Self-evaluation Guidance Material

Governance and Risk Frameworks

This guidance material presents decision makers with a series of questions to evaluate their university's implementation of governance and risk frameworks in accordance with this pillar of the Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector. This material is advisory only. It provides specific considerations for decision makers to refer to as appropriate to their circumstances. The questions are grouped under themes to assist navigation.

Accountable authority

1. Which senior executive or executive body has responsibility for foreign interference and safeguards?
2. Does the university have appropriate risk mitigation strategies to deal with foreign interference?
3. Who is responsible for maintaining, promoting and applying the university's risk mitigation strategies?
4. Are decision makers informed of the range of activities undertaken in the university?
5. Do the university's risk mitigation strategies provide appropriate actions according to the university's activities and associated levels of risk?

Managing foreign interference risks

1. Which policies and procedures:
   a. acknowledge foreign interference as a risk?
   b. promote awareness of safety and security to safeguard against foreign interference?
   c. enable staff and students to understand who is affected by foreign interference risks?
   d. manage responses to foreign interference concerns or incidents?
   e. trigger engagement with relevant Commonwealth agencies on legislative compliance and foreign interference (such as Defence Export Controls, the Foreign Arrangements Scheme and Autonomous Sanctions)?
2. How have relevant stakeholders been considered in foreign interference-related policies and procedures?

3. How effective are internal reporting mechanisms to support university evaluation and communication with external stakeholders?
4. How is the level of risk assessed in a particular research project, and is the nature of the governance and oversight that could be applied to mitigate this risk considered?
5. What documentation and templates capture these considerations, should a retrospective assessment of the research activity be undertaken? This could include how records and information are managed.
6. How can existing internal frameworks highlight efforts to mitigate foreign interference?
7. Do these mechanisms address concerns or incidents of harassment and intimidation that could lead to self-censorship?

Policies and procedures

1. What approvals processes are in place for staff appointments at various levels at universities?
2. Are staff and students provided training or refreshers on foreign interference at appropriate intervals during their engagement, which might include during orientation or induction, after promotion, or role-changes? Information includes the ways in which foreign interference may manifest in the university context and the university's policies, frameworks and expectations to manage this.
3. What processes help staff to be aware of their responsibilities, rights and obligations at the university?
4. How can students and staff readily access information about foreign interference, university policies, codes of conduct and consequences if codes are breached?
5. What training does the university offer to staff to build capacity in identifying potential instances of foreign interference, including harassment or intimidation? How can training for staff and students be clear about the difference between this and important academic processes such as disagreeing well.
6. What training is offered for staff and students to understand their role in the university's risk mitigation strategies?
7. How can universities seek assurance that staff are implementing their risk mitigation strategies?
8. How can a university-wide picture of incidents be compiled to inform potential risks of foreign interference, including possible harassment of students?

Escalation and reporting mechanisms

1. How clear is the escalation pathway for staff and students and is the appropriate response to these risks clearly articulated?
2. When would it be appropriate for the university to seek further information from Government or law enforcement? What avenues are available to escalate issues with Government?
3. Are due diligence and internal reporting applied to international funding sources and partnerships? Is the level appropriate to aid accountability and risk management?