



Risk Management of Fieldwork

Guidance to complete the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form

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Introduction

This step by step guide takes you through the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form. Some example fieldwork assessments and training are available through Health and Safety Services to support you. This guidance is not a comprehensive guide to every aspect of the fieldwork activities undertaken by the University. If you have any concerns or questions that relate to the activity you should seek further guidance and specialist advice from your Health and Safety Manager, Officer or Coordinator.

Definitions for Fieldwork

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 include archaeological digs, environmental and biological collection work / surveys, medical research and social surveys and interviews.

It 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 conference etc. off campus in the UK and abroad.
- Staff going to 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).

Third party organisation.

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.

Contingency plan

An alternative plan to be put into operation if needed; the 'plan B' that is required to ensure that the fieldwork is able to continue safely in foreseeable circumstances, whether or not emergency plans are invoked.

Dynamic risk assessment

The continuous assessment of risk in unforeseen and/or changing circumstances possibly requiring the implementation of new control measures.

Emergency plan

Plans required to respond to an emergency situation. These usually involve immediate action and will be made in order to provide a suitable response to a natural disaster or to a medical or security emergency.

Personal time

Personal time can be defined as a period of time, occurring before, after or within the overall duration of the fieldwork, but outside the jurisdiction of the institution.

Down time

Down time can be defined as time when programmed fieldwork activities are not taking place but fieldworkers remain under the general jurisdiction of the institution.

Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form

The form is divided into sections and this guidance follows the form's sections:

Fieldwork Project Details

- Faculty / School / Service.
- Location of fieldwork. Including confirmation of any FCO Travel Advice.
- Brief description of Fieldwork activity and purpose.
- Fieldwork itinerary.
- University Insurance Policy details. University Travel Insurance Policy Number is now included, including a link to the webpage and a Summary of Cover.
- Organiser details - Fieldwork Activity Organiser (often the course leader), Fieldwork Co-ordinator, nature of the visit and details of participants including name, address, email, telephone, gender and next of kin contact details.
- Participant details – for larger groups, this can be a separate list appended to the risk assessment.

Hazard Identification

1. Nature of the site

Include all locations to be visited during the trip e.g. remote sites, laboratories, workshops, schools, colleges, another university, farms etc. These could be logged as part of the itinerary. Any significant changes during the trip should be recorded on the itinerary 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.

2. Environmental Conditions

a) Climate

Assess the local climate and weather conditions to identify suitable equipment and clothing and ensure this is available and worn. Consider:

- Extreme cold or heat, and humidity.
- Exposure to sunlight.
- Fog.
- Rain or snow.
- Altitude.
- Wind.

Determine whether a period of acclimatisation is needed for the participants when visiting and returning from climates with extremes of temperature. Consideration should also be given to

recovery time following a long haul flight to compensate the effects of “jet-lag”. Consider hazards associated with specific climates such as:

b) Alpine & Sub-Alpine

- Purity of water.
- Exposure to sunlight.
- Altitude sickness.
- Access and evacuation in case of emergency.
- A place for safe refuge.
- Supply of food and water.
- Sudden weather changes.
- Lack of local infrastructure.

c) Desert and Arid

- Dehydration.
- Wild animals such as predators, venomous snakes and insects.
- Prevalence of disease.
- Water purity.
- Extreme sunlight and temperature.
- Political instability and hostile local people.
- Lack of local infrastructure.
- Other consideration should be given to transport, food and water supplies.

d) High mountains and Polar Regions

- Altitude sickness.
- Lack of local infrastructure.
- Lack of rescue services.
- Extreme weather conditions.
- Dehydration.
- Hypothermia.
- Wild animals.

e) Tropical and Subtropical

- Water purity.
- Flooding due to heavy rainfall.
- Prevalence of tropical disease associated with the area.
- Wild animals such as venomous snakes and insects.
- Political instability and hostile local people.
- Lack of local infrastructure.
- Consider site access and evacuation in the event of an emergency, and the supply of food and potable drinking water.

3. Site Specific Conditions

It is vital that knowledge of the site is gained prior to the trip. Where possible an assessment of the site should be undertaken before fieldwork starts, to assess any hazards and the suitability for the activities to be undertaken. This may take the form of a pre-trip visit or contact with local people who can pass on any relevant information. There may also be hazards inherent in the site itself that will need to be considered. Some specific examples include:

a) Alongside Railways and Major Roads

Work alongside railways and major roads require permission. The hazards associated with this type of environment are high, so work must be planned in conjunction with the controlling authority. Their advice should be taken on the permissions required.

b) Inner City / Suburban / Residential

- Traffic.

- Physical violence or abuse as a result of the fieldwork activity or due to becoming a victim of a crime.
- Domestic animals.

c) Commercial and Industrial

- Traffic including commercial vehicles such as forklift trucks or industrial plant.
- Chemical, biological and radiological hazards as a result of the processes being undertaken.
- Physical violence or abuse.
- Domestic and feral animals.
- Collapsing structures or falling objects particularly in demolition or building sites.
- Trenches / storage tanks / grain silos / old mine shafts / quarry etc.

d) Farmland

Any access to farmland should be agreed with the landowner and farmer, to prevent damage to crops and harm to animals, as well as highlighting any hazards that may be encountered by participants. Examples of specific hazards associated with farmland are:

- Aggression from domestic animals that have been disturbed especially those with young. If large domestic animals may be encountered, participants should be aware of what to do if a large domestic animal becomes aggressive.
- Mechanical hazards from farm machinery – It is crucial to be aware of the types of machinery that may be encountered. Remember that noise levels associated with machinery may reduce the operator's awareness of approaching groups or people or verbal warnings.
- Chemicals such as pesticides and crop sprays - The presence of these will vary depending on the time of year.
- Wild animals.
- Knowledge of open shooting season (usually October to January).

e) Hills and Mountains

Hills and mountains pose a number of specific hazards:

- Exposure, weather conditions and temperature may be very different at the summit compared to the base.
- Sudden changes in weather such as fog or snow.
- Exhaustion.
- Remoteness of the location – where small injuries can have far more serious consequences.
- Hypothermia and hyperthermia - body temperature falling dangerously low or climbing dangerously high.

f) Marine including Inshore, Coastal and Shorelines

The scope of fieldwork in marine environments will often lend itself to using specialist equipment and / or working with a third party partner organisation. Therefore many of the considerations relate to the third party partner organisation and their ability and competency to carry out the tasks. Hazards to consider include:

- Drowning.
- Pollution.
- Infection from ingesting polluted waters, e.g. Weil's disease.
- Falling rocks from cliffs.
- Landslips.
- Getting cut off by tidal changes or rapidly changing water levels.
- Quick sands and mudflats.
- Potentially dangerous wildlife such as stinging jellyfish.

- Hypothermia and hyperthermia - body temperature falling dangerously low or climbing dangerously high.
- Working from boats etc.

g) Moorland

Moorland poses similar hazards to those associated with hills or mountains. Consider the potential for becoming lost due to the lack of landmarks or as a result of poor visibility during bad weather. Consider the previous and current use of moorland e.g. artillery firing ranges, some areas have been used for military training and so there may be unexploded ammunition present. Other hazards to consider include:

- Fire.
- Wild animals with young.
- Knowledge of open shooting season (usually October to January).

h) Woodland and Forest

Seek permission for access to woodland and forests, and give consideration to the hazards associated with woodland. These hazards include:

- Fire.
- Getting lost due to the lack of landmarks.
- Forestry operations such as tree felling.
- Potentially dangerous animals (usually abroad), such as wild bears.
- Wild animals with young.
- Knowledge of open shooting season (usually October to January).

4. 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.

5. 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.
- Any transport on site.
- Also consider whether you are carrying any dangerous goods.

6. Equipment

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

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

7. Violence

Consider the potential for violence, political or civil unrest. Violence can be encountered anywhere, but the chances are often overlooked 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.

8. Cultural Considerations

Identify any cultural differences that may affect you and consider the consequences of your actions within the country, e.g. religious/ legal differences, differences in food and drink, appropriate clothing or behaviour, attitudes to gender and sexuality, politically sensitive issues.

This may include some consideration as to how you should dress and behave in certain countries where it can be an offence to be seen in public dressed inappropriately. You should also consider different attitudes to diet, alcohol consumption, gender and sexuality, or other potentially politically sensitive issues. You should also consider the consequences of any actions that may be acceptable in the United Kingdom but not in the one to be visited.

9. Individuals

Consider participants' capabilities and experience to ensure that these are accommodated as far as possible so that individuals have the opportunity to take part. This should include:

- Medical considerations; Medication - 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.

10. Work Pattern

Consider the pattern of work while undertaking the activity. Will participants be working shifts, working at night or working long hours? Also consider potential of lack of sleep, exhaustion, working time, personal time (time when programmed fieldwork activities are not taking place but fieldworkers remain under the general jurisdiction of the institution) and down time (time, occurring before, after or within the overall duration of the fieldwork, but outside the jurisdiction of the institution).

11. 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 invitations etc. Include details of any permission(s) you have obtained and any restrictions on activities within them. Permission should be sought prior to the fieldwork; however if needed when overseas, the Foreign Commonwealth Office, Embassy or Consulate of the country may advise on the legislative requirements and permissions required.

12. Other specific risk assessments required

Are other assessments required e.g. for Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) including how to deal with waste, Manual Handling, Lone Working? If they are required either include details or attach as a separate risk assessment – speak to your Health and Safety Manager for advice.

13. Health Questionnaire

Your Health and Safety Manager or the [Occupational Health Service](#) can advise. Information should be submitted in confidence to the school or service. In some cases, evidence of fitness to undertake the trip or specific activities may also be required from a doctor (e.g. fitness to fly when pregnant).

14. Health Surveillance required

For information contact your local Health and Safety Manager. The possibility of exposure to certain substances may require more extensive health surveillance and monitoring. Health surveillance may be required under specific regulations e.g. COSHH. Also consider whether the site might contain potentially hazardous substances, as some may occur naturally, as a result of previous activity or as

the result of pollution. Pre-existing medical conditions may make an individual more vulnerable to the adverse effects of some substances and in some cases pathogens if they have reduced immunity. Substances to be aware of include:

- Specified biological agents (human or transmissible animal pathogens “zoonoses”).
- Carcinogens.
- Toxic chemicals (with both short term acute and long term “chronic” effects).
- Allergenic substances (some wood dusts, paint vapours, lubricants and animal fur).
- Radioactive chemicals.

15. Vaccinations required

In some cases participants may potentially be exposed to infectious or contagious diseases such as Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B and Malaria which may require immunisation or prophylactic medication. They may also need to have proof of immunisation for the country / countries that are to be visited.

Potential exposure to these diseases will depend on the area being visited. Advice is available from the University Occupational Health Service (for staff), the Student Medical Practice (for students) or from participants’ own General Practitioner. Further advice can be sought from advisory bodies such as the World Health Organisation (WHO).

16. First Aid Provision

Consider providing appropriate first aid kits, means of correct treatment of casualties, and ensuring that there is an appointed person to monitor all first aid provision, and take charge of any situation that may arise. A basic First Aid Kit should contain equipment (e.g. bandages, dressings, plasters etc.) in sufficient quantities appropriate to the number of participants, the duration of fieldwork and the planned activities.

Consideration should also be given to any specialist equipment not normally required in a basic First Aid Kit (e.g. hypodermic needles, syringes, sterile saline). All participants should be informed of the arrangements for first aid, the location of facilities when on fieldwork, who the First Aider(s) is / are and the reporting mechanism following an accident.

When visiting some areas of the world consideration of emergency provision for injury or ill-health should be made. It may be necessary to include some medications, sterile solutions such as water and sterile hypodermic needles and syringes in the emergency kit. This should only be done when absolutely necessary and following advice from the Occupational Health Service.

Additional Supporting Information

17. Pre-departure briefing

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 Risk Assessment Form such as:
 - Itinerary of the trip
 - Hazards and control measures identified in the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form
 - Contingency/ 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 required and availability of medical facilities whilst in the field.

18. Training

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

Check that fieldwork training includes, as a minimum:

- The institution's operating procedures.
- Implementing the emergency plan.
- Risk assessment.

Consider undertaking an assessment of the competence of fieldwork leaders and independent fieldworkers to ensure training is commensurate with the level of risk. If this is carried out, the Head of School/Service should not authorise the fieldwork until all training requirements have been addressed.

- Review training needs for fieldworkers regularly. This can be achieved as part of the annual staff appraisal where such a mechanism exists.
- The quantity, level and range of training required for all fieldworkers and participants should be commensurate with the risks, and be appropriate to enable the safe undertaking of all activities.

19. Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Advice

If the fieldwork takes place abroad, the person completing the Fieldwork Risk Assessment form should check the latest travel advice on the FCO website. This will clarify whether the [FCO](#) advises against 'all but essential travel to' or 'all travel to' an area.

- Where FCO advice is *against* 'all but essential travel' or 'all travel' to the area, approval must be obtained by following the '**Procedure for travel against FCO advice**'. See separate Procedure flowchart.

An analysis of any risk associated with fieldwork should be undertaken as part of the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form bearing in mind the context of the location, where destinations are unstable politically or where there are significant cultural differences.

In-country contacts, colleagues, sponsors, staff and friends should be contacted to provide additional useful information against which to evaluate more formal information sources. Commercial providers and other sources of information should also be used e.g. travel websites, the Social Research Association etc.

The Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form could recommend providing a list of participants to the British Embassy / Consulate together with details of the visit prior to departure. Non-British Nationals could register with their own country's embassy or consul in the intended country of travel.

The Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form must be approved in the first instance by the Head of School/ Service. It is then passed on for further review and approval, with the final decision being made by the Dean of Faculty/ Director and the Secretariat. This should be done with support from the Health and Safety Manager

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other open source security information should be closely monitored to ensure that the fieldworkers are fully up to date with the threat climate.

20. Supervision and Communication.

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. People supervising others during the fieldwork should be named in the Fieldwork Risk Assessment, 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.

Lone Working must also be taken into consideration and suitable controls and levels of supervision put in place.

Identify any lone working during risk assessment and specifically include lone working arrangements in relevant plans at all stages. Independent fieldworkers should have some form of supervision, the level of which would be dependent upon the risk. The level of indirect supervision should be agreed by the supervisor and participant prior to the fieldwork commencing.

Two levels of supervision should be identified – direct and indirect:

- Direct supervision describes where a member of staff is in charge of the participant(s) at all times and is able to immediately intervene in person if necessary. This type of supervision is appropriate for high risk activities or for less experienced participants.
- Indirect supervision describes a situation where the member of staff manages the fieldwork but would be unable to intervene in person immediately. Examples of this type of supervision may include individual research projects, lone working, postgraduate research project fieldwork, and participants working together in group activities or social activities.

Ensure that there are clear communication frameworks in place for fieldwork leaders to adhere to when planning fieldwork.

Establish a system which will allow those on fieldwork to log routinely or update details of their whereabouts and changes to contact details. This will also allow contact from the institution in an emergency.

Ensure there is a process for implementing institutional emergency response and crisis management plans should an incident occur during fieldwork.

For supervised fieldwork, share written information with participants in a meeting prior to the fieldwork taking place, as groups or as individuals. This should include suitable opportunities for participants to express concerns and anxieties. During this exercise participants can be informed about the communication options which will be available to them and their next of kin during the fieldwork.

21. Emergency and Contingency Planning.

Local contact details will need to be added based on the country being visited alongside the University contact numbers which are pre-populated in the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form.

Ensure that the fieldwork risk assessment form includes emergency processes such as:

- Detailing the availability of medical assistance and first aid.
- Summoning help in an emergency. For remote locations, it may be necessary to have a personal location beacon or satellite phone.

- Procedures to follow in the event of an accident or incident to a member of staff or a participant. This could include for example if an incident or emergency does occur, the process that should be followed to deal with the situation and ensure that fieldwork participants are supported during the fieldwork and afterwards on their return to the University
- Emergency procedures should link to the University's procedures as far as possible e.g. in the event of a death.
- Where necessary, identify a local or in-country contact that can assist in the case of an emergency.
- Provide a copy of the incident and emergency plan and a list of emergency contact numbers to all participants.

Where appropriate, the emergency arrangements of third party providers should be assessed to ensure that they are suitable and sufficient. For project-critical third party providers, contingency plans should be made in case the provider proves unsuitable in practice.

All accidents, incidents and cases of ill-health associated with the fieldwork need to be reported to Health and Safety Services through the University's online accident and incident reporting system (Sentinel). When these incidents include fatalities, serious injuries such as broken bones, hospitalisation, or absence from work or study for more than seven days these should be reported immediately or as soon as possible following the incident. Accidents should be reported to the Activity Organiser, Fieldwork Coordinator or Health and Safety Coordinator.

22. Other Controls

Consider further controls e.g. registration with the embassy/ local authorities when entering a country.

23. 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, third party contractors or the general public.

24. Additional information.

Waste.

If any waste is produced as part of a fieldwork activity, it will need to be disposed of in accordance with local regulations (country specific) or if returned to the University disposed of in accordance with University requirements. Speak to your Health and Safety Manager for more information.

Personal protective equipment (PPE).

The Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form 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.

Accommodation.

The type of accommodation used for fieldwork activities will vary considerably from well-known hotel chains in busy cities to hostels, bunk houses and camping in very remote areas. Many factors need to be considered including the requirements of the fieldwork, the needs of all the

fieldworkers and the availability of accommodation in the location of the fieldwork. Speak to your Health and Safety Manager for advice.

The Fieldwork Activity Organiser should take steps to assess the standard of accommodation as far as possible prior to the work. The level of assessment required will depend upon the circumstances of the fieldwork and the accommodation provider.

• All members of staff in a supervisory role should be provided with guidance to enable them to make an informed decision on whether or not the accommodation arrangements are suitable on arrival. This will be based on the provision of basic safety precautions. Checks may include:

- Fire safety.
- Personal security.
- General safety of the structure and facilities – for example pool, lifts, balconies, electrics and gas safety.
- Environment surrounding the accommodation.
- As a minimum, there should be familiarisation with accommodation emergency escape routes.

The Fieldwork Activity Organiser should be empowered to change any accommodation booking, based on an informed decision if, upon arrival, the accommodation does not meet basic safety requirements.

For supervised fieldwork, inform participants in advance of the styles of accommodation being provided and give additional guidance if this is likely to be outside the participants' experience. This may include staying in tents or home-stays, or potentially if participants are expected to share with other members of the group.

Ensure that the accommodation meets the needs of all fieldworkers, paying particular attention to those with disabilities, young persons (under 18) and vulnerable adults.

Where necessary provide training to participants with regard to the safe use of any temporary accommodation such as tents.

For more information on University finance requirements for booking accommodation:

- see the University Finance Policy at <https://www.leeds.ac.uk/finance/policies/expenses/travel/principles.htm>
- for the support offered when bookings are made through Key Travel see - https://www.leeds.ac.uk/finance/policies/expenses/travel/Key_Travel_Bookings.html
- for the University's requirements regarding Airbnb and similar organisations see <https://www.leeds.ac.uk/finance/policies/expenses/travel/Accommodation.html>

For further advice and guidance on completing this Form please contact your Health and Safety Manager, Officer or Health and Safety Co-ordinator.