



Foreign Arrangements and Interference Western Sydney University

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A student's guide to
understanding
Foreign interference
in an academic
setting

Welcome to Western Sydney University



We are excited you have chosen Western Sydney University to pursue your professional goals. The University takes the safety and well-being of its students very seriously.

We want all students to feel welcome and safe as they enjoy the many opportunities that the university provides for their personal and professional development, without fear of any internal or external repercussions. This information deck provides guidance for students to be risk aware in an academic setting.



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INNOVATION AND TEACHING

Foreign interference and student life

Introduction:

The Australian government launched the [Foreign Arrangements Scheme](#) in 2020 to safeguard Australia's national interests. The University Foreign Interference Taskforce provides guidelines to all universities to educate students about the risks of foreign interference, including harassment and intimidation that may lead to self-censorship, and ensure their safety.

While the legislation is not focused on international students, coercive methods may be employed by foreign bodies to keep students from freely engaging in academic debates and influence or divert the direction of research.

Hence it is important to understand the risks that may affect the personal freedom and safety from foreign interference.



Foreign Influence vs Foreign Interference

Firstly, it is important to understand the difference between Foreign influence and Foreign interference.

Foreign influence (Transparent): All governments, including Australia's, try to influence deliberations on issues of importance to them. These activities, when conducted in an **open and transparent manner**, are a normal aspect of international relations and diplomacy and can contribute positively to public debate.



Foreign interference occurs when activities are carried out by, or on behalf of a foreign actor, **which are coercive, covert, deceptive or corrupting and are contrary to Australia's sovereignty, values and national interests.** (Covert)



Foreign interference risks

Globally engaged nature of universities comes with global challenges and threats.

These may include;

- Cyber spying;
- Student surveillance
- Intimidation and harassment
- Zoom bombing
- Impact on freedom of speech during lessons and on campus
- Threats to our intellectual property and IT systems



Implications for Research

These risks can have profound effect on research. The Key principles from the UFIT guidelines relevant to research state:

- Security must safeguard academic freedom, values and research collaboration; but
- Research, collaboration and education activities should be mindful of the national interest.

Overseas governments, entities or individuals may engage in foreign interference through:

- Inappropriate efforts to alter or direct the research agenda (subtle forms of undue influence/engagement and through funding arrangements that may lead to loss of future value and/or control of intellectual property – IP theft);
- Solicitation and recruitment of post-doctoral researchers and academic staff;
- Economic pressure; or
- Cyber intrusions



Relevant Policies & Resources

In this environment of significant threats to academic freedom, it is important to understand the following university documents and use them for guidance:

[Charter of Academic Freedom;](#)

[Media, Social Media and Public Commentary Policy;](#)

[Student Code of Conduct;](#)

External Resources:

[E-safety for students](#)



For further support and advice, students can contact Office of Equity and Diversity equityanddiversity@westernsydney.edu.au

If you have any questions or need clarifications about foreign arrangements, please contact:

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