will these changes to UKRI's Terms and Conditions result in additional resource requirements or further bureaucracy?**

A: Revisions to UKRI's Terms and Conditions aren't intended to add unnecessary bureaucracy, nor increase the administrative burden on ourselves or our research and innovation partners, but rather to support our researchers to focus on research and related activities which contribute to a healthy research base.

It is envisaged that any additional requirements in the short-term will mitigate against the need for more administrative requirements in the longer term by embedding effective due diligence from the outset. UKRI will continue to review its policies and frameworks, to ensure its approach remains agile and fit for purpose.

We see this programme as a way of delivering supportive tools, approaches, guidance and measures that should enable new relationships to begin and flourish, and to strengthen existing collaboration.

**Q12: Are there any next steps planned for due diligence considerations?**

A: UKRI are continuing discussions with relevant stakeholders across the sector on possible ways to support cross-sector due diligence.

One option proposed by the Association for Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA), as described in its report '[Due Diligence in International Research - Options for Improved Efficiency, Equity and Quality](#)' (March 2021), is *'to establish a Due Diligence Clearing House and National Service (that) should be grant funded by Research England and UKRI in partnership with a broader consortium of UK research funders and government departments (project phase 2 led by ARMA)'*.

Discussions with Research England, UKRI and ARMA have been progressed and a series of roundtables will be held in the autumn with the university and wider research sector to further explore this concept. Appropriate government departments and agencies views will also be sought. It is intended that an options paper will result from these discussions to inform next steps.

**Q13: How long will the TR&I work programme last?**

A: The TR&I work programme will operate for approximately one year, with its learnings and outputs being incorporated into UKRI's approach moving forward. Where appropriate, initiatives and activities will continue beyond this timeframe, particularly those where alignment with wider conditions or changes are needed.

**Q14: Is UKRI working with partners and other stakeholders on TR&I?**

A: We are already working closely with academic, business and government teams, sharing knowledge and information to develop this guidance. This ensures everyone across the UK research and innovation sector is involved in developing the key mitigation and risk protocols that minimise threats and empower researchers, innovators and organisations to make informed decisions and collaborate to create an environment that allows international partnerships and open research to flourish.

UKRI continues to work with wider sector stakeholders to co-develop this approach, such as the Royal Academy of Engineering, who co-hosted a series of workshops in the autumn. UKRI also hosted an event in partnership with Universities UK and Wilton Park in November 2021, to continue to engage the sector to share best practices and co-develop mitigation approaches.

**Q15: Is this response proportionate?**

A: Absolutely. Research and innovation is a dynamic and complex sector and it is vital that we all work together to ensure we have the right guidance in place and the flexibility to adapt as new issues emerge. We are effectively reviewing what we have so far in an objective and proportionate manner, in order to balance the benefits of international collaboration with the need for robust and transparent mechanisms that ensure the integrity of this research. We are also future proofing the information and processes in order to act fast, united and cross-sector as new circumstances emerge.,

**Q16: Will this have a negative impact on UKRI's international partnerships or programmes?**

A: There is no reason for it to. UKRI works with partners to foster and support international collaboration in pursuit of excellent research and innovation, and this is just another aspect of those trusted relationships.

UKRI will continue to engage and collaborate with international partners on areas of mutual strategic interest. This will ensure international collaboration remains at the forefront of UKRI's strategic approach and help keep the UK's place at the leading edge of science and technology.

UKRI does not intend to hinder international collaborations and is continuing to work across the sector on processes that are not overly control-oriented or bureaucratic.

**Q17: What further guidance can I access about TR&I?**

A: UKRI are also working with stakeholders across the sector to identify how best to communicate the various support and guidance already in place. Of particular note:

- Universities UK have published [Guidance](#) for universities to help inform their management of security-related risks.
- The UK Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) – the government authority for protective security advice to the UK national infrastructure – have also launched specific Trusted Research and Innovation guidance for [academia](#) and also [industry](#).
- Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) – which administers the UK’s system of export controls and licensing for military and dual-use items – have published [guidance](#) specifically for academics or post-graduates in fields where there is a high-risk it could be used for military purposes.

Further information about UKRI’s Trusted Research and Innovation work programme, including on-going sector developments, can be found (and will be kept updated) on the UKRI [website](#).

**Q18: Who can I contact within UKRI to discuss more?**

A: For general enquiries or further information about the TR&I work programme, please contact [trustedresearch&innovation@ukri.org](mailto:trustedresearch&innovation@ukri.org)

For Press and Media enquiries, please contact [press@ukri.org](mailto:press@ukri.org).

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Appendix I: Glossary of Terms

**Trusted Research:** a cross-Government initiative that aims to support the integrity of the system of international research collaboration, which is vital to the continued success of the UK's research and innovation sector.

**Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&I):** the UKRI work programme that has been developed in support of this wider initiative, which is aimed at protecting all those working in our thriving and collaborative international research and innovation sector.

**Research Integrity:** research carried out with a high level of integrity upholds values of honesty, rigor, transparency and open communication, as well as care and respect for those involved in research and accountability for a positive research environment.

**Conflict of Interest:** a set of circumstances that create a risk that an individual's ability to apply judgement or act in one role is, or could be, impaired or influenced by a secondary interest.

**Country agnostic:** a non-discriminatory approach that does not target a particular country or group of people.

**Intellectual Property (IP):** allows people to own their creativity and innovation in the same way that they can own physical property.

**Dual use:** knowledge, information, products and technologies that could be directly misapplied to pose a significant threat with broad potential consequences

**Export Control:** An export license is needed before the export of controlled military goods, software and technology and items on the UK dual-use list from the UK to another country.

**Foreign interference vs foreign influence:** Foreign interference is carried out by, or on behalf of a foreign actor and is contrary to national sovereignty, values, and interests. It is coercive, covert, deceptive or corrupting. This is in contrast to foreign influence, which is part of normal diplomatic relations and is normally conducted in an open and transparent manner.