

Checklist: Evaluating research proposals

Answering the following questions may help you evaluate new research proposals.

About new partners

- Why does a partner want to work with you?
- What are they expecting in return for their financial support or involvement?
- Is the organisation associated with a country which may be viewed as hostile to the UK or one which has different democratic and ethical values from our own?
- Has due diligence into the partner identified any involvement in research on behalf of the military or police with links to a hostile state?
- Set within the context of any information gained from due diligence, could your research be misused or have unintended applications which would be negative?
- Are there any legal, regulatory or university policy constraints on undertaking your research with this partner?
- Having considered the answers to the above questions, are there potential reputational or ethical risks to you or the university?
- Does the decision about this research need to be escalated within your department?

About research relationships

- Are the terms of any proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in keeping with the expectations of your department and university?
- Are you providing existing intellectual property (IP), research data, confidential or personally identifiable data to the project? If so, how is this going to be protected?
- Who will own any IP that is generated?
- Do you have plans in place for protecting the resulting IP?
- What contractual requirements are you able to put in place to protect the interests of your academic institutions?
- What access will the research partner have to your IT network? If they do have access, what broader visibility might this provide?
- Is there any physical separation or protection required between research in similar fields?

About existing partners

- Would proceeding with the research raise potential conflicts of interest with existing research partners?
- Have you spoken with your existing partners about any potential conflict of interest?
- Have you considered the terms of any non-disclosure agreements? Does this include an expectation that you will need to provide visibility to existing partners?
- Will this research breach any existing contractual agreements that you, your department or university already have?

Based on the answers to the above questions, are you happy to proceed with this research collaboration or do you need to escalate this within your institution or department for a decision?