



**THE GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY**  
WASHINGTON, DC

**Responsible University Official:** Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Research  
**Responsible Office:** Academic Affairs, Office of the Vice President for Research  
**Last Revised Date:** May 31, 2015

## 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

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 is Governed by 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 9/11 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 upon the advice of both the provost and 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 safeguard against the work having an adverse effect on 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 at which point, they may wish to seek

guidance from the university about the pursuit of a line of research.

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 aid in safeguarding against proprietary information being revealed. The company may also seek delay of publication while a patent application is being filed.

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

[Office of the Vice President for Research](#)

Additional information on classified information and research:

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

<http://www.aau.edu/policy/article.aspx?id=4694>

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## Contacts

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## Document History

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- **Last Reviewed Date:** April 5, 2017
- **Last Revised Date:** May 31, 2015
- **Policy Origination Date:** April 22, 2003

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## Who Approved This Policy

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Steven Lerman, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Leo Chalupa, Vice President for Research

Beth Nolan, Senior Vice President and General Counsel

*This policy, as well as all [university policies](#), are located on the [Office of Compliance and Privacy's](#) home page.*