



# Fieldwork

## Guidance

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## Introduction

Fieldwork is an essential part of University teaching and research, enabling and inspiring many staff and students' academic and personal development. The key to managing fieldwork safely is firstly to carry out a risk assessment and complete the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form to consider the potential risks before you go; secondly once you are doing the fieldwork, to carry out a dynamic assessment of risk as you go along to deal with changing situations.

## Definitions

**Fieldwork** - any activity carried out by staff and students for the purpose of their teaching or research as a member of the University of Leeds representing the institution off-site. Activities traditionally associated with the term fieldwork include archaeological digs, environmental and biological collection work / surveys, and social surveys and interviews.

### **Fieldwork also includes:**

- short organised trips for taught students to public sites, for example, the British Library, York Minster, Malham Cove etc.
- Students going to meetings and conferences etc off campus in the UK and abroad
- Staff going on business trips, conferences, meetings off campus **only when** they occur in a location to which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) recommends **against** travel.

### **Fieldwork does not include:**

- Staff going on business trips, meetings or conferences in the UK or abroad (unless the FCO recommends against travel there, in which case see above).
- Student Placements or Study Abroad (see relevant protocol).

## Suggested roles and actions

The health and safety responsibilities of staff, students or visiting personnel are set out in the University Health and Safety Policy. One way of attaining the Standard, could be to assign the following actions to the role-holders listed below.

### **Heads of School/ Service**

- Identify appropriate staff members to carry out the following roles - Fieldwork Activity Organiser, Fieldwork Coordinator, University contact.
- Put in place a system to file and record the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Forms. This will help you retain records and identify which staff/ students are on fieldwork, when and where.
- Check that health surveillance is carried out where required by the risk assessment.
- Check that records are kept.

### **Fieldwork participants**

Anyone taking part in the fieldwork activities.

- Be aware of the content of the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form and follow any control measures.
- Be aware of emergency procedures and follow them should an emergency arise.
- Attend for health surveillance or health advice where the Fieldwork Risk Assessment or your Line Manager / Academic Tutor require it.
- Complete medical questionnaires where identified as necessary.

## Guidance to the Standard:

### 1. Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form

The University-approved Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form is a vital part of the planning process as it will help identify hazards and the control measures that need to be put in place to protect participants from harm. There is only one Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form which must be completed and signed off as part of the Fieldwork Procedure. If any of the questions included in the form are not relevant, just mark them as non-applicable – see the Risk Assessment Form: Guidance document for more information.

### 2. System to file and record the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Forms

Schools/ services will have a system in place to record fieldwork details and processes to retain records. This may be at a very local level or at school/ service level depending on the frequency and complexity of fieldwork.

### 3. Appointing people to carry out the tasks identified for the roles below

Usually the Head of School/ Service in each area would identify people to carry out the following roles. The need for each individual role will depend on the complexity of the area and the fieldwork. Speak to your Health and Safety Manager for advice.

#### Fieldwork Activity Organiser

The person who should be in charge of organising the fieldwork. Often the Academic Leader/ Tutor or Line Manager but sometimes it can be the person undertaking the fieldwork.:

- Contact the Health and Safety Manager and follow the ‘**Procedure for travel against FCO advice**’ if the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form identifies the location as contrary to FCO advice.
- Check the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form is completed and approve/ seek approval for it.
- Hold a pre-fieldwork briefing for all participants including emergency and contingency plans, and check these are understood.
- Check that if training is identified as necessary by the risk assessment, it happens.
- Check that the University Contact has been given all relevant information and will be notified of any changes of plan or emergencies during fieldwork as soon as possible.
- Check that all members of the team understand their own role and those of their team members in relation to fieldwork.
- Check that fieldwork only happens once the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form has been produced, signed off and the control measures put in place.
- Check all people involved in fieldwork are aware of the relevant parts of the risk assessment form and that records are kept for the duration of the activity, unless an incident, accident, case of ill-health or near miss (to people or property) occurs.
- Make an assessment of any third party organisation’s health and safety suitability in conjunction with the Health and Safety Manager.
- Assist in monitoring the FCO advice when fieldwork is taking place in areas where the FCO advice recommends ‘against all travel’ or ‘against all but essential travel’ to the area.
- Review the process after fieldwork has occurred to support continuous future improvement.
- If an incident or emergency does occur, ensure that fieldwork participants are supported during the fieldwork and afterwards on their return to the University.

#### Fieldwork Coordinator

A person nominated by the school / service who knows about the fieldwork and is contactable for general support and in the event of an emergency. (Can also carry out the role of University Contact).

- Be involved in the Fieldwork Risk Assessment process as appropriate.
- Collate contact details for all participants, next of kin, medical questionnaires (where appropriate), emergency procedures, itinerary and any other control measures information.

- Feed into the review process.
- Collate any records to be maintained within the school / service.

### University Contact

A person nominated by the school / service who knows about the fieldwork and is contactable for general support and in an emergency. (May be the same person as the Fieldwork Coordinator).

- Make yourself aware of the detail of the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form and associated documentation and keep a copy in the school / service.
- Be contactable in the event of an emergency. The level of knowledge and involvement of the University contact will be dependent on the level of risk arising from the fieldwork activity.
- Keep in a safe place the contact details for all participants, next of kin, and medical questionnaires (where appropriate), emergency procedures, itinerary and any other control measures information.
- Implement emergency procedures following pre-arranged plans should an incident occur.

### 4. Fieldwork Procedure

Before the fieldwork happens, the Procedure must have been followed. It is provided to set out the essential steps that must be followed as part of the planning stages of fieldwork. This helps identify the documents that must be completed and the approval processes to be followed.

### 5. Health surveillance

The Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form will identify where health surveillance is required; if you're not sure contact your Health and Safety Manager or Occupational Health for advice. Once identified as required, staff should be referred to Occupational Health and students should be referred to their GP. This includes any vaccinations identified in the Form.

### 6. Check FCO travel advice for fieldwork overseas and incorporate into the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form.

The FCO site – <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> – provides lots of useful information which will help plan the trip. It also identifies whether, based on their expert knowledge, government advice is *against* 'all but essential travel' or 'all travel' to the area.

### 7. If FCO advice is against 'all but essential travel' or 'all travel' to the area

If FCO advice is *against* 'all but essential travel' or 'all travel' to the area, there is a specific Procedure (the Procedure for travel against FCO advice) which must be followed.

### 8. If the FCO advice changes to advise against 'all but essential travel' or 'all travel to' the area, during the fieldwork

It is important to monitor the FCO website during overseas fieldwork and if the FCO advice changes to advise against 'all but essential travel' or 'all travel to' the area, then the 'Procedure for travel against FCO advice' must be followed. This will mean that the Health and Safety Manager, line manager, academic leader or academic tutor needs to contact the person carrying out the fieldwork as soon as possible to discuss the updated FCO advice and see if additional approval to remain is needed.

### 9. Control measures

All control measures identified within the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form as necessary must be put in place before the fieldwork occurs.

### 10. Reporting accidents, incidents, ill health or near misses

If there is an accident, incident, case of ill health or a near miss, the University Contact should be contacted as soon as possible so it can be entered onto the University's online accident / incident reporting system (Sentinel).

### 11. Third party organisations

A third party organisation is an external company which is brought in to provide a specialist service. This could include a catering company, a company to dig a trench, a boat hire company, specialist guides or vehicle hire etc; it does not include public transport, eating in a restaurant etc.

Formal vetting of contractors is now accepted practice in the UK. However, overseas contacts may not be used to their safety arrangements being questioned. When a third party partner organisation is used, depending on the host country's requirements they may need to provide health and safety documentation and other requirements - e.g. specific personal protective equipment (PPE) - for the activities. Various techniques can determine their competency and the level of assessment will depend on the individual circumstances. Health and Safety Managers can advise.

While the fieldwork is happening, the competency of the third party should be evaluated to ensure that appropriate precautions and safeguards are in place. If responsibility for the supervision of health and safety is to pass to a third party organisation, this should be agreed with them in writing. The extent to which formal contract arrangements are needed will vary depending upon the risk involved and the level of control expected of the third party.

Individual competencies of third party instructors (diving instructors, climbers for canopy access, providers of crew for boats and survey vessels etc.) should be specified in writing.

An assessment should be made of the University's potential insurance liabilities arising from the failure of third party providers and the risk should be transferred, cover increased, or self-insurance considered as appropriate.

It is important that, during fieldwork, there is a clear command structure within any group. While this structure may be perfectly clear on most fieldwork, there can be confusion when command passes from the fieldwork leader to others, for example a boat skipper or a diving organiser. When this type of transfer occurs, all members of the fieldwork team should be kept fully informed.

If a third party organization is needed, whether in the UK or overseas, discuss these requirements with the Health and Safety Manager to check that how an assessment of the suitability of the organisation can be carried out.

## **12. Variations to the Standard**

Should any variation to the Standard become necessary, this must be formally agreed and recorded in writing by the Director of Health and Safety Services or the Head of Health and Safety.