



Statement on the University Foreign Interference Taskforce Strategic Refresh

02 October 2026

Since its establishment in 2019, the University Foreign Interference Taskforce (UFIT) Steering Group has been led by senior representatives from government and the university sector. Its members have been instrumental in drawing attention to the foreign interference and research security challenges facing the sector and developing advice to build resilience, with all guidance underpinned by the *Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector*.

In 2026, Australia's strategic environment has changed significantly. Global competition over critical technologies is intensifying; the level of espionage and foreign interference is extreme, and Australian universities are increasingly valuable targets in this competition as key drivers of innovation.

In recognition of UFIT's role and the degrading strategic environment, the UFIT Steering Group agreed on the need for a strategic refresh of UFIT to improve the sector's resilience to espionage and foreign interference. In October 2026, Steering Group members agreed to implement several changes to refresh UFIT, including a renewed focus on research security; a forward work program focused on delivering practical guidance; increased threat information sharing; more regular ministerial oversight; the creation of a working level advisory group to propose and advise on UFIT decisions; and the release of a public statement following each meeting.

This refresh better positions the Steering Group to identify systemic foreign interference risks and emerging vulnerabilities as well as promote sector-wide adoption of best practice guidance. It strengthens UFIT's capacity to provide timely and responsive advice and complements regulatory reform and implementation, helping the sector manage the risks of espionage and foreign interference whilst maintaining their status as world-class research institutions.

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