

## Assessing Risk Prior to International Engagements

### Guided Questions from the JASON Report<sup>1</sup>

To safeguard research and mitigate risks like intellectual property theft and foreign influence, researchers should evaluate funding, data-sharing, and institutional policies before engaging in partnerships. The 2019 JASON report on Fundamental Research Security provides a framework for researchers to assess international collaborations.

#### Prior to international engagements researchers should consider the following questions<sup>2</sup>:

- Describe the engagement succinctly and without jargon. Is it fundamental research? If not, work with the export control team to determine any federal restrictions.
- Are the terms of the engagement made clear in writing? Have all the participants been identified? Are all participants known to the PI and the PI's institution?
- Are all the participants conflicts of interest and commitment documented?
- Are there any aspects of the engagement that are not to be disclosed to any of the participants? If so, what is the reason?
- Is there any aspect of the engagement that seems unusual, unnecessary or poorly specified?
- Where does the funding and other resources needed for the activity come from?
- Is it clear what each party is providing?
- Are all of the tangible assets of the engagement, existing or to be generated (e.g., data, metadata, profits, equipment, etc.), known? How will they be shared? Who decides how they are allocated?
- How does a participant end their engagement?
- Are scholars expected to reside away from their home institutions as a part of the engagement? If so, how are they chosen for participation in the engagement?
- What are the reporting requirements back to home institutions or organizations?
- Who will control the dissemination of the resulting fundamental research?

#### When assessing international engagements some questions Purdue considers include<sup>3</sup>:

- Is there a risk to U.S. national security?
- What are the political, civil and human rights risks?
- Is there a risk to U.S. national competitiveness?
- Will export control compliance be assured?
- What are the intellectual property risks?
- Are there clear data and publication policies?
- What is the early termination risk?
- What is misrepresentation risk?
- Is there a risk to the institution's community and core values?
- What is the risk to institution of *not* engaging?

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<sup>1</sup> JASON. (2019). Fundamental Research Security (JSR-19-21). The MITRE Corporation. Retrieved from [https://www.nsf.gov/news/special\\_reports/jasonsecurity/JSR-19-21FundamentalResearchSecurity\\_12062019FINAL.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/jasonsecurity/JSR-19-21FundamentalResearchSecurity_12062019FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> JASON (2019, p. 34) references the *Heilmeyer Catechism* as a model for assessing research engagements, similar to how DARPA evaluates projects.

<sup>3</sup> JASON (2019, p. 31) presents an example assessment framework adapted from the *MIT Office of the Vice President for Research*, tailored for evaluating institutional risks in research collaborations.

Different stakeholders in the U.S. research enterprise—scholars, institutions, journals, and funding agencies—require tailored assessment tools to guide decisions on collaborations, publications, and funding. The following table, from the JASON report, outlines key rewards, risks, and obligations to consider before engaging in international partnerships from each perspective.

**U.S. research enterprise stakeholder rewards, risks and obligations in assessing engagements<sup>4</sup>**

Stakeholder	Perceived Reward	Perceived Risk	Obligation
Public	Improve quality of life	Misinformation	Expect valid communication of science
Political Leadership	Advancement of science and the economic competitiveness through attracting top talent	Loss of economic advantage, IP loss, and infiltration	Top level guidance to agencies and national labs balancing risks and rewards
Federal Funding Agencies	Advance science through collaboration and ability to attract top talent	Compromise of research integrity	Develop clear policies and guidelines that enable responsible conduct of research
Research Institutions	Advancing their institutions reputation through scholarship and attracting top talent	Reputational risk, IP loss, loss of talent, and loss of opportunity	Develop clear policies and guidelines that enable responsible conduct of research
Research Group Leaders	Advancing careers of faculty and students through opportunities and attracting top talent	Reputational risk, loss of access to talent and facilities	Foster a culture of research integrity and adherence to new policies
Professional Societies	Advancing their field and attracting top talent	Being left behind	Developing workable guidelines specific to their field, statistics on activities
Publishers	Enhancing reputation	Good science published elsewhere	Fair and safe rigorous review process
Principal Investigators	Access to research support, facilities, data and top talent	Loss of access to unique data, research funds, and talent	Ensure and educate about research integrity, insist on workable agreements in collaborations
Scholars	Access to facilities, data, mentors, and collaborations	Loss of jobs, degrees, and careers	Responsible conduct of research

<sup>4</sup> JASON (2019, p. 36) provides *Table 1*, which outlines key factors stakeholders should consider before engaging in international research collaborations.