QUICK REFERENCE

IDENTIFYING AND SAFEGUARDING SENSITIVE RESEARCH OF CONCERN

A SPECTRUM OF SENSITIVITY

The level of sensitivity of research may change throughout the research process; identification and safeguarding measures may take place throughout each research phase, involving all actors in the research system in greater or lesser capacities. As a result of these assessments, some research may be subject to necessary restrictions on sharing, for example, because it poses risks to public health and safety, privacy, the environment, or national or economic security.

Not sensitive → **Sensitive research** → **Sensitive research of concern**

1 RESEARCH DESIGN PHASE

Researchers, institutions, governments, and funders have a shared responsibility to identify sensitive research and determine whether it is of concern prior to the start of research. Once research has been identified as such, appropriate safeguarding measures can prevent malicious actors from getting access to data, knowledge, and information at the outset of the project.

IDENTIFY

Is this sensitive research of concern?

- Consult governmental or institutional lists
- Conduct risk assessments to identify relevant risk factors
- Engage specialized expertise to aid in identification

NO / **YES**

SAFEGUARD

- Prepare a risk assessment form and/or other documentation to support a security review of the research proposal by relevant parties
- Mitigate risks identified in security review (e.g., through development of a risk mitigation plan)
- Screen collaborators and research staff participating in project
- Obtain necessary research permits and licenses

2 ACTIVE RESEARCH PHASE

The sensitivity of research may change during this phase, due to unexpected research results or changing external factors. Continuous monitoring of the research project is necessary to assess whether re-visiting identification measures is necessary, and to determine which safeguarding measures are appropriate.

IDENTIFY

Is this sensitive research of concern?

- Revisit governmental and institutional lists to check for updates and/or if research is now included in lists consulted at outset of project
- Update and re-evaluate risk assessments based on changing circumstances
- Engage specialized expertise to assess whether research results may be sensitive research of concern

NO / **YES**

SAFEGUARD

- Continue monitoring the research project for evolving risks
- Continue monitoring collaborators and research staff
- Ensure physical security and cybersecurity of researchers and research facilities
- Support controlled access to facilities
- Revisit risk mitigation measures
- Adhere to data management plans and travel policies

3 POST-RESEARCH PHASE

Responsible approaches to publication and data sharing can help maximize the benefits of sensitive research of concern while ensuring that it remains out of the hands of malicious actors.

IDENTIFY

Is this sensitive research of concern?

- Consult export and catch-all control lists
- Consult external specialists prior to widespread sharing and publication of research to identify whether results should have limits on sharing

NO / **YES**

SAFEGUARD

- Prepare a risk assessment form and/or other documentation to support a security review of the research proposal by relevant parties
- Mitigate risks identified in security review (e.g., through development of a risk mitigation plan)
- Screen collaborators and research staff participating in project

Balancing Research Security and Open Science
The Expert Panel on Sensitive Research of Concern
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