# Trump regime demands Australian universities end “anti-US” and “socialist” links

**Mike Head**
**16 March 2025**

Over the past fortnight, in line with the Trump administration’s fascistic “Make America Great Again” agenda, United States government agencies have sent Australian researchers working on joint projects with American colleagues a 36-point questionnaire, clearly threatening to cut off their funding.

The five-page questionnaire, which appears to be a global notice, essentially demands that all research serve US military and strategic interests, as well as the Trump White House’s far-right offensive against government jobs, social services, science, public health, public education, environmental protection and “diversity, equity and inclusion” (DEI) programs.

To be completed and returned within 48 hours, the political interrogation features questions about any connections to socialist or communist parties, China or other designated US enemies, and “anti-American beliefs,” as well as “gender ideology.”

Universities and researchers in Australia and internationally are being targeted as part of the Trump administration’s termination of billions of dollars of research grants both in the US and globally, which has already triggered protests from thousands of scientists, educators and students across the US.

In Australia, this missive imperils hundreds of millions of dollars in research funding and thousands of jobs. This is intensifying the pressure on the country’s public universities, which are already axing more than 2,000 jobs as a direct result of the Albanese Labor government’s reactionary cuts to international student enrolments and continued chronic under-funding of universities.

The questionnaire combines the Trump administration’s drive to suppress left-wing opposition to its anti-immigrant offensive and Elon Musk-led domestic war on working-class services, jobs and conditions, with its global war plans, particularly directed against China.

One question asks: “Can you confirm that your organisation does not work with entities associated with communist, socialist or totalitarian parties, or any party that espouses anti-American beliefs.”

Another demands: “Can you confirm that your organisation has not received ANY funding from PRC [People’s Republic of China] (including Confucius Institutes and/or partnered with Chinese state and non-state actors), Russia, Cuba or Iran.”

Question 6 asks whether the university prohibits collaboration, funding or support for policies that are “contrary to US government interests, national security, and sovereignty.” Other questions demand that projects must help in ending “illegal immigration” or “strengthening US border security.”

Further questions include: “Can you confirm this is not a climate or ‘environmental justice’ project or include such elements?” “What impact does this project have in increasing American influence, trust and reputation within foreign governments?” and “Does this project directly impact efforts to strengthen US supply chains or secure rare earth minerals?”

Questions insist that research projects must “strengthen patriotic values” and “reinforce US sovereignty by limiting reliance on international organizations or global governance structures (e.g., UN, WHO).”

The questionnaires were dispatched by various US federal agencies, enforcing an executive memo from the office of the president requiring researchers to identify all funding was consistent with “policies and requirements.”

Australian universities have already had research grants suspended or terminated by the Trump administration. According to the “Group of Eight” (Go8) elite universities, their researchers were notified shortly after the US election that projects spanning a range of topics, from agriculture to foreign aid and diversity and equity, had been cancelled under US higher education cuts, pending a review.

Several research-intensive universities also have received show-cause notifications to justify funding, seeking a response within 24 hours.

For decades, the US has been by far the largest international research partner for Australian universities, including about 80 percent of all current collaborations at Go8 universities. About $515 million in funding for research at Go8 universities in 2024 came from the US, much of which went to military and medical science projects.

That highlights how far the universities are already integrated into US military and weapons research. This includes expanding ties with military conglomerates, such as the Lockheed Martin research centre at the University of Melbourne.

The US offensive has provoked alarm and outrage among university staff, many of whom face potential unemployment, as well as a wholesale assault on research and free speech.

In response, the Albanese government has nevertheless avoided

© World Socialist Web Site

any criticism of the Trump White House, instead pleading for the continuation of the partnership with US institutions.

A spokesperson for Education Minister Jason Clare said Australia was "engaging with the US government to understand what these measures mean for future funding and collaboration," adding: "Australia and United States research institutions have a long history of cooperation that has helped develop new technologies and solutions to global challenge."

University managements have scurried to underscore their commitment to the US strategic alliance, complaining that it could be damaged by Washington's measures. Go8 chief executive Vicki Thomson stated:

"Go8 universities are deeply engaged in collaborative activities with the US, especially through our defence initiatives and the AUKUS alliance… For every one of our members, the US is the largest research partner by far."

The AUKUS pact involves spending hundreds of billions of dollars on long-range nuclear-powered submarines, other weaponry and upgraded Australian military bases for use in a war against China, and ensuring that all research is subordinated to that effort.

The reaction of the main campus trade union, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), displayed a similar pitch to that of the university managements while striking a nationalist stance against "blatant foreign interference." NTEU national president Alison Barnes urged the Labor government to "push back" and "guarantee Australian researchers would be protected."

Barnes stated: "Donald Trump's hateful agenda is racist, transphobic and misogynistic. The idea of research funding being tied to any of those values is sickening." But her media statement was completely silent on the Trump administration's demand for an unconditional alignment behind US militarism.

Supported by the NTEU, the Albanese government has intensified Australia's integration into US war preparations, including via the AUKUS pact and associated legislation, which includes bans on any research links with scholars in China or other countries designated as US enemies.

Last year, the Labor government and the Liberal-National Coalition jointly imposed draconian "military secrets" laws that place researchers, research institutes and companies in danger of being prosecuted for collaborating, directly or indirectly, with overseas colleagues, except for those from the US and UK.

Researchers were told in Australian Defence Department briefings that they could face criminal charges unless the defence minister granted them individual "foreign work authorisations."

The Safeguarding Australia's Military Secrets Act, or SAMS Act, set jail terms of up to 20 years for anyone who trains or works for, or "on behalf of" any overseas organisation or state-backed company, without such a permit.

The legislation has far-reaching implications, especially for university and other researchers in a wide range of science and technology fields. That is particularly so for those who might be accused of any links to, or partnership with, colleagues from China, Russia or other proscribed countries.

The Albanese government introduced this regime despite widespread objections by researchers, research organisations and sections of business because of the crippling impact it has in many scientific fields that depend heavily on international collaboration.

These laws enforce the sweeping "whole-of-government and whole-of-nation" war effort outlined in the Labor government's 2023 Defence Strategic Review and 2024 National Defence Strategy, directed against Russia and China, which made specific reference to aligning universities and sections of industry more directly with the needs of the military.

Last year, the WSWS warned:

> These moves will have a further chilling effect on universities and free speech, adding to the xenophobic atmosphere being created by the government's slashing of international student enrolments, scapegoating them for the intensifying cost-of-living and housing crisis facing working-class households.

That warning was further underscored by last year's Labor-Coalition boosting of "foreign interference" laws that can, as the WSWS documented and explained, not only target China and its alleged local sympathisers. They can be used to outlaw political opposition, anti-war dissent and social protests by alleging that these activities are connected to "foreign" or international campaigns.

Last year, the Labor government also announced the establishment of a Technology Foreign Interference Taskforce, similar to the already existing University Interference Taskforce, which involves intensive monitoring of educators and their students, and bars any research or teaching that could be branded as assisting a foreign government, especially China.

While aimed at China, these measures are part of plans to suppress the developing struggles of the Australian and global working class under conditions of an economic and social crisis, outrage over the Trump administration's agenda and the Gaza genocide, and the ever-rising danger of catastrophic US-instigated wars.

The fact that the Trump administration, not China, is now "interfering" to dictate the slashing and redirection of research projects in Australia and internationally makes this assault ever-more blatant.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**

© World Socialist Web Site