UKRI Staff Script: Trusted Research and Innovation
Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: What is Trusted Research?
A: Trusted Research is a 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 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 does UKRI have a TR&I programme?
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. The 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 continues to update its approach to reflect best practice and policies.

In 2023, UKRI is launching its risk framework, the 10 Steps to TR&I, which aims to provide a consistent and transparent baseline across the UKRI and its constituent councils for assessing risk relating to trusted research and implementing the appropriate mitigations within its activities.

We have also launched a training programme for UKRI staff to increase their understanding of trusted research and help inform their approach towards managing these types of risks day to day. An initial awareness-raising module has been launched, with new modules to come.

A number of other initiatives to support our staff, projects and physical infrastructure have also been established through this work programme, including (but 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.

- Publishing a set of [Principles](#) outlining UKRI's expectations of organisations and universities funded by UKRI in relation to due diligence for international collaboration.
- 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.

In 2021, the UK government passed the [National Security and Investment (NSI) Act](#), which provides the government with powers to scrutinise and intervene in business transactions (including by higher education and research organisations) in [17 key areas of the economy](#), to protect national security. Accompanying Guidance on the implementation of this Act has also been published.

Other initiatives include (but are not limited to):
- The UK government has established a [Research Collaboration Advice Team (RCAT)](#), which is regionally based across the UK, and works with their local organisations to help protect their work from hostile activity.
- An [Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)](#) certificate is now 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.
- In March 2023, The Association for Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) published a [report](#): *Complex Collaborations – Efficiency, Equity, Quality and Security in International Research* to explore the current challenges facing the sector relating to due diligence requirements, with a particular emphasis on trusted research and security.
- A number of UK universities and wider stakeholders – including UKRI – have established 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 meets three times per year and will link to the Universities UK Security Group.

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 difference 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. The programme remains in conversation with the sector, with HMG and with technical agencies to agilely respond to evolving policies, legislation and regulation.

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 NSI 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 remains connected to DSIT, 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 on due diligence in international research 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)'.

Q14: Is UKRI working with partners and other stakeholders on TR&I?
A: We continue to work 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 2021. UKRI has also been hosting a series of events in partnership with Universities UK and Wilton Park to continue to engage the sector and key international stakeholders to share best practices and co-develop mitigation approaches. Further partner engagement and exchange happens as part of the TR&I programme.

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:
- UKRI, together with UK's National Protective Security Agency (NPSA) – the government authority for protective security advice to the UK national infrastructure – and UUK have also co-developed an overview of higher education sector guidance on Managing risks in international research and innovation.
- Universities UK (UUK) have also published updated guidance for universities to help inform their management of security-related risks.

- NPSA has 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.
- A series of [case studies](#) has also been published by the Cabinet Office on YouTube to present specific risk scenarios researchers and colleagues involved in international collaboration might face.

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

For Press and Media enquiries, please contact press@ukri.org.