

HEECA-ECJU 6-Month Export Controls Training Programme

Beyond the Pilot: Collaborating
for Lasting Impact

Impact Summary Report



Introduction & Overview

Between January and June 2025, the **Higher Education Export Control Association (HEECA)** and the **Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU)** - with financial support from **UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)** - delivered a first-of-its-kind, 6-month pilot training programme tailored to the needs of UK higher education institutions.



This pioneering initiative offered a structured **introduction to UK export controls**, combining foundational knowledge with practical case studies and peer experience. **Offered free of charge**, the pilot served as a proof of concept, demonstrating both the strong demand for structured, sector-specific training and the value of a collaborative, cross-sector approach.

Through **monthly workshops**, participants engaged with the full lifecycle of export control responsibilities from regulations and due diligence, through to licensing, audits and enforcement.

Designed for practitioners responsible for managing export controls within their institutions, the programme positioned compliance not just as a regulatory obligation, but as a **critical pillar of research security**.

Delivered as a wider professional development journey, the programme concluded with **delegates receiving a jointly branded HEECA-ECJU Certificate of Completion**, recognising their commitment to best practice and regulatory compliance.

"The incredible success of this training will act as a model for future iterations and new topics moving forward, complementing our E-Learning resources and national Research, Education and Innovation Security Hub which will start development in Q4 2025.

As an unfunded association, I want to thank all the volunteers and stakeholders who contributed to the development and delivery of this programme and mentored our delegates. The mutual benefit across all participants informing process and policy was clear to see.

HEECA will continue to innovate and collaborate in providing freely accessible training and resources for the benefit of the UK Higher Education sector in order to support a resilient and skilled community in the space of Economic and Research Security."

– Chris Buckland, HEECA Co-Chair

Participation & Structure

The pilot generated exceptional interest, with all **delegate places filled within 24 hours** of registration opening. The final **cohort represented 50 UK higher education institutions**, spanning a broad spectrum of institutional types and sizes.

Participation was open to all UK HEIs, with the programme targeted at staff responsible for export control compliance. To ensure continuity and consistency, attendance at all six workshops was required.



Cohort Structure & Peer Learning

As part of the programme design, delegates were placed into small peer groups (8–9 people), each led by a designated mentor.

These consistent groups created a trusted space for discussion and peer support and groups were encouraged to meet informally between sessions to share learning and strengthen cross-institutional connections.



Programme Format

The training was structured around six monthly workshops, combining in-person and online delivery to support accessibility and peer collaboration:

- Workshop 1 (In Person): The Foundations of UK Export Controls
- Workshop 2 (Online): Ratings & Exceptions
- Workshop 3 (Online): The 'Who' & Due Diligence
- Workshop 4 (In Person): Decision Making & Choosing Your Licence
- Workshop 5 (Online): Navigating the Audit Process
- Workshop 6 (In Person): Reflective Roundtable & Programme Review

50 institutions. 6 workshops. One unified commitment to export control excellence.

Impact & Outcomes

Strong Results Across the Board

Delegate feedback confirmed the programme's impact on both knowledge and confidence:

- **100%** would recommend the course to colleagues
- **100%** felt more capable of identifying when a licence is required for institutional activity
- Average rating of **9 out of 10** for quality of content and delivery
- Self-rated knowledge improvement from an average of **4.3 to 7.6** out of 10 - **a 134% increase**



Six Key Themes in Positive Feedback

1. Peer Networks & Shared Learning

Delegates built a sector-wide support network, sharing experiences, solutions and institutional approaches.

2. Direct Access to ECJU

Hearing directly from the regulator gave real-world insight and confidence in applying guidance.

3. Practical, Confidence-Building Learning

Real case studies helped demystify complex regulation and encouraged critical thinking.

4. Higher Education-Specific, Relevant Content

Tailored to academic contexts, the programme addressed the realities of university-based research and compliance, rather than industry-focused contexts.

5. Professional, Blended Delivery

The mix of online and in-person sessions supported flexible, engaging and sustained learning.

6. Broad Participation, No Cost Barrier

Free to attend and inclusive of a wide range of institutions, roles and levels of experience.

Wider Institutional Impact

While the programme supported **50 delegates**, the reach has extended far beyond the training room.

Many participants have already shared their learning with colleagues across their institutions, multiplying the programme's reach exponentially.

One delegate delivered a follow-up session to over 200 colleagues at their university.

If each delegate shares their knowledge with just 10 peers, the collective reach exceeds 500 individuals sector-wide - a tenfold increase in informed practice, policy awareness and regulatory capability.



Delivering an estimated £250,000–£300,000 in sector-wide savings.

Impact Without the Price Tag

By offering the programme **free of charge**, this pilot delivered an estimated **£250,000–£300,000 in sector-wide savings***, making high-quality, regulator-led training accessible to institutions of all sizes.



Crucially, this value doesn't account for the wider impact, where delegates are already sharing learning with colleagues and embedding changes across their institutions, amplifying the return on investment even further.

**This estimated saving is based on a benchmark of £5,000–£6,000 per delegate, reflecting the typical cost of attending a commercial course delivering comparable content delivered over one week.*

Reflections & Next Steps



Programme Reflections

The 2025 pilot programme demonstrated a clear and ongoing need for sector-specific training on UK export controls.

Across six months, the course provided a structured, collaborative space for knowledge-building, peer exchange and regulator engagement. Feedback confirmed the programme filled a longstanding gap in professional development for HEIs, particularly for those with compliance responsibilities.

Feedback highlighted the value of:

- A consistent cohort model that supported peer learning and trust-building
- In-depth, real-world insight from ECJU
- Content tailored specifically for academic research and institutional compliance contexts

The pilot also revealed a strong appetite for continued learning, more advanced content and sustained cross-sector dialogue.

“Working alongside HEECA to deliver this programme to the sector has been a genuinely meaningful experience. Helping universities navigate such a complex area is important, particularly with the growing relevance of dual-use technologies and sensitive research.

What stood out was the quality of the conversations. Delegates didn’t just attend, they asked thoughtful questions, shared real challenges and raised difficult issues. This openness helped shape the sessions and highlighted both where progress has been made and where support is still needed. This exchange enriched the sessions and emphasised the need for ongoing collaboration between academia and government.

The programme laid a strong foundation, but the evolving landscape we operate in requires sustained engagement to keep institutions informed and compliant. I’m excited to build on this momentum in future initiatives.”

– Jake Williams, Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU)



Looking Ahead: Sustaining & Scaling the Programme

The pilot would not have been possible without the generous support of UKRI, whose funding enabled the delivery of in-person sessions and made the programme freely accessible to institutions of all sizes. Without this investment, such a comprehensive and inclusive pilot would not have taken place.



As interest in the programme continues to grow, so too does the need for a sustainable delivery model.

Future iterations will require:

- **Secure funding** to maintain free access and quality of delivery
- **Ongoing partnership** between sector stakeholders and regulatory bodies
- **Investment in programme coordination** to support long-term scalability



This pilot has shown what is possible.

With the right backing, the programme has the potential to become a core part of the UK's research compliance landscape, strengthening sector capability, promoting responsible collaboration and supporting national security objectives.

Next Steps

Further planning is underway for a future iteration of the programme, subject to commitment from ECJU, and further available funding to enable delivery.

With Thanks

We extend our sincere thanks to the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) for their collaboration and expert input throughout this pilot programme.

Their involvement was central to the programme's success, providing delegates with direct access to regulatory insight and supporting sector-specific learning that would not have been possible otherwise.

We are grateful for ECJU's ongoing support and commitment to strengthening export control understanding across UK higher education.



Department for
Business & Trade

In Their Words: Hear from our delegates

"Networking has been a huge benefit. The group became a safe, supportive space for sharing and learning."

"The best broad grounding in export controls for academia - much needed and hugely valuable."

"Hearing directly from ECJU on sector-specific issues was invaluable."

Want to know more about our wider learning provision?

We currently offer the UK's first **free UK Strategic Export Controls eLearning course** designed specifically for UK higher education. To learn more, **get in touch** or explore our **1-Year eLearning Summary Report** to see the impact it's already having across the sector.

HEECA The Higher Education
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