

# Due diligence process for Research Collaborations

The Northeastern University London due diligence process ensures that research collaborations align with the university's ethics, compliance and strategic goals. It is essential to assess the suitability and integrity of potential research partners to protect academic reputation, avoid conflicts of interest and mitigate legal and financial risks.

## Initial risk assessment (light-touch)

Before moving forward with a project, **Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Services** will conduct an initial check to identify any reputational, financial or operational risks with your partner.

- This check should ideally be done at the **pre-award stage** but must be completed **before any funding is accepted**.
- We assess risks based on several factors, including:
  - **funding amount**
  - **country risk** (using globalEDGE and corruption index scores)
  - **FCO advice**
  - **partner's legal status and reputation**
  - **sanctions lists** (using Visual Compliance)
  - **any existing issues** that could impact project success

## Risk levels and actions

- **Low risk:** proceed without further checks
- **Medium risk:** additional questions and due diligence required
- **High risk:** full due diligence review, using the ARMA Long Due Diligence Questionnaire (information below)

## High-risk check

For projects involving **larger sums of money (over £30,000)**, **international partners** or those identified as **medium or high risk**, a full due diligence assessment is required.

The [UKRI-ARMA Long Due Diligence Questionnaire](#) is a comprehensive tool used by UK universities to evaluate financial, legal and operational aspects of potential research partners. This helps ensure compliance with funder requirements and mitigates risks such as fraud, corruption or reputational damage.

The questionnaire covers areas such as:

- **organisation details:** legal status, structure, and governance
- **financial health:** audited accounts, funding sources, and financial stability
- **operational capacity:** research expertise, infrastructure, and project management capability
- **reputation and compliance:** past performance, ethical standards, and adherence to regulations (e.g., GDPR, export controls)

## Outcome and monitoring

Partnerships that are deemed high-risk after completing the risk assessment and UKRI-ARMA Due Diligence Questionnaire will be escalated to the Executive Committee for review and a decision. If the risks involve ethical implications, the University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee will also be asked to review them. Possible outcomes are:

- **approved with no conditions**
- **approved with conditions**, such as mitigations through collaboration agreements (e.g., IP clauses or revised payment terms)
- **not approved**

RKE Services maintains a list of organisations assessed through due diligence. These assessments are valid for **two years**, unless significant changes occur. If project plans significantly change, or there are changes to the partner organisation, the project may require further review.

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### Contact Research and Knowledge Exchange Services

We are here to support you through the entire process. If you are unsure about any of the steps or need help assessing a partner, contact us early in the project planning phase at [research@nulondon.ac.uk](mailto:research@nulondon.ac.uk)