



THE GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON DC

**Responsible University Official:**  
Executive Vice President for Academic  
Affairs  
**Responsible Office:** Academic Affairs  
**Origination Date:** April 22, 2003

## POLICY ON CLASSIFIED RESEARCH

### Policy Statement

It is the general policy of the University not to accept or perform research that is considered classified.

### Reason for Policy/Purpose

Classified research is not compatible with open communication of knowledge within the academic community because it places restrictions on which faculty and students can access research data, the facilities required to carry out research, and/or research results.

### Who Needs to Know This Policy

Faculty, staff and students

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## Policy

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The George Washington University values the free exchange of knowledge through publication, education, and other means. It also takes seriously its responsibility to contribute to the public interest and believes that it can best fulfill this responsibility by maintaining an open intellectual environment that allows peer evaluation of research methods and findings, free interchange of information with other scholars, and transmission of the latest research-based information to students. Classified research, research for which knowledge of methods and/or results is restricted to individuals who have U.S. government security clearances, may play a critical role in serving the public interest. However, it is not compatible with open communication of knowledge within the academic community because it places restrictions on which faculty and students can access research data, the facilities required to carry out research, and/or research results.

The University Policy on Research, published in the Faculty Handbook, includes the following statements:

The academic research program of any student working toward any degree may not be classified or restricted from access by other members of the academic community.

University policy does not allow faculty to pursue research projects that restrict the freedom of the investigator to reveal the purpose, scope, or findings of the research. The University does not engage in classified research. Private consulting activities of faculty undertaken in accordance with applicable University guidelines are not covered by this prohibition.

The present policy statement is an elaboration upon and reaffirmation of that policy in the post-September 11 context.

- A. Because of the University's location, GW faculty, research staff, and students who wish to become involved in classified research may have opportunities to obtain security clearances through agencies and organizations other than GW and to pursue classified research projects on a consultant basis in accordance with applicable University guidelines. The University encourages them (i) to do so if they believe they can serve the public interest in this way and (ii) to explore ways to coordinate their classified research with related but unclassified sponsored projects brought through the University and conducted at one of its campuses.
- B. Because the conduct of classified research at GW campuses would compromise open communication within the academy and would require the establishment of special facilities and other procedures, GW does not allow classified research or the storage or use of classified data at any of its campuses. Nor does GW provide security clearances for GW personnel who seek to access classified material housed elsewhere or to conduct classified research elsewhere as consultants.
- C. If circumstances strongly warrant, an exception may be made by the President

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upon the advice of both the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Advisory Council on Research.

- D. The University will continue to base its evaluations of the scholarly work of faculty only on those works whose methods and results are made public.
- E. Faculty who decide to conduct classified research or access classified materials as consultants should (i) advise their department chairs, if possible, of the general nature of their activity at the time that it is undertaken, (ii) include a general characterization of the activity in their annual reports as required, and (iii) take all appropriate steps to ensure that the work does not adversely affect their research program at GW or their students' educational progress. Care should also be taken to prevent the appearance of University participation in the classified work.
- F. So that no student academic work will be placed in jeopardy of not being released for publication, no student research project, thesis, or dissertation for which academic credit is sought should require a security clearance or access to or involvement in classified research. GW students are free to participate in classified research as individuals if they obtain a security clearance through an entity other than GW and do not conduct the work at GW.
- G. GW researchers should be aware of the possibility that their research methods or findings could be exploited by enemies of the United States, whether the research is classified or not. If circumstances warrant, they may wish to seek advice of the University's General Counsel and/or others, and may wish to consider delaying publication if it is in the public interest to do so. Similarly, GW researchers should be aware that outcomes of unclassified research sponsored by the federal government can be classified by the government at a later time and may wish to seek guidance from the University about pursuit of a line of research if this should happen.

Proprietary research sponsored by industry may also raise issues concerning restrictions on the open communication of information. It may involve the desire on the part of a company to keep secret a research discovery by a GW researcher or a company's trade secrets, sensitive business information, or intellectual property. The sponsoring company may request to review publications in advance to ensure that such proprietary information is not revealed. The company may also seek delay of publication while a patent application is being filed.

GW's policies and practices regarding proprietary research are expressed in the "Policy on Research Agreements with Industry" (1999; see [www.gwu.edu/~research/resagree.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/~research/resagree.htm)). Consistent with the University Policy on Research, it allows sponsors a 60-day review period in which to review draft publications or presentations in advance of their release where there is a possibility that they may disclose sensitive, proprietary information or scientific discoveries. As with all sponsored project agreements, the specific terms of agreements with industry sponsors are negotiated by the Office of Research Services within the framework of University policy. This policy should be reviewed every four years.

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## Website Address for this Policy

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[GW University Policies](#)

The Office of Research Services:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~research/classifiedresearch.htm>

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## Contacts

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For information and questions on this policy, please call the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at 202-994-7315.

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## Definitions

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**Classified Research**                      Research for which knowledge of methods and/or results are restricted to individuals who have U.S. government security clearances.

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## Related Information

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[GWU Faculty Handbook, University Policy on Research, Section 5-1 Policy on Research Agreements with Industry](#)

Additional information on classified information and research:

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/clinton/eo12958.html>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030325-11.html>

<http://www.aau.edu/research/Info.pdf>

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## Who Approved This Policy

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Donald R. Lehman, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Beth Nolan, Vice President and General Counsel

John F. Williams, Provost and Vice President for Health Affairs

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## History/Revision Dates

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**Origination Date:**                      April 22, 2003

**Last Amended Date:**                      Not Available

**Next Review Date:**                      April 30, 2009