

Changes to safeguard our research (May 2021)

Important changes to safeguard our research – what you and your teams need to do

We must all comply with Government legislation in order to safeguard ourselves and the work we carry out, while also mitigating against any potential threats to national security. Safeguarding your research is vital to the integrity of your work, your own reputation and the reputation of the University. Over the last few months, there has been increased press and public interest in international research being undertaken in HE. This has coincided with some changes to legislation and requirements when undertaking research which will impact a significant number of staff across the University.

This email is important for all colleagues who carry out, or support, research activities. It contains important updates on the following and two actions for your attention:

- the expansion of the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) to apply to all researchers (including visitors),
- Export Control awareness and training requirements,
- the role of the University's new Research Relationship Oversight Group (RROG), which will review and assess the suitability of our research relationships with external organisations.

1. Expansion of the Academic Technology Approval (ATAS) Scheme

In January 2021, the University received a notification from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) confirming that from 21 May 2021 the ATAS scheme, currently confined to PGR students, will be applied to all researchers, including post-doctoral researchers, visiting researchers and academic staff. All researchers will be required to hold an ATAS certificate before applying for a visa to conduct activities on UK soil that could result in the Intangible Transfer of Technology (ITT) to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and Advanced Conventional Military Technology (ACMT) programmes of concern.

A University working group has been established to consider the implications of these changes and to ensure that processes are in place to support colleagues with their implementation. We are currently awaiting further information from the FCDO on what to expect once the changes come into effect and will communicate this with you as soon as we know more.

2. Export Control and training requirements

As an academic, you are responsible for all due diligence relating to your projects. The due diligence you conduct on potential partners should consider the reputational, ethical and security risks associated with working with them/the partnership. This is particularly important when working with partners in countries that may have different democratic and ethical values to the UK and may apply to organisations, individuals and/or specific areas of research.

Understanding how partners might use your research

The University is operating in an increasingly global capacity, with international research partners, international funding bodies and overseas students all contributing to the vital work

we do. An unfortunate consequence of thriving in this vibrant environment is that some of our research and its outputs have the potential to be misused when exported.

The UK Government's aim is to control the risks posed by weapons of mass destruction and abuses of human rights and terrorism. Therefore, export controls have two main areas of concern that will apply to your work at the University: dual-use and end-user.

- Dual-use concerns apply to the movement of goods, software or information/data out of the UK. The nature of your research project or content of your teaching courses may be of concern for its potentially unintended purpose/application. You may need an export licence depending on the content of your project.

Action: Please complete the 15 min online awareness module [TLCO310](#) Understanding Export Controls if your role is research related.

- End-user concerns relate to the organisation, company or institution (referred to as an 'entity') you are engaged with, or are planning to engage with. This includes collaborators, visitors, international travel, guest professorships, teaching (from abroad, or online from the UK), or consultancy work (either providing it or commissioning it). These collaborations can be formalised in an agreement or informal, such as working together towards publications.

The University has put processes in place to undertake due diligence on your behalf but you have a part to play in protecting your work and the University by requesting entity export checks if your collaborator/funder is located in the [key country list](#). These entity checks are necessary even if you assessed your research project as dual-use but not listed as controlled, or if the project is basic scientific research (low Technology Readiness Levels).

Action: Request due diligence checks on your collaborators/funders via the Export Controls Compliance team. Contact via [Export Controls on StaffNet](#) or email ecc@manchester.ac.uk.

3. Higher risk partnerships and the Research Relationship Oversight Group (RROG)

The University has established a new governance group, the [Research Relationship Oversight Group \(RROG\)](#), to review and assess the suitability of our research relationships with external organisations.

The purpose of a RROG review will be to provide greater assurance that our research relationships are consistent with our guiding principles, values, mission, and goals, including that of academic freedom, and to ensure that these relationships are unlikely to have a significant negative impact upon the reputation of our University.

RROG reviews may be undertaken for any externally funded research and research-aligned proposals, however informal or speculative, though the focus is expected to be on higher-value grants and contracts.

In the first phase of its operation, due diligence and [RROG reviews](#) will be required for new awards above certain financial thresholds unless the proposed relationship is with one of a modest number of organisations with which we have very well-established relationships (for instance, with UKRI, HMG and major charitable funders of research).

For more information

You can find out more information on the University's [export control StaffNet pages](#). We will be in touch once we have more detail about how the changes to ATAS will be implemented.

In the meantime if you have any queries please contact the Export Control Team on: ecc@manchester.ac.uk.