Lunch & Learn series

Research Security

David Spurrell, PhD - Manager, Grants and Contracts, Office of Research Services

Ben Goldberg, MBA – Managing Director, Industry Engagement and Customer Experience, Office of Commercialization and Industry Engagement

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Acknowledgements

Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.

We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

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Research Security

1) Background information and changes to the research landscape

2) NSERC Alliance and implementation of the Risk Assessment Form (RAF)

3) Current roll out of the RAF and future programs

4) The types of risks and how to mitigate/ think about them

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Research Security - Background

Current Research Security Landscape

- In the past 10 years or so there has been increased concern with safeguarding Canada's research and innovation from foreign state actors.

- Hostile states often look to advance their economic, technological, intelligence and military state interests.

- Almost all Canadian research domains face some level of risk, although some fields may be targeted more than others.

- There are many ways how threat actors will try to exploit vulnerabilities, and research funding is amongst them.

Research Security – how has Canada reacted to the changing landscape

- To ensure the Canadian research ecosystem is as open as possible and as safeguarded as necessary, the Government of Canada has introduced the National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships to integrate national security considerations into the development, evaluation and funding of research partnerships.

- This involves the completion of the risk assessment form

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NSERC Alliance Program and Risk Assessment Form

- The NSERC Alliance Program initially piloted the use of the Risk Assessment Form for projects involving one or more partner organizations from the private sector.

- We are currently using the second version of the Risk Assessment Form.

- **From NSERC :** "The Risk Assessment Form is a tool to identify and assess potential risks that research partnerships may pose to Canada's national security as outlined in the National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships and to develop effective mitigation measures."

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- The information in the RAF is used to assess national security risks in the proposed research partnership, which could expose the research project to foreign interference, espionage or theft from foreign governments, militaries and other organizations.

- For the purpose of the RAF, a partner organization is any organization that plays an active role in the project and/or supports a research partnership through cash and/or in-kind contributions.

Examples include:

- Sharing in intellectual leadership or providing expertise;

- Active participation in research activities; and/or

- Application of research results and/or active participation in translating or mobilizing the knowledge produced to help achieve the desired outcomes of the project.

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NSERC Alliance Program and Risk Assessment Form

- The Risk Assessment Form is divided into five main sections:

  - **Section 1 "Know Your Research"**

  - **Section 2 "Know Your Partner Organization"**

  - **Section 3 "Risk Identification"**

  - **Section 4 "Risk Mitigation Plan"**

  - **Section 5 "Additional Requirements"**

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Risk Assessment Form - Section 1 "Know Your Research"

- The questions in this section have been streamlined and rephrased for greater clarity in the updated form.

Questions include:

- Are you working in a research area that is related to:

1) critical minerals, including critical mineral supply chains

2) A research area that is classified within one of the critical infrastructure sectors of the National Strategy for Critical Infrastructure:

Energy and utilities, Water, Finance, Safety, Food, Manufacturing, Transportation, Information and communication technology, Government, Health

Risk Assessment Form - Section 1 "Know Your Research"

Are you working in a research area that is related to:

3) the use of personal data that could be sensitive

4) the development or use of large datasets that could be sensitive

5) goods or technology that are included on the Export Control List (ECL) of the Export and Import Permits Act (EIPA)

6) Research areas that may be considered sensitive or dual-use as listed in List 1 of Annex A of the National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships

Risk Assessment Form - Section 2 "Know Your Partner Organization"

- The purpose of this section is to assess whether your partner organization(s) could pose a national security risk by using the research knowledge, technology and intellectual property resulting from the research project.

- **From the RAF:** "Answer the following questions to the best of your ability by using information that is already available to you, your institution, or your partner organization(s), or that could be reasonably accessed through open sources. To further support transparency and openness, you are encouraged to consult your partner organization(s) when answering these questions."

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Risk Assessment Form - Section 2 "Know Your Partner Organization"

- **Questions include:**

    - Are there any indications that your partner organization(s) could be subject to foreign government influence, interference or control?

    - Are there any indications that suggest a lack of transparency or unethical behaviour from your partner organization(s), that may impact the proposed research project?

Risk Assessment Form - Section 2 "Know Your Partner Organization"

- Are there any indications that an individual(s) involved in the research project from your partner organization(s) could have conflicts of interest or affiliations that could lead to unauthorized knowledge transfer?

- Are there any indications that as a result of this research project, your partner organization(s) will or could have access to your research institution's Canadian facilities, networks, or assets on campus, including infrastructure that houses sensitive data?

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Risk Assessment Form - Section 3 "Risk Identification"

- A risk identification and risk mitigation plan are required for whenever there is a "yes" or "unsure" in section 1 and section 2. <u>Risk mitigation measures are required even if there are no risks with the partner, but the research could still be a target.</u>

- The response must provide information on the source and nature of the risks

Risk Assessment Form - Section 4 "Risk Mitigation Plan"

- The risk mitigation plan ensures that you identify the appropriate mitigation measures to reduce the likelihood of an identified security risk materializing, and/or to lessen the impact in case the identified risk materializes.

- Additional information on risk mitigation can be found on the Safeguarding Your Research portal (https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/safeguarding-your-research)

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Risk Assessment Form - Section 5 "Additional Requirements"

- This new section was added to address two questions from section 2 of the original RAF that have no possible mitigation measures:

"By submitting this Risk Assessment Form, the applicant on behalf of all co-applicants agrees that, to the best of their knowledge:

• The applicant(s) have not accepted and will not accept any offer of funding that is conditional upon the mirroring of their academic laboratory in, or the transfer of their academic laboratory to, a foreign country; and

• The source of funding and the value of the research project to the partner organization(s) has been communicated by the partner organization(s) to the applicant(s)."

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Research Security – Future Programs that will use the RAF

- To date, there has been a relatively slow roll out for the use of the Risk Assessment Form, piloting with the NSERC Alliance Program

- In the next year, several other programs will require the use of this form as part of the application package:

  1) Canada Biomedical Research Fund and Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund

  2) CIHR Project Grant (maybe – Spring 2024 competition)

  3) SSHRC Partnership Grants – in 2023

  4) Mitacs (https://www.mitacs.ca/en/research-security)

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Research Security – Resources available to Researchers

- National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships - https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/safeguarding-your-research/guidelines-and-tools-implement-research-security/national-security-guidelines-research-partnerships

- The National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships' Risk Assessment Form - https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/safeguarding-your-research/guidelines-and-tools-implement-research-security/national-security-guidelines-research-partnerships/national-security-guidelines-research-partnerships-risk-assessment-form

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Research Security & Industry Engagement

- Currently following the RAF process as described when required

- RAF reviewed by the Research Security Group

- Additional resources and training are upcoming

  - Federal Government

  - Dalhousie: Director, Research Security

Thank You