

Risks Associated with Research - University of Brighton Risk Assessment and Travel Insurance Requirements Guidance for BSMS Students Conducting Fieldwork

Introduction

The audience for this guidance is BSMS Masters and Post Graduate Research (PGR) students submitting applications for research projects involving face-to-face data collection and fieldwork conducted in a variety of settings in the UK or overseas, that is eligible for ethical review via the BSMS Research Governance and Ethics Committee (RGEN).

All BSMS student research is required to gain ethics approval prior to the actual start of the project and before any data collection or fieldwork commences. Applications are made and submitted electronically via the online ethics review application system in Sussex Direct, available [here](#).

In addition, students who are intending to conduct fieldwork off-campus, including lone working or domestic or overseas travel must address the hazards, risks, and control measures associated with in-person research by completing a risk assessment for approval before any data collection can officially commence, and include this in their ethics application as a supporting study document. Students must complete:

- 1) A University of Brighton Risk Assessment (RA) for their research project:** The Risk Assessment should be completed so that the safety and wellbeing risks to the researcher have been carefully considered and contingency plans (control measures) established. Researchers should assess the likelihood and magnitude of potential risks that could arise while engaged in data collection activities and develop strategies and a framework of responsibilities well in advance of the research. All activities that may cause harm must be risk assessed. These may include but are not limited to:
 - Travel, including to locations deemed 'High Risk' such as countries designated as either 'red' or 'amber' by the Foreign and Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO): <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>;
 - Hazards associated with lone working: researcher personal safety and security in lone working scenarios such as meeting and interacting with research participants in public places, and people's homes;

Risks Associated with Research – University of Brighton Risk Assessment and Travel Insurance Requirements – Guidance for BSMS Students Conducting Fieldwork Outside the UK, V2.0, 22 September 2022

- Hazards associated with dealing with other people: possible cultural and political sensitivities; exploring controversial topics; working with ‘at risk’ or vulnerable populations; work with children, various subcultures, or potentially illegal activities; exposure to antisocial behaviour, risks of psychological harm;
- Hazards associated with different environments: working in isolated places or rural locations, at unusual hours, or in inclement conditions;
- Hazards associated with the likelihood of unexpected events (e.g. political unrest);
- Hazards associated with using bespoke/modified equipment or machinery while out in the field which may not have been designed in line with safety standards etc.

Post Graduate Taught/ Masters-level and Post Graduate Research/Doctoral students:

Students intending to conduct fieldwork off-campus, including lone working or domestic or overseas travel, should complete a full project risk assessment using the generic University of Brighton Risk Assessment form.

A copy of the Word-based version of the Risk Assessment form is available on the Research Ethics webpages on the BSMS website in the guidance sections for BSMS Undergraduate & Postgraduate Taught Students; BSMS Postgraduate Research Students, and Overseas Research.

However, if you are a Postgraduate Research student and your research is taking place overseas and involves high risk travel or fieldwork conducted in a high risk location (for example, a country within Sub-Saharan Africa), an online Risk Assessment must be completed in AssessNET for the project, to provide institutional oversight. AssessNET is the default mechanism for completing risk assessments for high risk travel and fieldwork in higher risk locations.

How do I complete the Risk Assessment Form?

Several templates are available in AssessNET which are pre-populated with hazards and suggested controls. There is a template for research involving UK trips and one for research requiring overseas travel trips. In addition, the attached Appendix provides supplementary guidance for students in identifying potential hazards and designing appropriate control measures. It can be used by students who will only be completing the Word-based version of the Risk Assessment form.

Who should sign-off the Risk Assessment Form?

Please note that the Risk Assessment requires sign-off by your BSMS Supervisor, or Head of School or nominee. The signed Risk Assessment form is submitted with the supporting study documents and uploaded in Sussex Direct as part of the ethics application to the BSMS Research Governance and Ethics Committee (RGEC) for ethics approval for a new study.

For high risk research projects, it is recommended that the student's BSMS supervisor approves the risk assessment in AssessNET. It is anticipated that a student may have limited experience, and their supervisor can be expected to have a reasonable appreciation of the potential hazards.

Guidance for Students Planning to Travel Outside the UK:

CAVEAT: There is a third, and final tier of risk that relates to travel to Extremely High Risk locations (i.e. those designated as either 'red' or 'amber' by the Foreign and Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)). Travel to these locations requires completion of an Extreme Risk Fieldwork form (for example, fieldwork involving vulnerable populations such as research with refugees with scabies conducted in a refugee camp in a location designated as either 'red' or 'amber' by the FCDO). If student research is planned to take place in countries which the FCDO classify as 'red' or 'amber', permission for the activity must first be obtained from the University of Brighton University Executive Board, as it is classified as 'Extremely High Risk' in the University of Brighton Policy on Fieldwork and Travel, available [here](#). This includes fieldwork that is being undertaken by Doctoral students who are resident in the countries in which the fieldwork will be undertaken.

This process is initiated via the supervisor contacting a University of Brighton Safety HUB Manager. Before completing and submitting an ethics application you will need to identify whether your research is likely to take place in 'red' or 'amber' locations, and it is recommended that you ask your supervisor to contact Nicola Arnold, Safety HUB Manager, Occupational Safety and Health Services, n.j.arnold@brighton.ac.uk, if this is the case.

- 2) A University of Brighton Travel Application Form:** BSMS students undertaking research projects involving fieldwork conducted overseas will need to apply for insurance under the auspices of the University of Brighton. You will need to complete a University of Brighton Travel Application Form to apply for insurance for travel from the UK to conduct fieldwork overseas. The completed form is submitted to the University of Brighton Insurance team. The form for completion is located in [Personal Accident and Travel insurance \(sharepoint.com\)](#). For further information please contact the University of Brighton Insurance Officer: insurance@brighton.ac.uk

Appendix 1.

The following is intended to assist students in identifying common Hazards, Risks and control measures appropriate to their projects.

1) Hazards associated with *Lone Working*

Lone working is defined as working out of the eye sight of other colleagues. These hazards apply to much generic fieldwork where you carry out interviews or questionnaires alone, as well as travelling to and from the research site alone. Many of the control measures are common sense and apply to everyday life as well as research, but are important to observe.

Hazards associated with <i>Lone Working</i>		
Hazard	Risk	Control Measures
<i>Lone Working- Miscellaneous Hazards</i>	Difficulties in summoning help when required; risk of abuse/attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible work, as a minimum, in pairs. • Where possible carry a mobile phone. • Leave details of the field site and a work plan (include contact name and address) with colleagues in the department or at home prior to any trip. • Specify dates and times of departure and return. If your plans change, inform someone as soon as possible. • Do not carry valuables or large sums of money unless you need to. • Carry a personal alarm (This advice is directed to males as well as females - all are equally vulnerable when alone!) • Instigate a "check-in" system with a colleague or supervisor - Phone in at regular intervals. If you do not phone or return at a certain time arrange for suitable action to be taken. • Trust your intuition - If you feel scared or uneasy, do not ignore it.
<i>Lone Working- Travelling alone</i>	On foot - risks of personal attack/abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever possible avoid walking alone at night. • Keep to busy, well lit roads. • Avoid poorly lit or rarely used underpasses. • Walk facing on-coming traffic to avoid kerb-crawlers. • Do not use headphones - you will be unable to hear anyone approaching from behind. • Plan your journey in advance - tell someone which route you mean to take and estimated time of arrival at your destination. • Walk with confidence and purpose - try not to look as if you are not sure of where you are going.

Risks Associated with Research – University of Brighton Risk Assessment and Travel Insurance Requirements – Guidance for BSMS Students Conducting Fieldwork Outside the UK, V2.0, 22 September 2022

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure wallets, cameras, jewellery and expensive watches and other valuables are not on display. • Dress appropriately - try to fit in without attracting attention.
	By Car	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the vehicle is in good working order before setting off. • Make sure you have change for a telephone in an emergency. • Plan your journey in advance - tell someone which route you mean to take and estimated time of arrival at your destination. • Do not leave valuables visible in the car - even when you are in it. Keep bags etc. out of reach of open windows. • When parking in daylight, consider what the area will be like after dark. • When returning to the vehicle, quickly look around it to make sure there is no one waiting for you. • If you are forced to stop by another car, stay in the car, lock the doors and speak through a slightly open window. • Make sure you know what to do if the car breaks down. (i.e. who to phone; where to phone from etc.)
Lone Working- Staying in Hotels	Risks to personal safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At reception, try to avoid letting other people overhear your name and room number. • Do not go into other people's rooms unless you know it is absolutely safe. • Do not allow people into your room unless you know who they are. • If you hear a disturbance, stay in your room and phone for help.

2) Hazards associated with *Dealing with Other People*

Research often involves dealing with other people. Most research is carried out without problems, but it is important to be aware of the guidelines for good practice in dealing with the public, and especially entering other people's homes.

Hazards associated with <i>Dealing with Other People</i>		
Hazard	Risk	Control Measures
<i>Dealing With People - Other People's Homes</i>	Associated Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See also <i>Lone working</i>.

Risks Associated with Research – University of Brighton Risk Assessment and Travel Insurance Requirements – Guidance for BSMS Students Conducting Fieldwork Outside the UK, V2.0, 22 September 2022

	Risk of personal attack/abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not enter the house if the appropriate person is not available. Wait to be invited in or at least ask to enter. Acknowledge that it is their territory; let them lead the way. If the person is drunk or aggressive, do not enter. Ensure you can get out quickly if necessary. If you feel threatened at any point, make an excuse to leave.
	Causing offence, leading to abuse/attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try not to react to dirty or smelly surroundings. Do not spread your belongings around. Take care with documents you may not want them to see, but avoid being "secretive". Let them know how much of their time you will need.
	Other People's "Pets" - risk of injury, allergy, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware that not all pets are "friendly" If entering a house with a dog or cat, ask that the animal be put in another room if you feel uncomfortable. If you are "wary" of a dog, do not enter the house unless the owner is prepared to remove the animal from the room you are going to be in. (Be polite and tactful when asking!) See also <i>allergies</i>
Dealing With People - Unexpected Behaviour	Risk of personal attack/abuse due to misunderstanding of nature of work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of any delicate issues involved with discussions or interviews e.g. before asking a farmer questions, explain why you need to know. Ensure landowners and their employees know who you are and what you are doing.
	Aggressive Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not underestimate the importance of body language. Talk yourself out of problems; placate rather than provoke. Do not turn your back on someone who is behaving aggressively. Stay calm, speak gently and slowly. Do not be enticed into an argument. Avoid an aggressive stance. Crossed arms, hands on hips or raised hands will challenge and confront. Keep your distance. Never try to touch someone who is angry -this will not calm the situation. Keep your eye on potential escape routes
	Physical attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to get away as quickly as possible. Move towards a place where you know there will be other people. Carry a personal alarm - set it off as close to the aggressor's ear as possible and then throw it out of reach. Shout and scream - shout something practical like "call the police!" or "Fire!" - people rarely react to cries of "help!" or "rape!"

Risks Associated with Research – University of Brighton Risk Assessment and Travel Insurance Requirements – Guidance for BSMS Students Conducting Fieldwork Outside the UK, V2.0, 22 September 2022

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If grabbed and unable to break free - pretend to vomit. This will often have the desired effect!
Dealing With People - Dealing with Strangers	Causing offence, leading to abuse/attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek training in good interview techniques. • Where possible "vet" interviewees first over the phone. • Conduct interviews at neutral locations or public spaces or where neither party could be at risk. • Where possible conduct any interviews with an observer. • Seek advice and support from local groups. • Do not wear clothes that might cause offence.
Dealing With People - Public Places	Causing offence, leading to abuse/attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not stand in places where you will be causing an obstruction. • Always carry your ID card and be prepared to identify yourself. • Seek training in good interview techniques. • Consider your dress carefully - is it culturally suitable for the location. • Make sure you have sought permission from relevant authorities to work in your chosen location.

3) Hazards associated with different *Environments*

Different environments will involve different hazards, and it is important to plan for these.

Hazards associated with different <i>Environments</i>		
Hazards	Risk	Control Measures
Environment - Location	Risk of causing offence which may lead to personal attack/abuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect must be paid to local customs and problems, and advice taken from local contacts, embassies etc. • Dress appropriately. • Consult Foreign Office for advice before travelling overseas
	Working within other establishments, businesses, laboratories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure establishment has their own safety guidelines in place. • Whilst on the premises follow their guidelines.
	Working beside major roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear brightly coloured, conspicuous clothing. • Avoid having your back towards the traffic flow.
Environment - District	Risk of attack/abuse and personal injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid areas known to be "unpleasant" • Seek information on areas before setting out.

Risks Associated with Research – University of Brighton Risk Assessment and Travel Insurance Requirements – Guidance for BSMS Students Conducting Fieldwork Outside the UK, V2.0, 22 September 2022

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult Local Community groups, Local Authorities, Police etc. for information and possible contact names before setting out. • Do not enter unfamiliar neighbourhoods alone. • Walk with confidence and purpose - try not to look as if you are not sure of where you are going. • Do not carry more money than you need to. • Dress appropriately - try to fit in without attracting attention.
	Risk of getting lost - this may lead to straying into high risk areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study maps of the area before setting out. • Plan your route carefully. Ensure you know of a second route should the first be impassable. • Ensure you have a means of raising alarm if you are lost.

4) Hazards linked to *General Health and Fitness*

There are additional hazards to do with general health associated with working in the field, accidents and problems with allergies are most common in unfamiliar environments. The following should be used as a guideline.

Hazard	Risk	Control Measures
<i>Health -</i> Accidents	Risk of injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For projects in remote areas ensure that one of the fieldwork team is trained in First Aid, and carry a First Aid kit • Be aware of where medical Supplies or treatment can be bought or received if there is an accident • Have plans of action and be aware of where help can be sought should an accident occur in a remote location.
<i>Health -</i> Medical Conditions and General Fitness	Risk of illness whilst in the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure any necessary medication is carried at all times • Ensure someone else is aware of the medical conditions and will recognise signs and symptoms. They should also be informed of the location of medication. • Diabetics should ensure sufficient food is carried in case there is a delay in returning.
	Fatigue leading to lack of concentration, accidents and risk of injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not try to do too much in one day, especially if the work is to be followed by a long drive home • Lack of sleep can lead to accidents - ensure sufficient rest is taken.

Risks Associated with Research – University of Brighton Risk Assessment and Travel Insurance Requirements – Guidance for BSMS Students Conducting Fieldwork Outside the UK, V2.0, 22 September 2022

<p><i>Health - Allergies</i></p>	<p>Insect bites and some plant material or food may cause allergic reactions - Allergic reactions can cause discomfort and in severe cases anaphylactic shock</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If aware of an allergy, carry any necessary medication. Be aware that some forms of anti-histamine can cause drowsiness. If affected do not continue with fieldwork. • Be cautious of the first signs of allergic reaction and DO NOT ignore them. • Seek medical attention immediately for suspected anaphylactic shock.
	<p>Miscellaneous Risks -Food poisoning, dehydration, allergies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In remote/overseas locations - Be wary of accepting ice in drinks. • In remote/overseas locations be careful of eating food prepared by other people - particularly meats or fish and salads. • Try not to drink contaminated water • Caffeinated drinks (coffee, Cola etc.) can enhance dehydration - avoid drinking them in hot weather • Be cautious of the first signs of allergic reaction and DO NOT ignore them.