FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why has the ARC implemented this new requirement?  
The ARC Conflict of Interest [COI] and Confidentiality Policy is designed so that all material personal interests are disclosed. The new questions reflect the new ARC COI policy which extends to include foreign involvement in grants. In most cases, international collaboration is valuable and desirable, but there may occasionally be what is defined as inappropriate foreign influence or interference. Identification and management of potential perceived or actual conflicts of interest is designed to maintain public confidence in the ARC’s business processes, and ensure that both ARC-funded projects and research outcomes support and primarily benefit the Australian community.

2. How will the new RMS COI questions related to foreign partners, support and affiliations be used by the ARC?  
The ARC has advised that the questions are included to assist universities to detect and manage any inappropriate foreign influence or interference. The ARC will also review responses to questions and have advised that if any responses raise concern, they will work with universities to ensure understanding and identification of relevant risks. While the ARC is not a national security specialist, any issues identified by them will first be referred to the DVCR of the applicant’s Administering Organisation for consideration.

3. Will the new RMS COI questions related to foreign partners, support and affiliations be used as part of the peer review assessment of my grant?  
The responses to the new COI questions will NOT be used as part of the peer review process. The answers will not be displayed in RMS to other participants, or appear in the PDF copy of the application used by peer reviewers.

4. I am not sure if my specific situation fits the criteria of one of the questions or not – what should I do?  
We recommend taking a conservative approach and over-declaring rather than risk missing matters that should be declared. The University will continue to seek clarification from the ARC on what information is most relevant to each criterion and update this site accordingly.

5. I have been working in and with international institutions and organisations for a number of years. How far back do I need to go?  
Most of the questions are focussed on current information and arrangements. The only question seeking past information is in relation to engagement in foreign sponsored talent programs. We have been advised verbally that the ARC will be updating their advice to specify that this should cover the last 10-year period. As we receive further advice, this FAQ page will be updated accordingly.

6. I definitely do receive financial support from one and/or more of the foreign organisations listed in the questions. Should I still submit my ARC grant?  
Yes – there are no wrong answers and answering yes to any of these questions does not necessarily indicate that there is a problem. The focus is on how any potential, perceived or actual conflicts are managed. You should complete all questions to the best of your knowledge. This allows the University and the ARC to help identify and manage any potential issues. If you are still in doubt, please see contacts below for further advice.

7. I am a named investigator on an international grant/contract, but I don’t get any funding from it. Do I still need to declare it in these questions?  
Yes. The ARC questions ask for declaration of a ‘financial or in-kind’ support. While ‘in-kind’ can be a vague term, it is reasonably assumed to mean that you receive some sort of benefit (e.g. being named on publications, receiving hospitality and/or speaking opportunities, visiting fellow privileges, or other invitation to participate in activities that could contribute to building your research profile and ‘track record’).

8. I am not directly receiving ‘financial or in-kind’ support from a foreign party, but my post-doc and/or my PhD students are. Do I still need to declare it in these questions?  
Yes, as your own work will also gain benefits from those contributions. This is the case even if the foreign party is simply providing free accommodation, laboratory access or access to resources.
9. My funding comes from an international grant, and the funding is based in an international organisation. I am not sure where all their streams of funding come from. What would be the best response?
   If you are unsure, we recommend declaring the funding. Our advice is to take a conservative approach and over-declare rather than risk missing matters that should be declared.

10. I am named as an investigator on a grant funded by a foreign government. Does that mean that I am affiliated with a foreign government?
    Affiliation with a foreign government is not achieved simply by being named as an investigator on a grant funded by a foreign government. It depends on the terms and conditions of the grant. Being ‘affiliated’ with a ‘foreign government’ infers some level of control by that government over your actions and research outcomes. If being named on the grant allows the foreign government to control your actions and outcomes, then you are ‘affiliated’. Most international competitive grants do not meet this criterion because the foreign government does not expect a prescribed outcome from the research, or that you will act on its behalf in any way. You will need to make a case by case assessment on the basis of this advice. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact the below:

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