HEECA Higher Education Sector – Strategic Export Controls Training Course

Year 1 - Summary Report

October 2024

UKRI Research England

HEECA\\\\ The Higher Education Export Control Association

We are the first UK Higher Education sector-led initiative to deliver a bespoke export control training package, developed collaboratively across Industry, Government and Academia
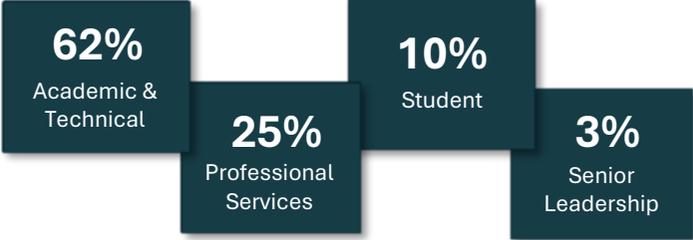
Overview

Since its launch, the **HEECA Strategic Export Controls Training Course** has transformed how UK higher education institutions engage with export controls.

As the first training programme of its kind, and completely free for UK HE institutions, this course was designed to demystify complex regulations and processes, offering clear insights into the purpose, definitions, and application of UK export controls, particularly in the context of higher education.

This summary report highlights our key achievements, development journey, and plans for future growth.

20,000+ Training delegates

79+ Registered organisations

Breakdown of delegate population by "Persona" pathway:

62% Academic & Technical

25% Professional Services

10% Student

3% Senior Leadership

How we're making a difference

Assurance to Government, Industry & International Partners
The course instils confidence that the UK HE sector operates in a compliant and informed manner concerning export controls, helping to preserve and enhance the sector's international standing.

Mitigation of Risks & a Duty of Care
The training aims to reduce the risks of economic, legal and reputational damage that could result from breaches of export controls, offering protection to individuals and institutions alike.

Empowerment of Practitioners, Academics & Students
By promoting awareness and driving cultural change, the course empowers individuals across the sector to better understand and navigate export controls in the context of everyday academic activities.

Support in Combating Hostile Actor Interference
The course addresses the deliberate attempts of hostile actors to exploit emerging technologies and other areas governed by strategic export controls. This collective, holistic approach, supported by government and industry, sends a powerful message about the UK's commitment to safeguarding national and global interests.

Platform & Course Features

- **Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)** informed by sector consultation
- A comprehensive **Glossary of Terms**, offering clear definitions of key concepts
- User-determined learning pathways or **"Persona" pathways**, that adapt content based on the job role of the user
- Featured **case studies** illustrating practical applications of the material
- A **question bank**, developed from the course content and ILOs
- Participants receive a **certificate of completion**, and **aide-mémoire** summarising key points for ongoing reference

The platform also supports **institutional customisation**, allowing for branding, designated points of contact, and the inclusion of institutional video media.

37%
of organisations have customised the course

Year 1 – Content Review Developments Include:
- AUKUS
- New Export Legislation
- Enhanced "Persona" pathway development
- Trusted Research & Secure Innovation updates
- Updated data and reference sources to latest current available versions

Course Maintenance & User Support in Numbers

432	350	99.98%
Support tickets progressed	Asynchronous content updates	Platform uptime

The course is hosted on a **Cyber Essentials Plus** accredited platform, ensuring a high standard of security and compliance. It meets the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1**, making it accessible to a wide range of users.

Its scalable infrastructure enables seamless expansion, while a **robust and resilient security model** ensures the platform remains secure and reliable.

CYBER ESSENTIALS PLUS

A Cost-Effective Solution for the Sector

Export control compliance is complex and costly for individual institutions, particularly those with limited engagement. This course has provided a cost-effective, accessible solution that raises the overall standard of export control awareness and compliance across the UK HE sector.
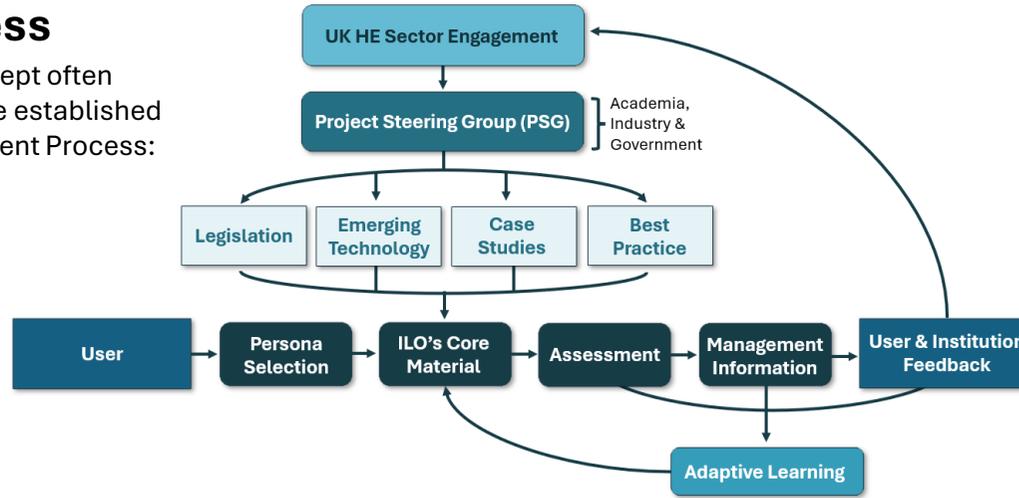
Indicative cumulative sector cost = £2.1m (based on approx. cost per individual standalone course design (~£15,000) x 142 institutions. Saving comparison made with UKRI Research England Development (RED) Fund grant income (£224,000) and ~£60,000 sector contributions in development and maintenance efforts.

£1.8m
Initial est. savings for the sector

£1m+
Ongoing est. annual savings for the sector

Training Development Process

In order to prevent the 'deploy and decline' concept often associated with compliance training courses, we established a thorough and well-founded Training Development Process:
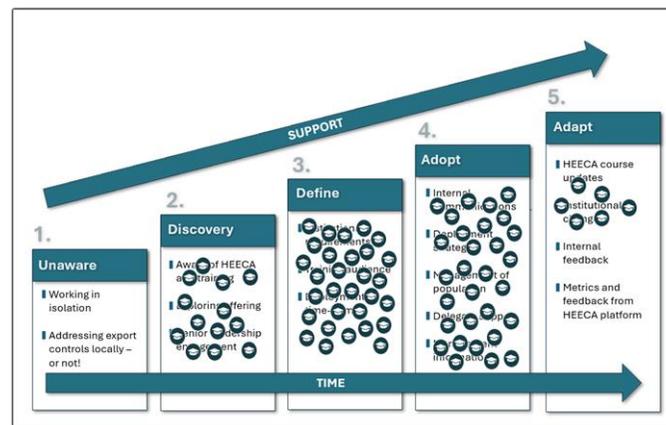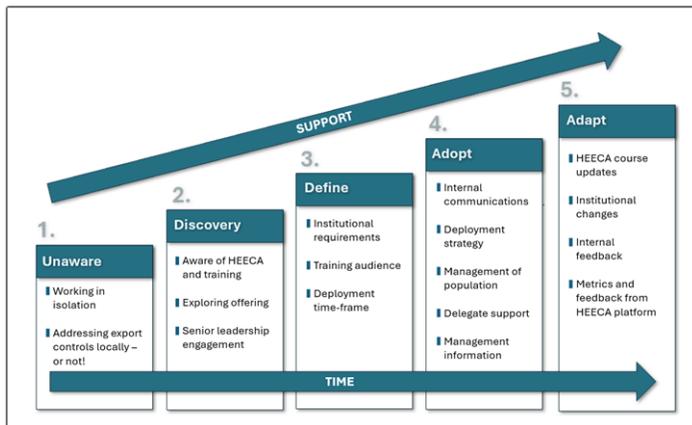

Adoption & Impact

Implementing the training course across institutions revealed vastly differing pathways, with some taking a **targeted** approach focused on specific teams or departments, while others opted for more **holistic** or **service-based** strategies.

This diversity in implementation reflects the unique structures and needs of each institution and is highlighted by the wide range of internal teams we have seen involved in the consultation process including:

- Risk Management
- Security
- Senior Leadership
- HR
- IT
- Legal
- Data Security/Protection
- International Partnerships
- Learning & Development

HEECA Training Maturity Model
Tool to help us understand and measure how well received the training is and how capable we are of continuous improvement:

Challenges

- Institutional complexity (diverse organisational structures) approving course adoption
- Underestimating the scale of engagement to access, deploy and engage with the platform content
- Integration with existing IT systems and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)
- Underestimating the scale of sector engagement and the associated reporting and data analytics tools
- Future financial support enabling new course development work
- Limited available resources to enable proactive national and international outreach, collaboration and engagement

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What's next?

Looking ahead, we plan to continue close collaboration with Government, Industry and Academia to refine our cost-saving strategies and ensure even broader parity of access across UK HE sector.
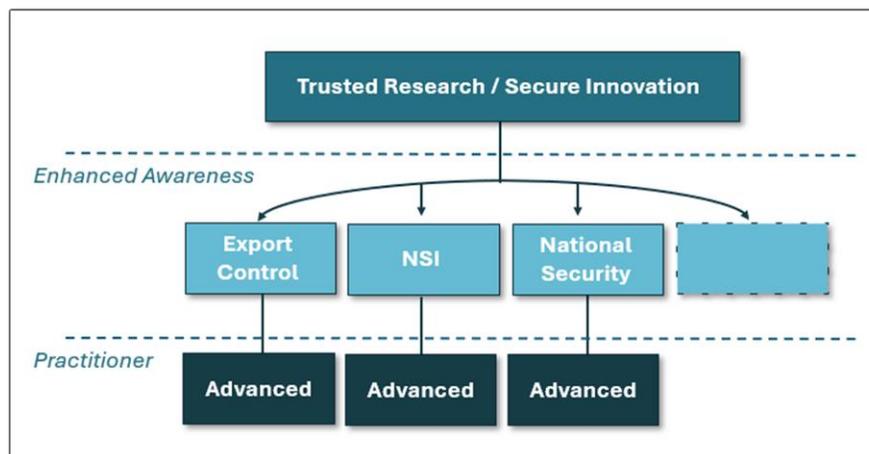
Future developments aim to further expand on efforts to date, including:

HEECA Trusted Research Practitioner Network & Training Hub*	SCORM Version Integration	Mobile Device Optimisation	Continued Enhancement of Neurodivergent Accessibility	Refresher Training	Enhanced Institutional Reporting & Data Analytics Tools

*Trusted Research Practitioner Network & Training Hub (Modular Training Course – Future Architecture)

The development of the course architecture aims to create a **configurable** and **scalable** system that can adapt to the evolving needs of various audiences. The approach is designed to be **proportionate**, ensuring that training content and resources are tailored appropriately based on user roles and requirements.

It will also seek to be **reactive** to changes in the regulatory environment or institutional needs. Finally, the architecture will be built with a **sustainable** focus, ensuring long-term viability and ease of maintenance while delivering impactful training solutions.

The **UK Higher Education Export Control Association (HEECA)** is a sector led, institutionally agnostic association formed in 2021, by research security professionals at some of the UK's leading research-intensive universities.

Although initially established for the purpose of development and promotion of best practice in Export Control compliance across the UK Higher Education (HE) sector, HEECA has over time, expanded its activities across the broader research security agenda to reflect the dynamic, complex and ever-changing landscape of UK national security.

HEECA acts as a conduit of technical exchange between practitioners, regulators, UK Government and other national and international stakeholders – including via participation in the Higher Education Security Forum (HESF) – and enables collaboration across the sector in order to build an informed and consistent approach to security compliance at a national level.

"We would very much welcome a similar course for the NSI Act. We think this course is excellent."

"It's an excellent initiative and I'm really glad it's been developed."

"I think this course is a very good idea for demystifying the process. I hope HEECA can develop other courses and a learning pathway to cover all aspects."

"This training has been exceptionally useful. It's accessible to an incredibly broad audience, bite-size but informative and has been invaluable. Face to face training is still enjoyed, especially for those difficult-to-answer questions but the format of the HEECA training can't be beaten for what it hoped to achieve."

"Just want to say thank you for doing this. It's brilliant as it is, and it fulfils a real need in HE."

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