

GROUP OF EIGHT MEASURES TO SAFEGUARD AUSTRALIA'S SENSITIVE RESEARCH

Group of Eight universities have implemented a range of multipronged programs to **detect and target risks to Australia's national security**. In many Go8 universities, leadership in coordinating counter-foreign interference measures is provided at Deputy Vice Chancellor level.

Common to all Go8 members is to ensure effective adherence to key laws and regulations such as the *Defence Trade Controls Act 2012*, the *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018* and *Australia's Foreign Relations Act*, as well as to the *Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector* (often termed *UFIT Guidelines*).

Our universities' Research Councils, Research Offices, Offices of Ethics and Integrity, legal areas, cyber security teams, research and external partnerships offices, and international strategy areas work together and with dedicated committees as well as external advisors in Government to address and manage the risk environment.

SPECIFIC GO8 MEASURES CAN BE GROUPED IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

1 GOVERNANCE AND RISK FRAMEWORKS

- Go8 universities play an integral role in the Australian Government's **University Foreign Interference Taskforce** (UFIT). UFIT includes representatives from Go8 and other universities, national security organisations and the Department of Education and focuses on four key strategic areas: cyber security; research and intellectual property; foreign collaboration; and culture and communication.
- This Taskforce has developed the UFIT **Guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian university sector** to which all Go8 universities conform and support.
- Each Go8 university convenes a **foreign interference steering committee** that provides strategic direction and engagement to manage sensitive national security issues.
- Each Go8 university requires **regular reporting on national security and foreign interference risks** to their governing body.
- The deployment of a wide range of **risk registers and assessments** – including sensitive research registers and staff foreign affiliation registers – provide Go8 universities a holistic understanding of their risk profiles and guidance on how to proactively manage potential risks.
- **Defence Industry Security Program membership** ensures that Go8 universities are provided with the best defence security advice to manage security risks across Go8 defence research programs.

2 DUE DILIGENCE

- **Conflict of interest policies and anti-fraud policies** provide clear guidance to university management and staff on their disclosure obligations and how breaches of these policies are rigorously managed.
- Routine **research partner background checking** to ensure Go8 universities are aware of any potential risks resulting from partner collaborations.
- **Defence Trade Controls checks** provide additional internal screening of research for defence applications; the Australian National University is pioneering the use of AI to help automatically identify all research that could be subject to Defence Trade Controls. (see case study)
- Dedicated **Chief Security Officers** and routine **sanctions compliance checks** during recruitment are ensuring compliance with essential regulatory requirements and best practice in relation to defence, national security, and foreign influence, as well as interference regulations and guidelines.

SPECIFIC **GO8 MEASURES** CAN BE GROUPED IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES (continued):

3 COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

- Go8 members are developing and rolling-out **foreign interference training** for staff in high-risk disciplines about national security laws and guidelines, relevant university policies, processes, and support services.
- **Education and training programs** are being provided to the broader staff and student body to educate them and increase their awareness of the risks of foreign interference.

4 KNOWLEDGE SHARING

- **Go8 universities liaise regularly with Government security services**, proactively seeking guidance on all matters sensitive to national security, and particularly when embarking on strategic international engagements.
- **Cross-institutional forums on preventing foreign interference**; for example, the Australian National University was instrumental in helping to set up the national sector-wide intelligence forum, the Trusted Cyber Security Forum.

5 CYBER SECURITY

- Go8 members engage in continual **cyber security threat intelligence sharing with the Australian Cyber Security Centre** and with other universities.
- New and **stronger cyber security policies** have been introduced, accompanied by regular **cyber security training** for university staff and affiliates.
- Go8 members engage in rolling **cyber security upgrades**; for example, Monash University has undertaken an audit against the *National Institute of Standards and Technology Cybersecurity Framework* to measure their cyber security maturity and progress areas for improvement.

CASE STUDY

USING TEXT MINING TECHNOLOGY TO HELP IDENTIFY RESEARCH SUBJECT TO DEFENCE TRADE CONTROLS

The Australian National University (ANU) is exploring the use of text mining to help researchers to identify activities that are listed in the Defence Strategic Goods List (DSGL) (360 pages plus) as a means of streamlining the pre-screening of research that may need to be reported under the *Defence Trade Controls Act*.

The tool uses text mining techniques, a scoring system to match key phrases, and semantic similarity scores between publications and items on the DSGL. It conducts examination of both the researchers interests and a document (e.g. research proposals) in determining possible relevance.

Based on a limited dataset currently available to the ANU, the tool has demonstrated the concept and has been able to determine relevant DSGL items with an encouraging degree of accuracy. Researchers with no risky publications have been identified accurately.

Significant additional data and refinement will be required to validate and improve the robustness and performance of the tool – the Go8 is working to assist the ANU access data from across the eight universities so that the tool can be progressed to the next stage.

