

# Dedicated government team to protect researchers' work from hostile activity

A dedicated new team is to be established within government to offer researchers advice on how to protect their work from hostile activity, ensuring international collaboration is done safely and securely.

The new Research Collaboration Advice Team (RCAT) within the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will promote government advice on security-related topics, such as export controls, cyber security and protection of intellectual property. It will ensure researchers' work is protected, and that the UK research sector remains open and secure.

The government is committed to supporting the UK's brilliant scientists, researchers and businesses to make the most of the enormous benefits that come from working with partners overseas. Last month we confirmed our association to the world's largest collaborative research programme, Horizon Europe – worth around €95 billion over the next decade.

The RCAT team will help researchers make the most of their collaborations while helping them to protect themselves from those who seek to compromise the UK's national security. Such behaviour left unchecked can leave the UK vulnerable to disruption, unfair leverage, and espionage. The threats to science and research in particular – primarily the theft, misuse or exploitation of intellectual property by hostile actors – are growing, evolving and increasingly complex.

The team will respond to requests from British universities who have identified potential risks within current projects or proposals. Advisers will also proactively approach research institutions and support them to implement advice and guidance already on offer.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Keeping the country safe is the primary responsibility of any government, and it is essential that we do everything in our power to support our brilliant scientists and researchers in pursuit of our ambition to become a global science superpower.

This new team will give universities and institutions access to the latest advice on safe collaboration with international partners and protections against those who seek to harm the UK.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

The UK is home to some of the world's leading scientists and researchers. Their vital work over the past year in response to the pandemic demonstrates how crucial it is to foster an open yet secure environment for pioneering research.

Researchers need to take precautions when collaborating internationally, and this new team will support them as we cement our status as a science superpower.

The leadership of the new team will be based in Manchester, with advisers distributed across the UK.

Today's announcement is the latest in a series of measures being taken by the government to keep the UK safe from hostile activity. Last month, the National Security and Investment Act received royal assent, strengthening the UK's ability to investigate and intervene in potentially hostile mergers, acquisitions and other types of deals that could threaten our national security. The UK's screening powers have also been extended to include assets like intellectual property, as well as companies.

Last year, the government supported Universities UK (UUK) to publish guidelines for the sector on managing security-related risks within international collaboration. These followed the launch of the government-funded Trusted Research campaign in 2019 by the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure and National Cyber Security Centre, which helps UK universities and research institutions to make informed decisions about international collaboration and associated risks.

Professor Julia Buckingham, President, Universities UK said:

International collaboration lies at the heart of excellent research, delivers huge benefits to the UK and helps to ensure that we are recognised as a global science superpower. We have a responsibility to ensure that our collaborations are safe and secure, and our universities take these responsibilities very seriously.

Together with UUK's guidelines on Managing Risk in Internationalisation, the work of this new team and the specialist advice and support it provides will help to ensure that the public can be confident in our research collaborations. We particularly welcome the creation of a single point of contact in government, which builds on recommendations made by Universities UK and will provide valuable insights for institutions and researchers.

Recruitment for the new team will begin this week.