



# Risk Management of Fieldwork

Step by Step guide to the Fieldwork Assessment (Medium Risk)

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## Introduction

This step by step guide takes you through the Fieldwork Assessment Form (**medium** risk activities). There are similar guidance documents for the Fieldwork Assessment Forms (low and high risk), and a specific guidance document for Social Research Activities. You should consider the specific nature of the fieldwork trip to gauge which fieldwork assessment form to use, especially areas such as the activity, the location and mode of transport.

Some example fieldwork assessments and training are available through Health and Safety Services to support completion of the risk assessment(s).

It should be noted that this guidance is in no way a comprehensive guide to every aspect of the fieldwork activities undertaken by the University. If there are any concerns or questions that relate to the activity it is important that you seek further guidance and specialist advice. Support can also be sought from your Health and Safety Manager or Health and Safety Coordinator.

## Fieldwork Assessment

The form is divided into sections to provide the following information; this guidance follows the form's sections:

### Fieldwork Project Details

- Faculty / School / Service.
- Location of fieldwork.
- Brief description of Fieldwork activity and purpose.
- Fieldwork itinerary.
- University Insurance Policy details. See the 'Useful web links' webpage for the link to this information.
- Organiser details - including Fieldwork Activity Organiser (often the course leader), Fieldwork Co-ordinator, nature of the visit and details of participants.

### Hazard Identification

- **Nature of the site**
  - Include all locations to be visited during the trip; these could be logged as part of the itinerary. Any changes during the trip should be recorded on the itinerary and be approved by the activity organiser and recorded on or off the site.
  - Site information could include:
    - Nearest local contact point(s) (such as a hospital, police station or hotel).
    - System for contact appropriate to the location (such as mobile phones or a two-way radio). Include prearranged contact times if appropriate.
    - Grid references and maps for rural and remote areas.
    - Tide-times where appropriate e.g. for coastal trips.
- **Process**
  - Consider what the process involves – does it include:
    - Interviewing groups or individuals.
    - Manual Handling.
    - Driving off road or driving specialist vehicles.
    - Handling or working with animals.
- **Transport**

Travel is one of the areas where most incidents happen during fieldwork.

Consider:

- Transport to and from the site – where appropriate an itinerary including a record of flight times and numbers.

Title:	<i>Step by step guide for Fieldwork Assessment Medium risk</i>	Number:	PRSG17.12	Issue date:	1	Page Number	Page 2 of 5
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- Any transport on site.
- Also consider whether you are carrying any dangerous goods.

- **Equipment**

What equipment is needed for the activities to be undertaken? Consider:

- Machinery.
- Specialist equipment e.g. climbing, sailing etc.
- Electrical equipment.

- **Violence**

Consider the potential for violence, political or civil unrest. Violence can be encountered anywhere, but the chances are increased in urban environments. Violence can take the form of:

- Violent crime such as mugging.
- Being caught up in local unrest such as political demonstrations.

Violence could result from people misinterpreting why activities such as questionnaires are being carried out. This is more likely when working alone, dealing with particular high risk individuals and groups, or working in areas with high crime rates.

- **Individuals**

Consider your capabilities and experiences and those of others within the group to ensure that these are catered for as far as possible and that individuals have the opportunity to take part, this should include:

- Medical considerations;  
If participants are currently taking medication they should ensure they have enough to cover the duration of the trip, with enough to cover in case of delay. They should also know the name of the medication, not just the trade name that is used as it is not always easy to obtain medication abroad and it may have a differing composition to that found in the UK.
- Experience of travel or activity.
- Any disabilities.

- **Work Pattern**

Consider the pattern of work while undertaking the activity, will participants be working shifts, working at night or long hours? Also consider potential of lack of sleep, exhaustion etc.

- **Permissions Required**

Do you require permission to carry out the fieldwork e.g. from the owner of the land, for entry into the country e.g. visas, letter of permission, formal invitation etc. Include details of any permissions that you have obtained and any restrictions on activities placed within them. Permission should be sought prior to the field trip and activity however if needed when overseas the Foreign Commonwealth Office, Embassy or Consulate of the country may be able to advise as to the legislative requirements and permissions required.

- **Other**

Consider other aspects that may be relevant to the activity, this may include environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity - particularly in other countries. Any specific entry requirements to a country e.g. Visas, specific vaccinations or prophylactic treatments required.

- **Other specific risk assessments required**

Are other assessments required e.g. for Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH), Manual Handling, Lone Working, etc? If they are required either include details or attach as a separate risk assessment. Ask your Health and Safety Manager if you are unsure of risk assessments which may be needed.

Title:	<i>Step by step guide for Fieldwork Assessment Medium risk</i>	Number:	PRSG17.12	Issue date:	1	Page Number	Page 3 of 5
--------	--	---------	-----------	-------------	---	-------------	-------------

## Additional Supporting Information

Some key items you could consider including in the pre-departure briefing include:

- Specialist training needs – depending on the fieldwork you may wish to provide training in specific areas for example self-defence, cultural sensitivity, first aid, swimming.
- Details from the Fieldwork Assessment such as:
  - Itinerary of the trip
  - Hazards and control measures identified in the Fieldwork Assessment
  - Contingency and emergency plans – what to do in an emergency and relevant contact details
  - FCO Advice – when travelling overseas. This also highlights any potential increased risk, often in the form of military or political unrest.
  - Dress and behaviour – you may wish to brief participants on any cultural sensitivity around the fieldwork activities and the area they are visiting.
- Health hazards and issues – also control measures.
  - Health hazards associated with the fieldwork activity or travel to certain countries.
  - Hazards associated with food, drink, hygiene, climate related illnesses e.g. dehydration, mountain sickness.
  - Advice on preventative medical treatment (e.g. vaccinations, malarial prophylaxis), any further training that might be required and availability of medical facilities whilst in the field.

### ● Training

During the planning and fieldwork assessment process training needs may have been identified, include this and whether training has been carried out.

### ● Supervision

Includes levels of supervision required for the activities; this should be appropriate to the experience of the individual participants. When on a group fieldwork activity, the ratio of staff to students or experienced to novice participants should be determined by taking into account the type of activity, size of the group and their experience.

When undertaking specialist activities such as diving which are being run by or in conjunction with a partner organisation their advice should be sought regarding supervision levels. Note that when a third party partner organisation is used they should provide appropriate health and safety documentation as well as any other requirements (e.g. specific personal protective equipment) for the activities.

People supervising others during the fieldwork should be named in the risk assessment and plan, and any specialist responsibility, qualification, training, in-house training and previous experience should also be included; e.g. trained in first aid, or a specialist instructor in rock climbing or sailing etc.

### ● Other Controls

Consider any further controls such as registration with the embassy or local authorities when entering a country. Include FCO advice when travelling overseas. Also consider any potential increased risks associated with visiting particular countries or regions, often in the form of military or political unrest.

### ● Persons at Risk

Identify anyone else who may be at potential risk from the work being carried out. This may include employees of partner institutions or the general public.

### ● Additional information

#### ○ Accident / Incident Reporting

All accidents, incidents and cases of ill-health associated with the fieldwork must be reported to Health and Safety Services through the Sentinel accident reporting system. When these incidents include fatalities, serious injuries such as broken bones, hospitalisation, or absence

Title:	<i>Step by step guide for Fieldwork Assessment Medium risk</i>	Number:	PRSG17.12	Issue date:	1	Page Number	Page 4 of 5
--------	--	---------	-----------	-------------	---	-------------	-------------

from work or study for more than three days these must be reported immediately. Accidents should be reported to the Activity Organiser, Fieldwork Co-ordinator or Health and Safety Co-ordinator.

- **Waste**

All waste that is produced as part of a fieldwork activity must be disposed of in accordance with local regulations (Country specific) or if returned to the University disposed of in accordance with University requirements (link to waste manual / standards and guidance). Ask your Health and Safety Manager if you are unsure.

- **Personal protective equipment (PPE)**

The risk assessment should determine any requirements for PPE. The University will supply **specialist** PPE for specific tasks, such as rigger gloves for certain manual handling or hardhats for working under cliffs.

- **Clothing and footwear**

Identify suitable clothing for the trip and activities. This includes items such as:

- Walking boots.
- Rain wear.
- Cold weather clothing.

For further advice and guidance please contact your local Health and Safety Manager or Health and Safety Co-ordinator.

Title:	<i>Step by step guide for Fieldwork Assessment Medium risk</i>	Number:	<i>PRSG17.12</i>	Issue date:	1	Page Number	Page 5 of 5
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