



Foreign Influence and Interference

Document Type:	Policy	Document No.:	RS10	Version No.:	1.0
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Implementation Date: 1/02/2024

Review Date: 1/02/2027

1.0 Introduction

In the majority of cases, international interactions benefit research at Wesley Research Institute (WRI). However, there is a need for foreign influence to remain transparent and for foreign interference to be understood as a potential threat to the reputation of research in Australia. As an administering institute for research that may be funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and other accountable funders, this policy provides a framework for disclosing foreign influences and the identification of possible source/s for foreign interference.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure foreign influences are disclosed and possible sources of foreign interference are identified to decrease the risk of foreign entities exerting undue influence on the academic freedom of research and/or compromising sensitive data or intellectual property rights from the institute’s research activities in Australia.

3.0 Scope

This policy is applicable to all research staff including permanent, casual, secondment, full-time and part-time arrangements. It is also applicable to honorary appointments.

4.0 Principles

4.1 Foreign influence and foreign interference

Foreign influence is the open and transparent deliberation of issues across jurisdictions, which can be constructive. Foreign interference is when these activities are conducted in a coercive, clandestine, deceptive or corruptive way, and are contrary to Australia’s sovereignty, values and national interests.

The following common examples are not foreign influences, so long as there is no primary or substantial purpose to influence a political or government decision or process on behalf of a foreign principal: (i) Grant applications with a foreign Chief Investigator (CI), (ii) academic publications, and (iii) communication of research findings.

The following activities are examples of how a person undertaking foreign interference may attempt to create a personal connection, and obligation, from an individual: (i) gifts, (ii) donations, (iii) expenses-paid travel, (iv) facilitated immigration processes, (v) networking opportunities (vi) preferential access to senior officials or business people, (vii) seminars, study tours, business inspections or similar opportunities.

These activities may occur for long periods without a direct request for foreign interference. Potential warning signs that these interactions are transitioning to foreign interference could include: (i) reduced transparency such as transitioning to less open or more informal forms of communication, (ii) a relationship being ongoing and privileged to the exclusion of sections of the community, (iii) a suggested or implied quid pro quo, (iv) attempts to hide a relationship or interaction, (v) a request, suggestion or pressure to influence others to take a particular position.

4.2. Sensitive research

Research is ‘sensitive’ if it includes ‘controlled items’ i.e., goods, software or technology that is regulated when exported, supplied, brokered or published as described by the Defence and Strategic Goods List (DSGL). In this list are the following



categories – Part 1 (items for military use), Part 2 (items for other use, but may be useful in a chemical, biological or nuclear weapons program i.e., dual use), as well as firearms and explosives.

There are exemptions, including but not limited to, (i) medical equipment designed for medical end-use, (ii) basic scientific research that extends “fundamental principles of phenomena or observable facts” and is “not primarily directed towards a specific practical aim or objective”, and (iii) technology in the public domain.

Sensitive research can carry a higher risk of foreign influence or foreign interference.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

All research staff and honorary fellows are responsible for the immediate notification of sensitive research, foreign influence or foreign interference to the institute’s Head of Research Operations and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Upon notification, all related work must cease until risk mitigation practices are in place for the work to progress as confirmed by the CEO.

Executive Leadership Team (ELT) are responsible for ensuring that sensitive research, foreign influence or foreign interference, are assessed and risk mitigation practices put in place in a risk proportionate manner before further related work progresses.

ELT in consultation with the Board can decide not to proceed in regard of any associated activities if the risk is not able to be appropriately managed.

5.1 Identification and reporting

Sensitive research disclosed to the Head of Research Operations and CEO must be included in the institute’s Risk Register.

Foreign influence disclosed to the Head of Research Operations and CEO (based on guidance in Table 1), must be included in the institute’s Risk Register and Attorney-General Department’s [online register](#).

All possible foreign interference disclosed to the Head of Research Operations and CEO (based on guidance in Table 1), must be subject to an investigation and if confirmed, corrective and preventative action taken and reporting made to the [National Security Hotline](#).

Due to the inherent coercive, clandestine, deceptive or corruptive nature of foreign interference, it may not be obvious or readily identifiable. Do not wait for proof in the escalation of possible foreign interference.

Table 1. Decision process for the identification of foreign influence and foreign interference.

Question	Yes (Response)	No (Response)
Q1. Do you conduct activity for which the primary or substantial purpose is to influence a Commonwealth decision, official, candidate, proceeding, or registered political party?	Next question	
Q2. Is the activity on behalf of a foreign entity?	Next question	Disclosure unnecessary
Q3. Is the foreign entity a foreign government, political organisation, government-related entity or government-related individual?	Next question	
Q4. Is the activity parliamentary lobbying, political lobbying, disbursement of funds or communication where the primary or substantial purpose is to influence a political or government decision or process i.e., not usual academic publications?	Disclosure required	

6.0 References and Related Documents

6.1 References

- 6.1.1 Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector
- 6.1.2 Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act (Cth) 2018

- 6.1.3 Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020
- 6.1.4 National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018
- 6.1.5 Defence Trade Controls Act 2012
- 6.1.6 Defence Trade Controls Regulation 2013
- 6.1.7 Defence and Strategic Goods List 2021
- 6.1.8 Autonomous Sanctions Act 2011
- 6.1.9 Customs Act 1901
- 6.1.10 Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulations 1958
- 6.1.11 Weapons of Mass Destruction (Prevention and Proliferation) 1995
- 6.1.12 Charter of the United Nations Act 1945

6.2 Related Documents

- 6.2.1 RS01A Research Governance
- 6.2.2 RS01B Research Integrity and Misconduct
- 6.2.3 RS04 Conflict of Interest
- 6.2.4 RS12 Consultancy and Secondary Employment

7.0 Version History

Version No.	Approver	Implementation Date	Summary of Change
1.0	Andrew Barron	1/02/2024	e.g., Introduction of Policy