



Countering Foreign Interference Framework

Developed by:	Foreign Interference Operations Committee
Approved by:	Foreign Interference Advisory Committee
For review:	<i>A year from approval date (TBC)</i>

Introduction

The purpose of this Framework is to protect the Australian National University (ANU) from foreign interference and to strengthen the University's protections against national security risks. It seeks to outline the University's approach to managing and mitigating the risk of foreign interference in order to safeguard the reputation of the University, protect students and staff, and ensure continued benefit from international collaboration.

ANU is proud of its global focus and recognises the central importance of international collaboration and engagement in fostering the sharing and development of knowledge with the best and brightest minds around the world. The University's international engagements include its research partnerships, and the educational opportunities it provides to domestic and international students and higher degree research candidates. ANU welcomes students, staff and visitors from around the world and strongly encourages members of the ANU community to pursue and foster international engagement and collaboration.

At the same time, ANU recognises that it operates in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment where it needs to remain vigilant against the growing threat of foreign interference that may arise from its global collaborations and cyber threats.

ANU is committed to acting consistently with the national interest at all times and to embedding a positive risk culture that informs balanced decision-making.

Definitions

Foreign influence¹

All governments, including Australia's, try to influence deliberations on issues of importance to them. These activities, when conducted in an open and transparent manner, are a normal aspect of international relations and diplomacy and can contribute positively to public debate.

Foreign interference

Foreign interference occurs when activities are carried out by, or on behalf of, a foreign actor, which are coercive, clandestine, deceptive or corrupting and are contrary to Australia's sovereignty, values and national interests.

This Framework focusses on foreign interference risks and issues.

¹ Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector, University Foreign Interference Taskforce, p 5, October 2021

Guiding Principles

ANU has adopted a set of overarching principles to guide its approach to managing foreign interference risks across its operations and will integrate foreign interference risk management considerations into its ways of working, in line with these principles.

Principles	
Academic freedom	ANU holds academic freedom and freedom of lawful speech as a defining value, to be exercised freely and in accordance with the law and the University's Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy.
International collaborations are valuable	ANU recognises that international engagement and collaboration is an important contributor to the fulfilment of its vision and mission as Australia's national university.
Empowerment	ANU is committed to enabling researchers and students to operate in a globally engaged community, safe in the knowledge that any concerns around foreign interference have been considered by those with appropriate expertise and mitigated where possible.
Fairness & consistency	Foreign interference matters will be handled in a way that does not favour or disadvantage particular areas of collaboration, while also acknowledging that the geo-political context is an important part of risk management.
Privacy and confidentiality	ANU will ensure that the information provided and disclosed by staff and students is stored, handled and communicated in line with privacy laws, and on a need-to-know basis to support sound management decision making.
Transparency	Foreign interference risk management decisions and supporting rationale will be shared with those involved, as openly and transparently as appropriate to the circumstances. This will support education of the University community, and foster accountable and procedurally fair decision-making.

Foreign Collaboration Requirements

When deciding whether to pursue, commence or continue activities with a foreign entity or individual, ANU, its decision-makers, staff and students apply the following requirements:

Requirement 1: Consistency with the University's object, values, and ethical standards and standing in the community

ANU activities must be consistent with the University's:

- a) **purposes** as determined in Section 5 of the [Australian National University Act 1991](#), and which can be summarised as: advancing and transmitting knowledge by undertaking research of the highest quality; advancing and transmitting knowledge by undertaking teaching of the highest quality; providing facilities for higher education purposes; and meeting its obligations to the nation and ACT through its status as a national institute;
- b) **core values** of academic freedom integrity, fairness and justice; respecting celebrating and learning from First Nations Peoples; safety and wellbeing; truth-seeking,

transparency and accountability; inclusion, equity and diversity; and respectful collegiality - embodied in the ANU [Staff Code of Conduct](#) and [Student Code of Conduct](#);

- c) **commitment to upholding the Guiding Principles outlined above, including the central principle of freedom of speech and academic freedom** as defined in the [Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy](#);
- d) **commitment to conducting all research, in Australia and overseas, to the highest possible ethical standards**, including in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018](#), the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007\)](#), [Student Sanctions](#), the University's [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#), the [Gifts and Fundraising Policy](#) and [Disclosure of Interest Policy](#).

If the activity is **inconsistent** with (a) to (d) above, it must not be continued or pursued in the form underway or proposed.

If the activity is **consistent** with (a) to (d) above (or can be modified so that it is consistent), and meets others requirements, it can proceed.

Requirement 2: Compliance with relevant laws and Government guidelines

ANU activities must be lawful, conducted transparently and comply with all Australian legislation and sanctions, and guidelines including the following:

- [Autonomous Sanctions Act 2011](#)
- [Defence Trade Controls Act 2012](#)
- [Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018](#),
- [National Security Legislation Amendment \(Espionage and Foreign Interference\) Act 2018](#)
- [Modern Slavery Act 2018](#),
- [Australia's Foreign Relations \(State and Territory Arrangements\) Act 2020](#)
- [Australia's Foreign Relations \(State and Territory Arrangements\) Rules 2020](#).
- [Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector](#).

Requirement 3: Consistency with University policies

ANU activities must comply with all ANU policies, including those with a particular relevance to the prevention and mitigation of foreign interference risks and the safeguarding of the ANU community:

Whole of University

- [Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy](#)
- [Prevention of Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Procedure](#)
- [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#)
- [Code of Practice for Teaching and Learning Guideline](#)
- [External Project Funding and Agreements Policy](#)
- [Gifts and Fundraising Policy](#)
- [Disclosure of Interest Policy](#)
- [Disclosure of Interest Procedure](#)
- [Risk Management Policy](#)
- [Academic Titles Conferral: Honorary \(Clinical\), Appointee, Visiting Fellow, Visitor and Emeritus Professor Procedure](#)
- [International Partnerships and Agreements Policy](#)
- [International Partnerships and Agreements Procedure](#)
- [Academic Programs and Courses Accreditation Policy](#)

Students

- [Student Code of Conduct](#)

- [Student Grievance and Complaint Resolution Procedure](#)
- [Student sanctions](#)

Staff

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Unsatisfactory Performance and Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Managing Misconduct, Serious Misconduct and Suspension Procedure](#)

Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone in the ANU community, staff, students, higher degree research candidates, and visiting personnel, have a role to play in supporting the identification and mitigation of foreign interference risks. The ANU is committed to providing its community members with the education, information and tools they need to support this endeavour, and is currently developing a training and awareness raising package of initiatives.

Several organisational units have specific roles that support the prevention and mitigation of foreign interference as follows:

Central advice and coordination

The role of the **Compliance team in the Research and Innovation Services, within the Research and Innovation Portfolio** is to

- provide advice and guidance to staff on potential foreign interference risks and matters that need to be reported to FIAC for their decision through the management of the foreignarrangements@anu.edu.au inbox and other interactions;
- collate all matters for submission to FIAC, undertake an initial triage, and present to the DVCRI for confirmation, in advance of FIAC meetings. Also ensure that matters deemed high risk are deferred direct to the Information Security Office for investigation or direct to FIAC for discussion;
- provide secretariat support to FIAC, including preparation of agendas and meeting minutes and follow up on decisions and agreed actions;
- manage reporting to DFAT under the Foreign Arrangements Scheme;
- manage communications with staff about FIAC decisions; and
- coordinate follow up discussions and security briefings with staff and other stakeholders, including government, as required.

Matters automatically captured through business processes and referred to FIAC

Certain ANU engagements with foreign collaborators are captured through existing processes and promptly notified by response line areas to the Compliance team for FIAC decision. ANU International Office captures all arrangements under the International Partnerships and Agreements Policy that need to be reviewed prior to approval (e.g. Memoranda of Understanding, admission pathway agreements, joint and dual awards agreements, articulation agreements, transnational education partnerships agreements, staff and student exchange agreements, and study abroad agreements).

Staff members' responsibility

Individual staff members are responsible for submitting proposed foreign engagements, not already captured in the above business processes, to FIAC for decision using the [FIAC e-form](#). These matters could include, but are not limited to:

- research engagements that involve a signed agreement or MOU with a foreign entity;
- paid or honorary appointment at foreign universities;
- individual student Dual and Joint Award PhD candidature;
- arrangements for individual visiting academics and students under VAHA;
- externally-funded research projects;
- consultancies and commercial services;
- research commercialisation agreements;
- data sharing agreements;
- grant applications that involve foreign entities;
- any other collaboration that may pose foreign interference risk, or a foreign interference matter about which a School Director or College Dean would like advice.

Foreign Interference Advisory Committee

The objective of FIAC is to monitor, advise and provide assurance to the University community about the management of foreign interference risks across all areas of operation. The Committee makes determinations on foreign engagements and, where appropriate, will make recommendations to the Vice Chancellor.

FIAC is a sub-committee of the University Research Committee and reports six-monthly to this Committee on its operations and activities. It also oversees required reporting to the Australian Government.

FIAC meets fortnightly to review all matters submitted to FIAC for decision and these are treated confidentially, information securely stored, and all matters are de-identified for reporting purposes. Some high risk matters may be escalated to specific managers, the Vice-Chancellor, Human Resources and/or to the Australia Government, so that they can be effectively managed. Higher risk matters are referred to the Information Security Office for investigation and assessment of foreign interference risks.

The membership of FIAC is as follows:

- Chair, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)
- Dean Higher Degree Research
- Vice President, Advancement
- Director, ANU Communications & Engagement
- Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)
- Dean, College of Asia & Pacific
- Dean, College of Science
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International & Corporate)
- Chief Information Security Officer

Work is planned to progressively embed foreign interference considerations into due diligence processes across the ANU.

Expert Assessments on Higher Risk Foreign Engagements and Cyber-Security Safeguarding

The Chief Information Security Officer is a member of FIAC. The triaging of all matters submitted to FIAC leads to specific higher risk matters being referred to the Information

Security Office for investigation and risk assessment. These assessments are shared and discussed with FIAC and support sound decision-making. In addition, the Information Security Office provides general support to FIAC in coordination with the FIAC secretariat. It also ensures the development of appropriate strategies and processes to identify and mitigate cyber security threats to the ANU, including those from foreign actors.

Incident Management and Reporting

Anyone who is aware of, or reasonably suspects, that foreign interference is occurring in connection to ANU activities must report it immediately to an appropriate officer. The University provides a variety of reporting channels to ensure the process is as easy as possible.

Students can report incidents and seek support in a range of ways as follows:

- Office of the Registrar: reports@anu.edu.au;
- Dean of Students: dean.students@anu.edu.au;
- Student Health and Wellbeing Team: student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au
- Notify the incident themselves on the confidential Figtree platform (under development)

Staff can report incidents and seek support in a range of ways as follows:

- Speak to their supervisor or another senior staff;
- Speak to their Human Resources Business Partner (College or Corporate Portfolio depending on where they work); [and](#)
- Notify and seek advice from the Compliance Officer via e-mail: foreignarrangements@anu.edu.au
- Notify the incident themselves on the confidential Figtree platform (under development).

Support for Staff and Students

The University is committed to supporting staff and students who are the subject of foreign interference incidents or witness them occurring to others.

For students, the primary source of confidential psychosocial support is:

- the Student Health and Wellbeing team. They can be contacted via e-mail: student.wellbeing@anu.edu.au, or phone: +612 6125 2211

For staff the primary source of support is their leader, otherwise their local Human Resources team. Additional staff support services can be accessed as follows:

- Adviser to Staff via email: staff.adviser@anu.edu.au, or;
- Employee Assistance Program: <https://services.anu.edu.au/human-resources/wellbeing/employee-assistance-program> (Staff only content)