



| | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Newsline | Research Security | | |
| Week | Oct. 6-Oct. 10, 2025 | | |
| Editor | Alaa Dabboor | Position | Research Security Manager |
| Resource Package | | | |
| | 1 | Team Canada – 2025 Research Security Conference report | |
| | 2 | Research Security Centre | |

Executive summary: Canada’s research security landscape is rapidly evolving, shaped by new federal frameworks such as the Sensitive Technology Research and Affiliations of Concern (STRAC) policy and the National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships (NSGRP). These initiatives strengthen protections against risks like economic espionage but have also introduced challenges, including a “chilling effect” on international collaboration and talent recruitment. The priority for institutions is to balance openness and security by building strong due diligence practices while maintaining a collaborative research environment. This Newsline summarizes key updates from the 2025 Research Security Conference and the Research Security Centre Newsline, highlighting emerging trends, policy impacts, and real-world developments across Canada’s research ecosystem.

Key Insights:

- **Policy Impact and Unintended Effects:** The STRAC and NSGRP policies have enhanced risk mitigation, but researchers (particularly early-career faculty) are increasingly cautious, sometimes avoiding international collaborations or student hires due to misconceptions about policy restrictions.
- **Measured Progress:** Federal agencies report fewer high-risk proposals and stronger mitigation plans. During the 2021–2023 NSGRP pilot, 3.2% of partnership applications underwent deeper security review, with 68% deemed “unmitigable risk.” By mid-2025, only four proposals were rejected, showing improved compliance and awareness.
- **Expanding Scope:** The NSGRP will now apply to select funding opportunities from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and future updates to the Sensitive Technology Research Areas (STRA) list may include social science-related fields.
- **Provincial Landscape is Fragmented:** Provincial research security requirements are not harmonized. Ontario has made its framework a legislative requirement with financial penalties for non-compliance, while other provinces like Quebec and Alberta are developing their own approaches.
- **Resource Challenges for Smaller Institutions:** Small and mid-sized universities face significant challenges in building research security capacity due to limited dedicated funding and staff. The conference highlighted the importance of leveraging national and

regional communities of practice, Public Safety Canada advisors, and consortium pricing for due diligence tools.

Recent Cases Highlighting Research Security Risks:

- **First-Ever Trial Under Security of Information Act:** The trial of Yuesheng Wang, a former Hydro-Quebec researcher, has begun in Quebec. He is the first person charged under Canada's Security of Information Act, accused of economic espionage for China by allegedly sharing confidential battery research data through China's Thousand Talents Plan.
- **Visiting Delegation and Scholar Risks:** A Canadian university mitigated risks during a high-profile foreign delegation visit linked to Named Research Organizations (NROs) by enforcing strict protocols, including supervised tours and electric device management. Another institution now requires safeguarding reviews before hosting visiting scholars after discovering attempts to access dual-use research.

International Context: A Global Shift

Canada's approach is part of a broader international movement. The conference revealed that other allied nations are developing their own frameworks, with many looking to Canada's STRAC policy and associated lists as a model:

- **United States:** The National Science Foundation (NSF) is implementing a "compliance plus" model, requiring certified research security programs at well-funded institutions and investing USD \$67 million in the secure program to create tools and a shared virtual environment for risk analysis.
- **Japan and Germany:** Japan has established a central university cooperation scheme (URSIC), while Germany's approach is framed by its constitutional protection of academic freedom, focusing on "de-risking, not de-coupling."
- **United Kingdom:** The UK's strategy emphasizes being "specific and proportionate" to avoid a chilling effect, using behavioral insights (the "EAST" framework: Easy, Attractive, Social, Timely) to encourage secure practices.

Conclusion: Canada's research security framework continues to mature amid global change, striving to keep research as open as possible and as secure as necessary while protecting both academic freedom and national interests.