Foreign Interference Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The University of Newcastle (University) is committed to fostering global collaborations with institutions and individuals worldwide, creating opportunities through research, teaching, professional development, industry partnerships, and cross-cultural experiences.

(2) It is acknowledged that the higher education sector must be vigilant against the growing threat of foreign interference and other matters related to national security.

(3) The University is committed to ensuring our collaborations, research and education activities are mindful of the Australian national interest.

Section 2 - Purpose

(4) This Policy establishes the University's principles for strengthening our protections against national security risks.

Section 3 - Audience

(5) This Policy should be read and understood by the University community, including but not limited to staff, students, third parties, and controlled entities.

Section 4 - Scope

(6) This policy applies to:

a. all activities, operations, governance, and administration of the University;
b. all campuses and locations of the University; and
c. all times whilst engaged in University activity or otherwise representing the University.

Section 5 - Document Specific Definitions

(7) In the context of this document the following definitions apply:

a. accountable authority is a senior executive or executive body responsible and accountable for the security of people, information and assets to counter foreign interference;
b. national interest means matters that seek to pursue the prosperity of Australia, the security, safety and freedom of our people, and the independence of our decision-making.

Section 6 - General Principles

(8) To protect the University and the Australian national interest, the University will:

a. maintain its ongoing commitment to academic freedom and integrity;
b. require mandatory disclosures in accordance with the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018, the Disclosure of Interest Policy and its associated procedure;
c. comply with other legislation and schemes related to national security, foreign influence and foreign interference, including:
    i. Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020;
    ii. Defence Trade Controls Act 2012; and
    iii. Autonomous Sanctions Act 2011;
d. adhere to the Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector and the overarching principles:
    i. security must safeguard academic freedom, values and research collaboration;
    ii. research, collaboration and education activities must be mindful of the national interest;
    iii. security is a collective responsibility with individual accountability;
    iv. security should be proportionate to organisational risk; and
    v. the safety of our University community is paramount.
e. maintain information related to foreign arrangements and affiliations, and any reports of foreign interference activity;
f. incorporate assessment and management of foreign interference and national security risks across the University's operations and planning, including policy development and review;
g. escalate foreign interference risks to the University's accountable authority (the Foreign Interference Committee) and the Risk Committee as required;
h. continue to uplift our capacity and resilience through:
    i. ongoing training and education for our staff, students, and the University community;
    ii. ongoing activities of the National Security Compliance Manager in implementing and managing the University's National Security Strategic Framework, and as the key advisory role for the University and principal liaison with Government, external agencies and other universities on foreign interference matters;
i. maintain ongoing engagement with national security agencies and government authorities to receive advice in relation to sector updates and risks, and seek advice on how these risks may be mitigated; and
j. require pre-employment screening for personnel with access to critical or high risk systems, in line with AS 4811-2022 Employment Screening.

(9) The accountability for reporting the University's compliance with the relevant legislation lies with both the Chief Operating Officer and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

Section 7 - Related Documents

(10) This Policy should be read in conjunction with these documents:

a. Student Code of Conduct;
b. Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom;
c. Global Partnerships Framework;

d. National Security Strategic Framework.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	29th June 2026
Review Date	29th June 2029
Approval Authority	General Counsel and Chief Governance Officer
Approval Date	26th June 2026
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Alex Zelinsky Vice-Chancellor alex.zelinsky@newcastle.edu.au
Enquiries Contact	Fiona Mundie National Security Compliance Manager Legal and Governance Services

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Asset" - Any tangible or intangible item (or group of items) that the University owns or has a legal or other right to control and exploit to obtain financial or other economic benefits.

"Controlled entity" - Has the same meaning as in section 16A of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

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

This document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to the Policy Library for the latest version.