Instructions

There are two components to the provincial research security requirements for the Early Researcher Award application: an **Applicant Attestation Form** and a **Mitigating Economic and Geopolitical Risks Checklist** (MEGRC).

Both forms are required as part of a complete application, regardless of the relative research security risk of the project. Both forms are fillable PDFs that must be completed by the PI and submitted via email to irp@uwo.ca for submission to the Ministry by the posted deadline.

The provincial approach to research security incorporates, but is not limited to, the federal Policy on Sensitive Technology Research and Affiliates of Concern (STRAC). For complete details of the provincial research security scope, process, and definitions of terms, please refer to the Research Security Guidelines of Ontario Research Funding Programs.

If you are unfamiliar with the research security landscape in Canada generally, please begin by consulting the Safeguarding Your Research portal and Western's Safeguarding Research resources.

Application Attestation Form

The Application Attestation Form must be completed, initialed, and signed by each named researcher in the application. For the Early Researcher Awards there is only a Principal Investigator (PI).

Institution Name should be The University of Western Ontario, not Western University.

Ensure Project Title aligns with your ERA Application title.

Project Number will not be relevant in this case and can be left blank.

Public Profile Link is a URL linking to your Western faculty or lab profile.

On page 3, you are asked to select Option A or B. You should select Option B and provide relevant details if you have any relationship with an entity on the Named Research Organizations list, the Australian Strategic Policy Initiative or the US Department of Defense list within the 2 years prior to the ERA application submission. This includes collaborations, affiliations, or receipt of in-kind support or funding on any project (not only the current ERA project). If the collaboration has since ended this should still be disclosed. Collaborations can be direct or indirect (e.g. co-authorship on a paper with someone whom you never directly communicated, or collaboration with someone who received funding or in-kind support from an entity of concern). Use the space to provide details. If you have no such relationships, you should select Option A.

Whether you select Option A or Option B, ensure that you both check the option box AND add your initials. If this is missed the form will be returned to you for correction.

The Application Attestation Form must be signed and dated by the PI.

Mitigating Economic and Geopolitical Risk Checklist

The Mitigating Economic and Geopolitical Risk Checklist requires you to disclose risks identified as relevant to your research project, and to develop a plan for mitigating those risks to safeguard your research. The form must be completed by the PI and signed by Western Research.

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Applicant Name (Lead Institution Name) should be The University of Western Ontario.

Ensure Project Title aligns with your ERA application form.

Project Number is not relevant in this case and can be left blank.

Involvement with Foreign Entities

If applicable, provide information regarding any current affiliations with and funding or in-kind support received from international bodies. This might include nominal appointments at international academic institutions, board member or named role in an international scholarly organization, or receiving funding from US or other international sponsoring agencies.

Risk Checklist

The items in the checklist are taken from *Mitigating economic and/or geopolitical risks in sensitive research projects: A tool for university researchers* (Universities Canada, 2019). This document provides helpful context for interpreting the checklist items (see pages 6-10).

As you complete the checklist, consider your program of research as discussed in your application. If a heading does not apply to this research (e.g., your project does not involve non-academic partners) you can mark the items under that heading as "Not Applicable." For the Early Researcher Awards, most headings will be relevant to all projects. International Travel is relevant to projects for which international conferences might reasonably be anticipated.

If a checklist heading is relevant to your research, or could be relevant in the future, you may find it helpful to read the individual items under that heading as "IF this risk/practice applies, we will discuss" rather than agreement that the risk/practice has come up already. For example, if your project *could* lead to the generation of IP, you should agree in advance with all collaborators and team members how the IP will be managed.

Potential Risk Identified and Risk Mitigation Proposal

This narrative section should begin with a statement identifying the relative overall risk of the project based on whether the research falls within a Sensitive Technology Research Area (STRA). If your research is in a STRA, or could be considered to be in a STRA, you should identify which area(s) it falls under and why you consider it high or low risk. If your research is not in a STRA, you can state this and that you therefore consider the research to be low risk. If you are unsure whether your research area might be considered a STRA, please consult with Western's Research Security team for guidance (researchsecurity@uwo.ca).

The narrative section should then disclose any potential high-risk collaborations, as identified in the Application Attestation Form, and provide appropriate mitigation strategies. If you name any other researchers in your Early Researcher Award application (this would not be typical for an ERA), you also need to disclose and mitigate their relevant collaborations in this section.

For example:

The following risks have been signaled, and mitigation strategies put in place, as a result of our due diligence:

> Risk 1: Relationship of Dr. X with X University, and Y funding organizations.
>
> Context: Dr. X co-authored paper within the relevant period with an individual affiliated with the referred institution.
>
> Actions: The project outcomes will not be shared with the individual affiliated with the named institution. The collaboration with the named individual is not currently ongoing and will not be continued in the future.

If the collaboration has ended, you can identify this as the mitigation plan. If the collaboration is ongoing and you are not sure how to mitigate risk, we recommend you consult with Western's Research Security team for guidance (researchsecurity@uwo.ca).

Finally, the narrative should identify general risks to the project and risk management strategies adopted by your lab or research group, organized by heading to align with the risk management checklist. The detail and specificity of mitigation plans will vary based on the sensitivity and level of risk associated with the research. Sample text is included below.

Examples of mitigation measures you might discuss include training on aspects of research security, team awareness of institutional policies and procedures, assessing external partners, implementation of best practices, partnership agreements (i.e., in cases of IP and technology transfer), and data management and cybersecurity plans. Sample text for general practices is included below.

The MEGRC must be completed by the PI and signed by Western Research.

Risk Mitigation Sample Text

Risks:

- The intellectual property produced as part of the project might be subject to theft, resulting in undesired and unintended uses of the research outcomes.
- The lab might become target of physical intrusion.
- Project team laptops and workstations might become target of cyber-intrusion.
- Unauthorized data access and intellectual property loss resulting from cybersecurity threats.
- Unauthorised data access and intellectual property loss resulting from sharing data through malicious apps.

Actions:

Building a Strong Project Team:

- The professional history of all staff, trainees, and team members will be assessed along with potential conflicts of interests or affiliations that would impede the project.
- Academic collaborators will be reviewed to ensure alignment with research priorities and assess existing or potential conflicts of interest.
- All projects will be developed in discussion with collaborators, including active participation on how to achieve our goals and mitigate risks.
- All team members will continue to keep in regular contact via email and monthly meetings.

Assess Private Sector Partners:

- In the case of future non-academic partnerships, due diligence will include ensuring the motivations of all partners are clear and aligned with the goals of our research, assessing reputational risks from the partnership, ensuring alignment of ethical standards and conduct of research with Western policies.
- As the need arises, we will work with the Western Research Contracts and Partnership Agreements team to establish formal partnership agreements covering the management of intellectual property and research outcomes.

Cybersecurity:

- The PI will verify that all team members have completed mandatory Western Cyber Security Awareness training and data management training.
- Team members will adopt "In-Lab" data access protocols, assigning minimal privileges and will adhere to university protocols for network protection, including restricted access and VPN use.
- Adjust team members' access as needed, particularly when roles change.

Use of Research Findings:

- The project team members will design a plan regarding how and when project outcomes will be shared and made public via open-source publications, international conferences, technical reports, white papers, courses, mass media, social media and personal communications.
- As relevant, the team will work closely with Western’s Technology Transfer Office to ensure that our IP is protected adequately.

International Travel:

- The project team members will assess travel risks before committing to international events, consult Western’s Safety Abroad Guidelines and Canada's travel advisories, take relevant precautions, design travel plans including data safeguards, and register travel at the university and travel.gc.ca.