

# Student Guide

## Academic Solicitation Short

---

### Introduction

Narrator: Welcome to the Academic Solicitation Short.

Meet Dr. Harry Dreaper and Dr. Elizabeth Monroe. These longtime research colleagues are out for a lunchtime walk.

Dr. Dreaper: Good morning, Elizabeth. Did you receive an invitation to speak at the conference in Rio coming up in October?

Dr. Monroe: Yes. I remember when we went to the conference there years ago. I'd love to go back.

Dr. Dreaper: I noticed this conference isn't hosted by the same organization. We might want to look more closely into it before registering.

Dr. Monroe: Why do you say that?

Dr. Dreaper: Something about it didn't seem right. I want to be sure someone isn't using academic solicitation methods to get our research data.

Dr. Monroe: What's academic solicitation?

Narrator: Academic solicitation is one of the fastest-growing methods of operation used by foreign intelligence entities (FIEs) to obtain sensitive or classified information. Due to the potential of relatively easy access to highly valuable information, the academic community will likely remain an attractive target for the foreseeable future.

By the end of this Short, you will be able to identify academic solicitation methods, determine countermeasures, and report suspicious activity.

### What is Academic Solicitation?

Academic solicitation is the use of students, professors, scientists, or researchers as collectors — or FIE posing in those roles — improperly attempting to obtain sensitive or classified information.

As we saw in the opening scenario, Dr. Dreaper and Dr. Monroe received an invitation to speak at an international conference. Because both scientists work with sensitive applied research, they can be targets of collectors attempting to obtain information, otherwise known as academic solicitation.

Collectors target a variety of information, such as:

- Research and development: This may be research submitted to a college that hasn't been

classified yet or falls under International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR).

- Intellectual property and proprietary information: May not be classified or export-controlled but has value for the development of profitable products.
- Personnel: Academics working on classified or proprietary projects are at risk, as well as anyone who formerly worked on a classified project. Any information about the students, professors, and researchers working on the technologies may be of value to FIE in attempts to exploit or even possibly recruit. This may include financial information, evaluations, Protected Health Information (PHI), or other personal information.
- Contracting and Security: Personnel in contracting and security are also at risk due to their knowledge of projects and workspaces and their placement and potential access within a college or university.
- Classified, sensitive, or export-restricted basic and applied research: Adversaries target any information of value. They may target information before it is classified or pieces that are unclassified, but become sensitive or classified in aggregate.
- Developing defense or dual-use technologies: Dual-use technology is normally used for civilian purposes but may have military applications (for example, radio navigation systems such as GPS).
- Information about the students, professors, and researchers working on the technologies: Adversaries can obtain the contact information of personnel working on sought-after technologies by using social networking sites and instant messaging services.

## What is Academic Solicitation? (Cont'd.)

Collectors are targeting various personnel: Those who perform very specialized tasks, or are at the top five percent in their field, are targets. However, they are not the only ones who need to exercise vigilance. It is important for Facility Security Officers (FSOs) to be aware of personnel working on any projects that could be potentially targeted, which includes the following personnel:

- Subject matter experts (SMEs), researchers, and scientists.
- Cleared contractors and businesses: Contract or budget analysts may be privy to sensitive information, clients or suppliers, and contact lists.
- Academics and professors: They are similar to SMEs in level of knowledge and also for their access to the networks of other academics and professors.
- Students: Besides undergraduate and graduate students, working students are targeted. Students who travel internationally may be of interest. Adversaries may not just target the student, but those they are close to, including friends and co-workers.
- Human resources personnel: May be targeted due to having access to the contact information of SMEs and others who can further an adversary's goals.
- Executive assistants: May have access to contact lists, calendars, and personnel information.
- Custodial services: May have access to sensitive areas and equipment.

## Academic Solicitation Methods

The academic community has traditionally been a culture open to collaboration. Significant scientific advancements have been possible due to international collaborations, yet the spirit of collaboration can be exploited by an adversary. FIEs have successfully obtained protected information under the guise of an academic request.

Academic solicitation is at the center of several methods of contact and methods of operation.

The Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) recognizes 12 total methods of contact. These are the approaches used to connect a foreign actor to the target. For academic solicitation, four commonly used methods include:

- Academic resumes
- Social networking services
- Email
- Contact at conferences, conventions, and tradeshow

DCSA recognizes 13 methods of operation. These equate to what the foreign actor is trying to accomplish through its contact. For academic solicitation, three commonly used methods include:

- Resume submissions
- Exploiting relationships or experts
- Requests for information

Counterintelligence Special Agent (CISA) Roberts is reading the latest report from the DCSA related to the targeting of U.S. technologies.

CI Special Agent Roberts: Welcome. I'm here to share with you the tactics we've seen FIEs use to solicit information. Have a look at these with me.

- Foreign students accepted to a U.S. university or to postgraduate research programs are recruited by their home country to collect information and may be offered state-sponsored scholarships as an incentive for their collection efforts.
- U.S. researchers receive requests to provide dual-use components under the guise of academic research.
- U.S. researchers receive unsolicited emails from peers in their academic field soliciting assistance on fundamental and developing research.
- U.S. professors or researchers are invited to attend or submit a paper for an international conference.
- Overqualified candidates seek to work in cleared laboratories as interns.
- Candidates seek to work in cleared laboratories whose work is incompatible with the requesting individual's field of research.
- Intelligence entities send SMEs requests to review research papers to have the SMEs correct any mistakes.

## Countermeasures

Narrator: Thinking back to the opening scenario, Dr. Dreaper mentions to Dr. Monroe they should look more closely at the international conference in Rio. They both are aware of academic solicitation, but what can they do if they suspect they have been targeted?

Dr. Dreaper: Let's not respond to the invite yet. I'll check into the conference details to see if they are legitimate. If I find anything suspicious, I'll report it.

Dr. Monroe: Ok, Harry, thanks for checking on this. Let me know what you find out.

Narrator: View unsolicited academic inquiries with suspicion, especially those received through the internet.

- Before responding to an inquiry, verify the identity and address of the requesters. If you are uncomfortable looking up the entities, reach out to your FSO to help determine the identity of the senders. Remember that if you are traveling internationally, you will need to receive a foreign travel briefing.
- Ensure any response to known or unknown requesters only includes information authorized for release.
- If the requester cannot be verified or the request is suspicious:
  - Do not respond in any way.
  - Report the incident to security personnel if you suspect you may have been a target of this method.

## Reporting

Narrator: You should report any contact such as emails, telephone calls, or personal contact that is suspicious because of the manner or subject matter of the request. This may include requests from U.S. persons or from foreign nationals located in the United States or abroad, and may consist of:

- Unsolicited applications or requests for undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, or other research positions
- Unsolicited requests for access to research papers or other research-related publications or documents
- Unsolicited requests of assistance with or review of theses or dissertations, draft publications, or other research-related documents
- Unsolicited invitations to attend and/or present at international conferences

Thinking back to our opening scenario, Dr. Dreaper became suspicious of the unsolicited invitation to attend the international conference in Rio.

Suspicious contacts like these are required to be reported by the FSO to the appropriate DCSA Industrial Security representatives, or IS Reps, and Counterintelligence Special Agents, or CISAs, who are trained to take your suspicious contact reports.

If DCSA is not your cognizant security office, ask your FSO or refer to the National Industrial Security Program Operating Manual (NISPOM).

For specific reporting requirements, refer to the NISPOM. For reports regarding actual, probable, or possible espionage, sabotage, terrorism, or subversive activities, submit to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as well as your security office.

Thinking back to our opening scenario, Dr. Dreaper reported the contact to his FSO, who in turn contacted the Program Office and the DCSA representatives, which include an IS Rep and a CISA.

## Epilogue

Dr. Dreaper: I heard back from the FSO about the Rio conference.

Dr. Monroe: Yes, what did you find out?

Dr. Dreaper: We were able to verify the identity of the coordinator who sent us the invite and didn't find evidence of academic solicitation.

Dr. Monroe: That's a relief.

Dr. Dreaper: Yes, it is, and we can proceed with registering. The FSO reminded me that academic solicitation can take other forms besides conference invitations, but the FSO will cover that more in the foreign travel briefing. Be sure to look critically at any unexpected requests or resumes you receive in your email inbox, and don't hesitate to report them if you're suspicious.

Dr. Monroe: Will do, Harry.

## Knowledge Checks

### *Question 1*

Read the scenario and question. Select the best response.

Dr. Oberoi has posted a job announcement for a researcher to assist with ballistic missile research at a military installation. Dr. Oberoi receives a response from a foreign virologist.

How should Dr. Oberoi respond?

- Report to the FSO.
- Schedule an interview.
- Forward the resume to a virologist colleague.
- Respond with a request for additional information, such as references or transcripts.

*Question 2*

Read the scenario and question. Select the best response.

Noor, an Iranian student, is taking an introductory level engineering course with Dr. Rhodes, a leading tribologist. Tribology can be used for ballistics research and is implemented in developing rail guns. At a recent meeting during office hours, Noor asks Dr. Rhodes detailed questions about his colleagues, his tribology research, and its application to the rail gun.

Why might this scenario be suspicious?

- The rail gun may be classified, sensitive, or export-restricted basic and applied research.
- Noor's questions aren't related to her introductory-level engineering course.
- Noor is asking about Dr. Rhodes' colleagues.
- All of the above.

*Question 3*

Read the scenario and question. Select the best responses.

After speaking at an international conference, Dr. Riel received an email from a foreign undergraduate attendee asking him for input on a microelectronics research paper. The attendee asked for unclassified details that, in aggregate, may be sensitive or even classified.

Why should this scenario be reported? Select all that apply.

- The scenario occurs after an international conference.
- The request came from a foreign student.
- The request is unusual within the academic community.
- The questions are outside the scope of an undergraduate-level research paper.

*Question 4*

Read the scenario and question. Select the best response.

After conducting a demonstration of smart glasses (considered dual-use technology) at a conference, Dr. Bamberg is approached by a researcher from Ukraine. The researcher is interested in obtaining a pair of the glasses to conduct academic research.

How should Dr. Bamberg respond?

- Gather the researcher's information and report it to his FSO.
- Share his contact information and offer to send information.
- Offer to host the researcher for a visit at Dr. Bamberg's university.
- Agree, since they say it's for academic and not for military purposes.

## Conclusion

During this Short, you learned to identify academic solicitation methods, determine countermeasures, and report suspicious activity.

As we could see when following Dr. Dreaper and Dr. Monroe, they have an awareness of academic solicitation threats and are vigilant in monitoring suspicious contact. When necessary, they report suspicious contact.

If you see something suspicious, report it. You are required to report not only to be in compliance with the NISPOM, but to assist in protecting United States research, technology, intellectual property, and proprietary information.

## Knowledge Check Answers

### Question 1

Read the scenario and question. Select the best response.

Dr. Oberoi has posted a job announcement for a researcher to assist with ballistic missile research at a military installation. Dr. Oberoi receives a response from a foreign virologist.

How should Dr. Oberoi respond?

- **Report to the FSO.**
- Schedule an interview.
- Forward the resume to a virologist colleague.
- Respond with a request for additional information, such as references or transcripts.

Feedback: Because Dr. Oberoi is posting for a position involving the protection of national security (missile research), she must be vigilant in selecting a candidate who will preserve our Nation's security. A response from a foreign candidate will require additional screening. Additionally, because the candidate's background in virology does not match the requirements of the job posting for ballistic missile research, this is a suspicious contact. Dr. Oberoi should report it to the FSO. Because this is a part of DOD, the security office the FSO will report to is DCSA, and the program manager. Dr. Oberoi should not respond to the candidate, schedule an interview, or forward the candidate's resume, as this may cause more solicitation and could be damaging.

### Question 2

Read the scenario and question. Select the best response.

Noor, an Iranian student, is taking an introductory level engineering course with Dr. Rhodes, a leading tribologist. Tribology can be used for ballistics research and is implemented in developing rail guns. At a recent meeting during office hours, Noor asks Dr. Rhodes detailed questions about his colleagues, his tribology research, and its application to the rail gun.

Why might this scenario be suspicious?

- The rail gun may be classified, sensitive, or export-restricted basic and applied research.
- Noor's questions aren't related to her introductory-level engineering course.
- Noor is asking about Dr. Rhodes' colleagues.
- **All of the above.**

Feedback: There are several indicators in this scenario that are suspicious. The aspects of the program Noor is asking about may be classified, sensitive, or export-restricted basic and applied



research. Also, Noor is asking questions about tribology, a dual use technology. By asking about Dr. Rhodes' colleagues, Noor is potentially looking to gather information from others who may be SMEs in tribology. These details suggest that Noor may have been recruited to collect information. This incident should be reported.

### *Question 3*

Read the scenario and question. Select the best responses.

After speaking at an international conference, Dr. Riel received an email from a foreign undergraduate attendee asking him for input on a microelectronics research paper. The attendee asked for unclassified details that, in aggregate, may be sensitive or even classified.

Why should this scenario be reported? Select all that apply.

- **The questions are outside the scope of an undergraduate-level research paper.**
- **The request is unusual within the academic community.**
- **The scenario occurs after an international conference.**
- **The request came from a foreign student.**

Feedback: One known form of academic solicitation involves intelligence entities sending SMEs requests to review research papers to get the SMEs to correct any mistakes. In this scenario, the attendee of the international conference may be seeking to solicit information from Dr. Riel in the hopes he will identify mistakes in a research paper and, in the interest of scientific advancement, correct the mistakes.

### *Question 4*

Read the scenario and question. Select the best response.

After conducting a demonstration of smart glasses (considered dual-use technology) at a conference, Dr. Bamberg is approached by a researcher from Ukraine. The researcher is interested in obtaining a pair of the glasses to conduct academic research.

How should Dr. Bamberg respond?

- **Gather the researcher's information and report it to his FSO.**
- Share his contact information and offer to send information.
- Offer to host the researcher for a visit at Dr. Bamberg's university.
- Agree, since they say it's for academic and not for military purposes.

Feedback: Because this request for dual-use technology is coming from a foreign national, Dr. Bamberg should gather contact information of the researcher and report it to his FSO. The FSO will report to the Program Manager and DCSA. From there, DCSA can determine if the contact is a threat. If Dr. Bamberg does not get contact information, he is not being proactive. Several other academics may also be targeted, and Dr. Bamberg's report may prevent potential damage. Dr. Bamberg should not share his contact information or extend an offer to visit, as more contact may cause more solicitation and could be damaging.