

Preventing harm (safeguarding) researchers in research and innovation activities: responsibilities of key stakeholders

Purpose

This policy is a statement of the University's commitment to ensuring the physical safety and mental health and wellbeing of research students and staff undertaking fieldwork, as part of research and innovation activities.

It sets out roles and responsibilities at all stages, from grant applications and recruitment to planning, undertaking and debriefing fieldwork.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Safeguarding policy
- Business Travel Policy
- Lone worker policy
- Dignity at Work and Study
- Personal Relationships Policy
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups
- The Prevent Duty
- Code of Good Practice in Research
- Postgraduate Research Code of Practice (and Research Furth Policy)
- University Ethics Policies

Context:

Whilst the University's Safeguarding policy and ethics procedures highlight responsibilities for conducting research in relation to vulnerable groups, this policy focuses specifically on our staff and students, as one of those groups that is vulnerable to harm during fieldwork.

The University is committed to doing everything possible to ensure a positive environment for research fieldwork, acknowledging that risks may be due to the physical environment but also the emotionally demanding nature of fieldwork itself or of some types of research (e.g. in relation to trauma). It is also noted that some research environments may have power imbalances or poor working cultures, which may also lead to harm to researchers, including abuse, bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. This policy therefore also supports the principles set out in the Dignity at Work and Study policy and the personal relationships policy, providing a framework to ensure that issues are fully

explored and addressed, and roles and responsibilities and where to go for additional support or advice are clear for all parties involved in fieldwork.

Scope

This policy applies to all postgraduate researchers or staff (from any group, including professional services, technical or academic) who are undertaking research fieldwork, in the UK or abroad. Our fieldwork definition includes any type of data collection which involves travel or data collection outside of the UofG campuses (including archival visits, students returning to home country / previous workplace to collect data). In the case of data collection within another Institution, Graduate Schools should advise whether the Research Furth Policy is also required.

Policy statement

- As a University, we have a duty of care to students and to staff, to ensure that they are fully aware of risks in the fieldwork process and have an appropriate risk assessment in place. This is overseen by Health, Safety and Wellbeing. However, responsibility for this policy and training and support for researchers undertaking fieldwork is overseen by the Director of Research and Innovation Services
- Risk management for research projects (and ensuing mitigation steps and costs) are the responsibility of the Head of School or Director of Research Institute. However, many day to day responsibilities in this sphere are delegated to the Supervisor or Line Manager.
- Schools / Institutes will be best placed to support disciplinary specific issues but assessing fieldwork risks might need specialist input from other networks or Services, or external partners
- It is primarily the job of the Supervisor or line manager to ensure that a comprehensive risk assessment and mitigation plan is in place and to understand the level of experience of the individual undertaking fieldwork, and what support is required. However, the line manager or supervisor may not themselves have the right experience or knowledge to support this and therefore must be aware of their own limitations. They are required to support their student or staff member to identify and access support or training from other sources, while continuing to be approachable, respectful and supportive as the risk assessment and planning process evolve.
- In the case of Postgraduate Research Student (PGR) fieldwork, PGRs are considered to be partners in the risk assessment process and this should be framed as a core part of developing as a professional researcher. As with any aspect of the PhD process and supervision, it is a learning experience. The balance of roles and responsibilities is expected to be different for each student-supervisor relationship and to evolve over time. See also the [supervisor-student expectation continuum](#) used widely across the sector and in UofG Supervisor development.
- Third party organisations will often be involved and roles and responsibilities or expectations should be clearly set out and agreed with them, and reviewed regularly

Table 1: Responsibilities of key stakeholders at each stage of the research process.

	Principal Investigator / Research Supervisor* or Line Manager	Research Student or staff member undertaking fieldwork	School / Institute (led by Head of School / Director of Research Institute - may be delegated to a research fieldwork/ Health & Safety lead)	Institution
Research proposal	<p>To consider and document risks associated with the research proposal as they relate to research team, research subjects and other interested parties or communities (in line with Safeguarding policy).</p> <p>To undertake appropriate training / reading or seek advice from the School / Institute on risks.</p> <p>To include costings and appropriate time in the grant application for any safety / first aid training or measures to mitigate risks and ensure safety and wellbeing of researchers.</p>	<p>If the funding application is researcher-led, then the researcher must ensure that they have discussed potential risks and training needs and how these might be met with their prospective supervisors or line managers</p>	<p>To work on building longer-term partnerships with in-country partners, to help ensure safety as well as meaningful research.</p>	<p>To provide mechanisms for costing additional fieldwork safety training or measures (via Research Support functions) and advice, where possible, on eligible costs.</p>

<p>The appointment of a researcher (staff or student)</p>	<p>To explain risks of the projects, related to travel, fieldwork and emotionally demanding data collection. Supervisors or line managers should highlight if fieldwork is likely to be of higher risk to particular groups, signposting to resources, networks or support which might enable the individual to make an informed decision on whether or not this is for them.</p> <p>Supervisors or line managers should also be prepared to explore other options which may not require the individual themselves to conduct the fieldwork in-person, or for them to undertake a pilot visit prior to a longer study. Supervisors should work with their School / Institute on this.</p>	<p>To reflect on any personal factors which may increase risks with travel, including seeking advice on these to make an informed decision e.g. through the Disability Service or FCO travel advice. An individual may wish to disclose and discuss personal factors which may influence their personal safety/well-being but is not required to do so.</p>	<p>To document and draw on learning from previous fieldwork experiences of students and staff (including working with central Health and Safety leads on this), to provide additional guidance to Supervisor and prospective researcher if required.</p>	<p>To share learning and good practice across Schools and Institutes (via Health, Safety and Wellbeing and Research & Innovation Services).</p>
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	<p>Note: the assumption cannot be made that risks are necessarily lesser because a researcher will be conducting research in their home country, or because they are undertaking their data collection remotely.</p>			
<p>In preparation for fieldwork or emotionally demanding data collection</p>	<p>To undertake a risk assessment, in partnership with the individual (student or staff) undertaking the work and discuss / agree appropriate mitigation steps.</p> <p>To ensure that the individual receives an appropriate and tailored pre-departure briefing.</p> <p>To support the student to reflect on training, particularly expectations of professionalism, and what that means, as a researcher in their</p>	<p>To undertake required reading (including all relevant policies) and training, and make use of networks, to ensure thorough knowledge and preparation, as a professional researcher.</p> <p>To undertake a risk assessment in partnership with the Supervisor or line manager, to reach agreement over mitigating actions and be clear over expectations.</p> <p>To register for all appropriate institutional services available for</p>	<p>To provide advice and guidance to the Supervisor and the student in the conduct of the risk assessment and mitigations.</p> <p>To provide specialist or contextualised (e.g. country or discipline specific) training to students / staff and Supervisors/PIs on how to conduct themselves safely in the field.</p> <p>To ensure that in cases of high risk, the mitigating actions are reasonable</p>	<p>To provide cross-university advice and training for Supervisors and researchers on how to conduct themselves safely in the field (via online course, first aid, mental health awareness and personal security training).</p> <p>To promote cross-institutional networks to support researchers with seeking peer support and advice or experience.</p> <p>To facilitate building longer term and</p>

	<p>discipline and context of the project.</p> <p>To ensure roles and responsibilities are clear and that the individual knows where to go for specialist advice and support or in case of emergency. This may include ensuring agreements are in place with any third party or in-country organisation.</p> <p>To discuss how the fieldwork risk assessment links with other key safeguarding concerns, processes or policies (including codes of conduct and ethical approval or local agreements, e.g. with third parties).</p> <p>To ensure that appropriate processes are in place for regular check-ins.</p>	<p>fieldwork and travel (e.g. travel insurance or Safezone app)</p>	<p>and appropriate to safeguard the individual.</p> <p>To provide clarity to all parties over financial considerations (e.g. access to emergency funding or cash advances).</p> <p>To ensure that individuals are aware of who else they can go to for support or advice if they have concerns with the support being provided by their Supervisor or manager (recognising that this may be due to any number of reasons and will not be treated as an automatic 'complaint' or 'issue').</p>	<p>meaningful partnerships with overseas institutions, to support staff and student safety.</p> <p>To ensure that support services are up to date in their knowledge and awareness of fieldwork risks and how to mitigate these to support staff and students (led by Research & Innovation Services)</p>
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<p>During fieldwork</p>	<p>Although it may not always be with the Supervisor, a process should be in place to ensure there is regular contact with the student (or staff member), and effective support, including 24 hr assistance in case of emergencies</p>	<p>To implement agreed actions in risk assessment.</p> <p>To keep in contact with Supervisor or other agreed check-in process and to discuss with them where safety measures cannot be met.</p>		<p>To provide advice and guidance to students, staff and supervisors on matters of safety and wellbeing in relation to research fieldwork (via R&IS training and supported by Health, Safety and Wellbeing)</p> <p>To provide emergency assistance when required (via Insurance providers and Safezone app / Security Services)</p> <p>To put in place systems (e.g. insurance, travel booking and Safezone) to ensure that there is knowledge within the University of who is undertaking fieldwork at any one time. (Health, Safety and Wellbeing, in collaboration with Security Services)</p>
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<p>After fieldwork</p>	<p>To ensure that a debrief conversation takes place, allowing the researcher to discuss their experience and any issues. And to ensure ongoing support, if required, during the analysis stage (e.g. when working with emotionally demanding material).</p> <p>To report any concerns or near misses to School.</p> <p>In many cases, students will benefit from an additional debriefing conversation with someone other than their Supervisor / line manager and Supervisors should support and encourage this wherever possible.</p>	<p>To reflect, as a professional, on the experience.</p> <p>To provide feedback on experience – including ‘near misses’.</p> <p>To ‘debrief’ on the experience (with your Supervisor or line manager and also, if desired, with an alternative).</p>	<p>To collect information on ‘near-misses’ and use to inform future risk assessments and training (in collaboration with SEPS).</p> <p>To support staff and students if issues occurred during fieldwork</p>	<p>To work with Schools to update any centralised training based on learning / feedback or sectoral developments.</p> <p>To keep track of ‘near misses’ at institutional level and take steps to mitigate issues where possible.</p> <p>To support debriefing activities (e.g. by providing guidance or a network of individuals willing to act as a debriefing contact).</p>
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*In some cases (e.g. based on expertise) responsibilities might, by agreement, be delegated by the Primary Supervisor to a second Supervisor.

Review:

Over 2019/20, the University significantly enhanced its support, training and policies for researchers undertaking fieldwork. At the same time, sectoral expectations are changing rapidly (e.g. aligned to safeguarding concerns in international fieldwork, research culture developments,

sustainable travel concerns) and with changes in how fieldwork is conducted due to the global pandemic and travel restrictions. With all of this in mind, a thorough review of this document and institutional support for researchers undertaking fieldwork, should be undertaken in Autumn 2022, with a view to understanding the impact of these interventions on the ground and how our policies and support should continue to evolve in this area. This will be led by Research and Innovation Services, with cross-university working group (similar in representation to the 2020 group) and with input from Graduate Schools, PGRs, Supervisors and specialist staff.