

Project Collaborator Policy

1. Purpose

This Project Collaborator Policy (Policy) provides a framework for Vector Faculty Members to engage with researchers who are not affiliated with the Vector Institute, hereafter referred to as “Project Collaborators”. This Policy serves the dual purpose of fostering open, collaborative research while ensuring compliance with Vector’s research security requirements as well as safeguarding Vector’s Technology Assets and physical space.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to researchers that Vector Faculty Members would like to engage with as part of a time-bound research Project, which requires access to Vector’s Technology Assets and/or physical space.

This policy replaces the *Computing Resource Access for External Researchers Policy*.

3. Definitions

Project Collaborator: Researchers who engage with a Vector Faculty Member on a time-bound Project and are not otherwise a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, Vector Distinguished Postdoctoral Fellow, or research intern of a Vector Faculty Member. Project Collaborators are expected to engage with professional autonomy and are not subject to the direct academic supervision typical of a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, or research intern.

Personal Information: Any information about an identifiable individual.

Domestic Project Collaborator: Researchers affiliated with a publicly funded Canadian academic or research institution.

International Project Collaborator: Researchers affiliated with international academic or research institutions that are neither listed as [Named Research Institutions](#) nor otherwise prohibited from supporting an engagement in Canada.

Risk Assessment: An evaluation using pre-defined criteria, as per Vector's Research Security Plan and publicly available information e.g., web searches, to determine the security implications of a proposed collaboration.

Technology Assets: Technology systems, services, and data.

Vector Faculty Member: An individual who holds a faculty position at the Vector Institute.

Project: A defined research initiative with specific objectives, timelines, Technology Assets, and a list of individuals working on the project.

4. Eligibility Framework

4.1. Vector Faculty Member

Must maintain an active faculty appointment at the Vector Institute for the duration of the research Project.

4.2. Domestic Project Collaborator

- 4.2.1. Engaging with Vector Faculty Members on time-bound research Projects.
- 4.2.2. Engage with professional autonomy and are not subject to the direct academic supervision typical of a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, or research intern.
- 4.2.3. Are not otherwise a current Vector-affiliated graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, or research intern.

4.3. International Project Collaborator

- 4.3.1. Engaging with Vector Faculty Members on time-bound Projects.
- 4.3.2. Engage with professional autonomy and are not subject to the direct academic supervision typical of a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, or research intern.
- 4.3.3. Are not otherwise a Vector-affiliated graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, or research intern.

4.4. Ineligibility Conditions

- 4.4.1. Current affiliation with any [Named Research Institutions](#) (NRO), which are currently defined by the federal [Policy on Sensitive Technology Research and Affiliations of Concern](#) (STRAC).
- 4.4.2. Engagement in any [Sensitive Technology Research Areas](#) without appropriate risk mitigation strategies in place that have been approved by the Vector Institute.
- 4.4.3. Residence in a jurisdiction subject to current sanctions imposed by the Government of Canada.
- 4.4.4. Full-time employment in industry without academic or research institutional affiliation recognized by the Vector Institute.
- 4.4.5. Engagement in research related to Export Control List items without appropriate authorization.

5. Risk Assessment and Approval Process

The risk assessment and approval process operates across three tiers based on the proposed collaboration type and corresponding risk profile.

Tier 1: Domestic Collaborators Low-Risk

Tier 2: International Collaborators - Medium-Risk (risk score under 12 out of 20)

Tier 3: International Collaborators - High-Risk (risk score 12 or above out of 20)

6. Number of Projects Limit

The Vector Institute's current operational capacity limit is such that no more than ten Domestic Project Collaborators and five active International Project Collaborators may be active at any one time per Vector Faculty Member.

6.1 Collaboration Request Process

All Vector Faculty Members must submit requests to approve a Project Collaboration through the [Onboarding Request Form](#) for Project Collaborators.

The requirements of such a request will vary based on the risk profile described above.

All Tiers

Identification of the prospective Project Collaborator, project details, and justification for requiring an external collaborator to come on to the project.

Tiers 2 and 3: Additional requirements

The Project Collaborator's CV, attestation of residency form, National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships' Risk Assessment Form, a detailed project proposal, data usage type, Technology Assets, and physical space requests.

Supplementary assessments may be conducted by the Vector Data Team, Research Director, Chief Operations Officer, Affiliated Institutional Partners with Research Security Offices, and the Research Security Centre (RSC), Public Safety Canada.

Researchers who have had previous affiliations with NROs are required to declare that the affiliation has concluded in accordance with Vector's Research Security Plan.

6.1. Tier Assessment and Treatment

6.1.1. Tier 1: Domestic Project Collaborators (Low Risk)

Assessment Process: simplified verification using publicly available data for personal and institutional verification.

Target Assessment Time: 1-5 business days

Initial Term of Engagement: Up to one year, with the ability to extend for one additional year.

Approval Authority: Research Operations

Confirmation: Approval of a Tier-1 Project Collaboration is provided to the Vector Faculty Member and Domestic Project Collaborator by roapdesk@vectorinstitute.ai

6.1.2. Tier 2: International Project Collaborators (Medium Risk)

Assessment Process: Comprehensive risk assessment using prescribed criteria with a risk score under 12 out of 20. Additional assessments may be required per section 6.1.2.

Target Assessment Time: 1-3 weeks

Initial Term of Engagement: Up to eight months, renewable for an additional time period not to exceed 50 per cent of the duration for the original Project.

Approval Authority: Approval by the Director, Research Operations with concurrence from the Research Director.

Confirmation: Approval of a Tier-2 Project Collaboration is provided first by the Research Operations team's notification to the Vector Faculty Member, who is then responsible for communicating the final decision to the International Project Collaborator.

6.1.3. Tier 3: International Project Collaborators (High Risk)

Assessment Process: Enhanced risk assessment using prescribed criteria with a risk score of 12 or above out of 20. Additional assessments may be required per section 6.1.2.

Target Assessment Time: 2-4 weeks

Term of Engagement: Up to eight months, renewable for an additional time period not to exceed 50 per cent of the duration for the original Project.

Approval Authority: Joint approval by the Vice President, Research Operations and Academic Partnerships, Research Director, and the Chief Operations Officer.

Confirmation: Approval of a Tier-3 Project Collaboration is provided first by the Research Operations team's notification to the Vector Faculty Member, who is then responsible for communicating the final decision to the International Project collaborator.

Vector's Research Operations team will document the assessment, decision, and rationale for its decision-making with respect to Project Collaborators. Business records will be retained in accordance with the Vector Institute's [Records Retention and Destruction Policy](#).

7. Risk Assessment Principles

All Risk Assessments are conducted in accordance with applicable guidelines, using documentable criteria that consider institutional affiliations and research security requirements.

8. Inquiries and Feedback

Questions about eligibility and the policy should be routed to roapdesk@vectorinstitute.ai.

9. Approval

Periodic changes may be made to this Policy, as recommended by the VP, Research Operations & Academic Partnerships and approved by the Chief Operations Officer.