Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology

RCAT Update
August 2023

This update provides an overview of the development and initial impact of the Research Collaboration Advice Team (RCAT) **since the launch of its advisory service in March 2022**.

1. The aims of the RCAT

The RCAT was established in 2021 to meet the demand in the academia sector for clear advice from government on the changing research security landscape. The RCAT has three strategic priorities:

1. **Providing a trusted advice service to the research sector to address specific national security concerns in international research collaborations,** particularly in the context of the regulations that need to be applied to specific activities and partnerships.

2. **Helping institutions with the development of a step change in research culture,** working with institutions as they build a better understanding and application of Trusted Research.

3. **Gathering and sharing information about the range of issues research institutions are handling** to provide a much more nuanced understanding of the space for sector and government.

2. The RCAT's progress

Since March 2022, RCAT advisers have **engaged over 130 research institutions**. RCAT's advisers build confidential and ongoing dialogue with research offices within institutions.

The **team has been fully recruited and trained**. The RCAT consists of 15 staff with 12 advisers (including the Head of the team) based in Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, London, and Salford.

The RCAT has **established strong working relationships with key government departments and teams**. These relationships are crucial to the RCAT's aim to link together cross-government advice for the academic sector.

Edinburgh

Manchester

Birmingham

Cardiff

London

The **RCAT has been generally well received by the sector**, and there are plans to develop the service further. A recent RCAT survey of the sector received 90 respondents, and will be used to influence the development of the advice service. RCAT has also worked with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to improve the engagement work of the team that aims to support longer-term change in the sector.

3. What we are learning

RCAT advisers have **provided over 350 pieces of advice on issues faced by institutions and research offices, including the management of over 100 complex cases**. The five most common issues around which advice was given were: Export Control (32%), specific queries (23%), NSI Act (18%), institutional governance and research security polices (15%), and ATAS (9%).

The RCAT are developing a much **clearer picture of the nature of the specific threats, hostile approaches and existing exposures UK research faces:**

1. The RCAT has also worked with universities to provide advice on specific, detailed cases, where tailored advice was required. The majority of these cases were raised by the sector, showing the sector's willingness to work with RCAT.

2. Topics of key concern in high-risk collaborations include: Advanced Materials, Artificial Intelligence, Advanced Robotics, Synthetic Biology, Quantum Technology, and Space Technology.

3. **RCAT has provided tailored advice and mitigations** to queries about specific collaborations, that have allowed research institutions to make **informed decisions about the risks.**

RCAT advice given

- ATAS 9%
- Export controls 32%
- Specific queries 23%
- NSI Act 18%
- Institutional governance and research security policies 15%