

Security-Sensitive Research Material

Registration of research that involves access to and/or storage of security sensitive research material

1. What is 'security-sensitive' research material?

Security-sensitive research materials cover:

- Materials that are covered by the [Official Secrets Act \(1989\)](#) and the [Terrorism Act 2006](#)
- Materials that could be considered 'extremist' which is defined in the Statutory Guidance to HEIs under Section 29 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 as, 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs'
- Materials used for research projects commissioned by the military or under an EU security call.
- Research projects that involve the acquisition of security clearances to undertake the research.

'Materials' include online, electronic and hardcopy sources, audio and video recordings.

It is recognised that other research material, not mentioned above, could also be regarded as security sensitive. If in any doubt, a researcher should contact the University's Research Governance Team for further advice.

2. Purpose of the Registration Process

The University supports its researchers in undertaking research using security sensitive material, but takes seriously the need to protect them from the misinterpretation of intent by authorities, which can result in legal sanction. It is therefore important that the University is aware of the research before it begins and can ensure proper data management and oversight.

The registration process described below is a mechanism for allowing researchers to register their use of security sensitive materials as part of legitimate research projects and thereby enabling the University to demonstrate to authorities that it is aware the research being carried out. It is not a mechanism for reviewing this research or regulating it.

3. To whom does this guidance apply?

The guidance applies to all staff and students, both postgraduate and undergraduate.

4. **What do researchers using security sensitive research material need to do?**

(i) Register all research that involve the use of security sensitive research material

Individuals whose research falls within the definition of using security sensitive research material must register their research project(s) with the University prior to commencement by completing the Registration Form (Appendix A) and submitting it to the Research Governance Team. The registration form must be approved by either the departmental Director of Research (staff research) or the research supervisor and departmental Director of Research (student research). This provides evidence that the University is aware of the research, and its legitimacy.

(ii) Use a university profile when visiting security sensitive websites

Researchers should be aware that visits to security sensitive websites (even from open access sites) may be subject to monitoring by the police and, if discovered, can prompt a police investigation. Therefore it is recommended that, when undertaking research, university IP addresses are used to access these sites, thus ensuring that any enquiries about such activities come to the institution in the first instance.

(iii) Use the University-provided and individually allocated secure drives to store security-sensitive research material

Research material that is security-sensitive must not be stored on the researcher's personal computer, university computer or on their standard university drives. Individuals indicating on the registration form that their research involves the storage of security-sensitive research materials will be allocated a secure drive for the storage of this material.

Physical data e.g. reports/manuals must be scanned and a copy uploaded to the site. Hardcopies must subsequently be securely destroyed.

Documents stored on the secure site will only be accessible by the named research personnel and files from this store must not be exchanged. This will ensure that security-sensitive material is kept away from personal and university computers.

The Head of Research Governance and Planning will have oversight of the declared use of security-sensitive research material through the registration process. The purpose of this oversight is to allow a prompt response to any enquiries, internal and external, relating to declared use of security-sensitive material. The Head of Research Governance and Planning will be aware of the names of the researchers who are able to access each secure site and will be aware of the metadata for documents (e.g. the titles) that are stored, but will not know the content of the document themselves. For those who declare the use of security-sensitive research material, this oversight will offer protection for researchers as it ensures that the research material is kept secure and at arm's length from external intrusion (unless access is required for legal reasons).

5. **Enquiries regarding the use of security sensitive research material**

If it is identified that material is being accessed or used within the University that appears to be security sensitive, in particular, material that might be connected with terrorism and extremism this should be reported to the Research Governance Team using the appropriate form (Appendix B).

Material of this kind can be connected with legitimate research and on receipt of an enquiry form checks will be made to establish whether the discovery of such material is linked to a registered research.

If the identified material is not connected with legitimate research, the matter will be immediately reported to the University's Security Manager.

Date created: June 2016

Date approved by Research Committee: June 2016

Date for review: As required

This policy and procedures is based on the guidance provided in the Universities UK published document, [*Oversight of security-sensitive research material in UK universities: guidance.*](#)

University of Essex

Security-Sensitive Research Material

Registration Form (Section 1)

Name:

Department:

Does your research fit into any of the following categories which have been identified as security-sensitive?¹ If so, indicate which:

1. Commissioned by the military:

Yes	No
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2. Commissioned under an EU security call:

Yes	No
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3. Involve the acquisition of security clearances:

Yes	No
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4. Concerns terrorist or extreme groups

Yes	No
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If your answer to question 4 is yes, continue to the questions in section 2. Otherwise continue to Section 3.

¹ See paragraph 1 of the University's [Policy and Procedures for Handling Security-Sensitive Research Material](#)

Registration Form (Section 2)

The Terrorism Act (2006) outlaws the dissemination of records, statements and other documents that can be interpreted as promoting or endorsing terrorist acts.

1. Does any of your research involve the storage on a computer of any such records, statements or other documents?

Yes	No
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2. Might your research involve the electronic transmission (e.g. as an email attachment) of such records or statements?

Yes	No
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3. If you answered 'Yes' to questions 1 or 2, you are advised to store the relevant records or statements electronically on the secure University file store. The same applies to paper documents with the same sort of content. These should be scanned and uploaded. Access to this file store will be protected by a password unique to you. Please initial the box to indicate that you agree to store all documents relevant to questions 1 and 2 on that file store:

Yes

4. Please initial the box to indicate that you agree not to transmit electronically to any third party documents in the document store:

Yes

5. Will your research involve visits to websites that might be associated with extreme, or terrorist, organisations?

Yes	No
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6. If you answer 'Yes' to question 5, you are advised that such sites may be subject to surveillance by the police. Accessing those sites from university IP addresses might lead to police enquiries. Please acknowledge that you understand this risk by initialling the 'Yes' box below.

Yes

Please continue to Section 3.

Registration Form (Section 3)

Declarations

- 7. By submitting to the registration process, you accept that the University Head of Research Governance and Planning will have access to a list of titles of documents (but not the contents of documents) in your document store. These titles will only be available to the Head of Research Governance and Planning. Please acknowledge that you accept this by initialling the 'Yes' box below.

Yes

Signature of Researcher:

Signature of Supervisor (for students)

Signature of Departmental Director of Research

Date:

After completion the form should be submitted to the REO Research Governance Team reo-governance@essex.ac.uk .

Registration Form (Section 3)

Declarations

- 8. By submitting to the registration process, you accept that the University Head of Research Governance and Planning will have access to a list of titles of documents (but not the contents of documents) in your document store. These titles will only be available to the Head of Research Governance and Planning. Please acknowledge that you accept this by initialling the 'Yes' box below.

Yes

Signature of Researcher:

Signature of Supervisor (for students)

Signature of Departmental Director of Research

Date:

After completion the form should be submitted to the REO Research Governance Team reo-governance@essex.ac.uk .

University of Essex

Report form for enquiries relating to security sensitive research material

This form is to be used to report the discovery within the University of unsupervised material that appears to be security sensitive – in particular, material that might be connected with terrorism and extremism. Material of this kind is sometimes connected with legitimate research, and this office carries out checks relevant to establishing whether or not items reported on have that status.

Your name
Your e-address
Your contact telephone number
Your enquiry or report
Thank you. This office will contact you and undertake an investigation if necessary.

After completion the form should be submitted to the REO Research Governance Team reo-governance@essex.ac.uk