



# Trusted Research

**UNIVERSITY  
OF WARWICK**



**01**

Background to Trusted Research

**02**

Compliance Obligations

Export Controls

HTA / Nagoya

NSI Act

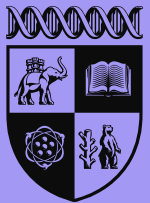
Due Diligence

Foreign Influence Registration Scheme

Ethical Principles

**01**

# **Background to Trusted Research**



# Trusted Research

- Trusted Research Guidelines released in 2021 by UK Government
- Raises awareness of the potential **risks** to UK research
- Helps researchers, UK universities and industry partners to **have confidence in international collaboration** and **make informed decisions around potential risks**
- Seeks to **protect research, IP, and personal information** whilst ensuring that measures are **proportionate to support international engagement**

“

*“State actors are targeting UK universities to steal personal data, research data and intellectual property and this could be used to help their own military, commercial and authoritarian interests.”*

National Protective Security Agency



# What are you at risk from?



[Reputational RISK](#) (video link)



Level of risk is dependent on partner and sensitivity of research and technology (dual-use, commercially valuable, TRL, subject to export controls)

# Why protect your research?

1

**Protect** research, data, IP and commercially sensitive information and technology

2

**Protect** individual reputation

3

**Protect** national security

4

**Prevent** the misuse of your research

5

**Prevent** legal consequences (e.g. breach of UK Export Controls can be a **criminal offence**)

# Know Your Partner

## **Who is funding your research and who is your research partner? Consider:**

- How much information about the partner or funder is available?
- How did the relationship start?
- Are there shared objectives and values for the research? Have you established why this prospective partner wants to work with you?
- What are the affiliations with other countries and entities (e.g. foreign militaries)?
- Are there any conflicts of interest?
- How does the country in which your prospective partner is from or based in approach academic freedom and open science?

**First steps: Do basic open source searches (e.g. check UK sanctions list) and engage R&IS for a due diligence assessment**

# Know Your Research

## What are the potential uses of your research?

- Are you undertaking research collaboration in a sensitive area?
- Are there any dual-use applications to your research?
- Is any of the research likely to be subject to UK or other countries' export licence controls?
- Are there commercial applications of the research and are there IP protections in place?
- Do you need to protect sensitive data or personally identifiable information (e.g. genetic/medical information, population datasets, personal details, commercial test data)?
- Will your prospective partner be granted access to your institution's IT network? What wider visibility of your institution's research and data could this give them?

**First steps: consider the potential uses of your research and engage R&IS**

# Sensitive Research Areas

- Advanced Materials
- Advanced Robotic
- Aerospace and Propulsion
- Artificial Intelligence
- Civil Nuclear
- Communications
- Computing Hardware
- Critical Suppliers to Government
- Cryptographic Authentication
- Data Infrastructure
- Defence

- Electronics
- Energy
- Military and Dual-Use
- Quantum Technologies
- Satellite and Space Technologies
- Sensors and Lasers
- Suppliers to the Emergency Services
- Synthetic Biology
- Transport

*Based on list from National Security & Investment Act*

# Case Study: Risks While Attending Conference



As part of an ongoing research project funded by a UK funder, you attend an international conference to present your research in relation to increased **efficiency for aerospace engines**



While at the conference, someone you have not previously met approaches you and starts to chat about your research. This individual proceeds to ask you meet their colleague.



This colleague states they are looking to **start a lab researching aerospace engines** in Country X, and asks whether you would be **willing to spend 2-3 months per year** leading the lab in exchange for a **cash payment and research funding**.



***What risks are present here?  
What steps could you take?***

# Risks & Mitigation Options

## Risks

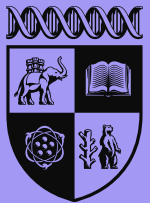
- Export controls & national security risks
- Lack of IP protections
- Reputational damage
- Loss of commercial and economic opportunities

## Mitigation options

- Notify department/RIS
- Due diligence on partner (e.g. which research institute/university or company are they affiliated with?)
- Export controls assessment
- IP protections

**02**

# **Compliance Obligations**



## What Is Covered Under Trusted Research?



# Export Controls

## What is an export?

### The physical taking or sending of items outside of the UK:

- Shipping components/devices/samples to a collaborator, or for repair/maintenance
- Travelling overseas with an item (e.g., laptop, phone, memory stick, hard drive, camera)

### The electronic transmission of items outside of the UK:

- Emailing information to overseas collaborators
- Technical discussions during an international web conference
- Digital / Remote Presentation
- Accessing data whilst outside of the UK (e.g., via cloud storage)
- Teaching overseas



# UK Export Controls

- Restrict the export & communication of **sensitive** technology and strategic goods
- Prevent the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and counter international threats including terrorism
- The controls have developed and today apply to a broad range of technology/items which could be misused.

## UK Legislation

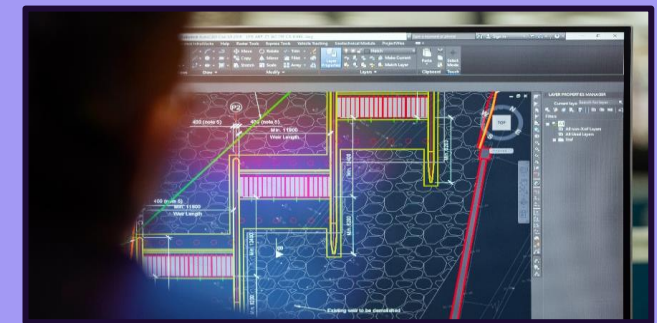
- Export Control Act (2002)
- Export Control Order (2008)



# What is a Controlled Item

The item (goods, software or technology) being exported is:

- On a control list
  - Military and/or dual-use items
  - Physical items and “technology”
- Not on a control list but an ‘End Use’ control applies
  - WMD / Military end-use



## UK Strategic Export Control Lists

The consolidated list of strategic military and dual-use items that require export authorisation from Great Britain and Northern Ireland

# Defining Military and Dual-Use

## Military

- Specially designed or modified for military use
- Design intent is key
- Not just weapons

## Dual-Use

- May have a military application though not designed for that use
- Applies to many goods – from electronic components to raw materials
- Complex to interpret – based on performance parameters

## Dual-Use List

[Annex I to Regulation (EC)1 No. 428/2009]:

- Category 0 Nuclear materials, facilities and equipment
- Category 1 Special materials and related equipment
- Category 2 Materials processing
- Category 3 Electronics
- Category 4 Computers
- Category 5 Telecommunications and “information security”
- Category 6 Sensors and lasers
- Category 7 Navigation and avionics
- Category 8 Marine
- Category 9 Aerospace and Propulsion

# End Use Controls

The government has powers to require an export licence for items even if they are not on the consolidated control list.

## Military end-use controls

- May apply if there is a risk the item is intended for military use in a destination subject to an arms embargo
- Guidance is available [End-use controls applying to military related items - GOV.UK](#)

## WMD & WMD technical assistance end-use controls ([End-use controls applying to WMD-related items, including technical help - GOV.UK](#))

- May apply if there is a risk the item may be intended or diverted for purposes connect with WMD or their means of delivery
- Technical assistance includes:
  - Instructions
  - Skills
  - Training
  - Working knowledge
  - Consulting services
  - Transfer of technical data

# Sanctions & Penalties

- A breach of UK Export Controls can be a **criminal offence**
- Sanctions apply to **individual researchers and institutions**
- Accidental non-compliance followed by voluntary disclosure: **civil penalties**
- Knowingly exporting without a licence: **criminal offence**
- Unlimited fines
- Prison sentence up to a **maximum of 10 years**

From January to March 2025, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) agreed compound settlements with 3 UK exporters totalling close to £3.7 million.

The settlements relate to unlicensed exports of military-listed goods and related activity prohibited by The Export Control Order 2008 and contrary to The Customs and Excise Management Act 1979. These do not relate to sanctions offences.

The 3 settlements agreed with UK companies were:

- January 2025 – £10,900.00 was paid for export license breaches in relation to the export of military goods controlled by The Export Control Order 2008
- February 2025 – £431,232.20 was paid relating to the unlicensed exports of military goods controlled by The Export Control Order 2008
- February 2025 – £3,231,762.40 was paid relating to the unlicensed exports of military goods controlled by The Export Control Order 2008

# What to do if your research is 'controlled'



If you determine that your research is 'controlled', this is not necessarily a roadblock!

- R&IS will support you to ensure the appropriate export licence is in place
- Contact [researchcompliance@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:researchcompliance@warwick.ac.uk) who will support you:
  - Identify relevant control list entry, or confirm end-user concerns
  - Collate information and documentation for licence application
  - Submit and manage licence application
  - Provide instructions on compliance with licence terms
- Items and / or technology must not be exported until a licence is obtained

# Exemptions for Academic Research

## Basic Scientific Research

- Be solely to add to the sum of human knowledge
- Not be aimed as a specific, short term, practical aim
- Not address a specific technical problem

Consider the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) : <3 would count as BSR  
Only applies to dual-use technologies

## In the public domain

Information that is already in the public domain can be shared freely without restriction

## Patents

The minimum information necessary for a patent application.



# Key Resources: Goods and OGEL Checker

**Goods Checker:** the [Goods Checker Tool](#) helps to establish if your items are controlled and identify the appropriate control entry ('rating') from the [UK Strategic Export Control Lists](#).

**OGEL Checker:** The [OGEL Checker](#) helps to identify if an appropriate Open General Export Licence (OGEL) exists



**The Human Tissue Act  
regulates the removal,  
storage, and use of human  
organs and other tissue for  
specific health-related  
purposes**

UoW Designated Individual:  
Professor Geraldine  
Hartshorne

Further details and specific  
training available from R&IS

[HTA@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:HTA@warwick.ac.uk)



**The Nagoya Protocol is a legally binding global agreement that implements the access and benefit-sharing obligations of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

Further details and specific training available from R&IS

[ResearchCompliance@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:ResearchCompliance@warwick.ac.uk)

# National Security and Investment Act (NSIA)

- The Act focuses on issues of national security and the acquisition of entities which may require further review by the Government (known as “qualifying entities”).
- It is a distinct and independent piece of legislation from regulations governing Export Controls and can apply to transactions taking place entirely within the UK even where there is no export taking place. It principally applies to the set-up of grants and contracts.
- Your pre-award team are familiar with the University Policy and SOP and may ask some additional questions during their usual due diligence process.
- To date, the University has not made any notification of qualifying entities.

# NSIA Continued

- Grants the government the right to **scrutinise, intervene, block, or unwind certain acquisitions** by UK and foreign entities, including universities, businesses, and investors, that could harm the UK's national security.
- **Relevant Qualifying entities (mandatory notification)** include universities, university subsidiary, and university spin-outs
- **Qualifying assets (voluntary)** include designs, plans, drawings and specifications, software, trade secrets, databases, source code, algorithms, formulae, land, tangible moveable property (e.g. lab equipment)

## 17 Sensitive Areas:

advanced materials,  
advanced robotics,  
AI,  
civil nuclear,  
communications,  
computing hardware,  
critical suppliers to government,  
cryptographic authentication,  
data infrastructure,  
defence,  
energy,  
military and dual use,  
quantum tech,  
satellite and space technologies,  
suppliers to the emergency services,  
synthetic biology,  
transport.



## Case study: NSIA notification

- Researchers at a UK university have developed a **new software system for autonomous vehicles** and are seeking to create a spin-out company.
- The spin-out company is seeking commercial partners to support the testing and manufacturing of vehicles with the new software.
- An overseas transport corporation (**Corporation A**) offers to invest funds in exchange for a **25 % stake** in the spin-out company.
- **Likely to require notification to UK government as the spin-out is in a critical area (transport) and gives Corporation A certain level of control over spin-out**
- **Dual-use and national security risk:** use of autonomous vehicles in defence settings
- High commercial value

# Due Diligence

What it is and why we do it

- Designed to cover a range of risk areas relating to university values and potential reputational harm.
- Includes Ethical Principles.
- Important to complete Due Diligence checks on all funders, direct partners/collaborators, project leads and subcontractors as early as possible.
- Important to cover parent companies and corporate structures/links.
- Checks are valid for 6 months, or 3 months if defence sector
- R&IS will pay particular attention to “direct association” with any human rights violations

# Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS)

- Legislation that aims to strengthen resilience of UK political system against covert foreign influence.
- Provides greater assurance around activities of certain foreign powers or entities that may post a national security risk.
- Two-tier system requiring public bodies to register arrangements to carry out
  - Political influence activities directed by a foreign power
  - Any activities conducted for or behalf of entities on the enhanced list

# FIRS continued

## Political Influence Activities

- A communication to a senior public official or politician
- A public communication except where it is reasonably clear that that it is made at the direction of a foreign power
- The provision of money, goods or services to an individual or entity in the UK

## Any other activities

All activities including but not limited to:

- commercial activities,
- the provision of goods and services, research activities, and
- attendance at events.

# UoW Ethical Principles

- Defence
- Fossil Fuels
- Gambling
- Tobacco
- Research involving humans / animals



# Key Compliance Processes

- **Research Grants and Contracts / Ethics and Sponsorship / Internal Funds**
  - Export control questions embedded into Ideate, Application Forms and Nol processes
  - Triggers a discussion with the Export Control Team
- **International Travel / Local Screening Processes**
  - University guidance issued and questions are embedded in travel authorisation forms
  - Travel guidance added to the Institutional Policy

*Both processes embed the same set of triaging questions*

## Key questions:

- Working with non-UK military organisation?
- Does work fall within any categories in control list?
- Could the “technology” or materials support the design, development, production, stockpiling or use of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons?
- Do you have concerns about the end user?



# What else do we do?

- ATAS : <https://www.academic-technology-approval.service.gov.uk/>
- Travel advice
- International visitors
- End User Forms

# Key messages

- Trusted Research seeks to raise risk awareness while supporting international engagement
- Know your partner – who are you working with
- Know your research – what could it be mis-used for
- Know your compliance obligations – ignorance is no defence
- Contact Research & Impact Services if you have any questions



# Contact Details and Further Information

**Contact the Research Compliance and Governance Team:**

[ResearchCompliance@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:ResearchCompliance@warwick.ac.uk)

**Useful links:**

[Research & Impact Services](#)

[Research & Impact Services International](#)

[Research](#)

[National Security Protective Authority](#)

[Trusted Research Guidance for Academia](#)

[The Higher Education Export Control Association \(HEECA\)](#)



**Thank you for listening**

**Are there any questions?**