Academic freedom and researcher ethics

Universities are committed under legislation to undertake research (pure and applied) to benefit local, national and international communities, and promote culture of free inquiry.

Individual researchers determine the scope and area of research interest.

All researchers and research activities are conducted in accordance with the highest ethical standards, including complying with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

Research and education arrangements

Standard domestic research and education agreements are reviewed and endorsed by universities’ research offices / contract management offices or equivalent.

Non-standard research and education agreements additionally reviewed by universities Office of General Counsel and referred to other compliance checks where necessary.

International research contracts are assessed for foreign exchange risk and international tax withholding, and additionally reviewed by international offices or equivalent.

Comprehensive delegations framework in place to approve research, education or consultancy agreements. This is usually done through contracting/legal and financial delegations, which vary institution to institution.

Significant, major, research, education or consultancy agreements, that exceed management delegations, may be additionally referred to universities’ governing bodies.

Foreign relations, defence trade Controls and security Checks

When a research technology agreement is sent to the university’s research offices, it will be checked against the Defence Strategic Goods List online search and Export Controls Activity questionnaire.

When research technology is subject to controls, University applies for permit from Defence Expert Controls OR if research technology is not subject to controls, researcher pursues activity. Only University Research Office registered to apply for permits.

University research offices or equivalent brief researchers under the Act and obligations.

University research offices also undertake weekly reviews of sanctioned countries as proactive practice.

Other international agreements (including MoUs, student mobility programs, scholarships)

Preliminary discussion between faculty / area with support of university’s international offices to develop proposal.

Preliminary review of proposal with Associate Dean (International) in faculty and/or with university’s international offices depending on scope of proposal.

Conduct due diligence risk assessment including legal, financial, quality, TEQSA/compliance, strategy.

University international office coordinates the development of draft agreement with faculty / area with support of Office of General Counsel as required, and executes.

Formal agreements recorded on international agreements database and reviewed periodically by university international offices.

A range of Australian Government agencies support the university sector, including: Department of Home Affairs’ National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator, Department of Education, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Australian Signals Directorate, Attorney-General’s Department, Department of Defence, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science through provision of advisory and technical support. This work occurs at the level of institution and across the sector through guidelines and the University Foreign Interference Taskforce.

All research activities, collaborations and agreements underpinned by Guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian university sector and complies with Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act.