

APPENDIX 8 – Additional Information for Supervised (Field) Trips

The guidance below is aimed at organisers of supervised trips and those accompanying students on trips, but is also useful to people travelling alone.

The person organising supervised trips is responsible for carrying out a risk assessment covering the whole group, taking into account the maturity, experience, expertise, specific needs and training of the individuals involved. The organiser must determine the level of risk of the supervised trip using [Risk Rating Table](#) above.

The organiser will then need to consider the issues outlined in the Travel Assessment Form appropriate for the level of risk, and provide a copy to each person going on the trip. The organiser is also responsible for keeping a list of those going on the trip, and providing a detailed itinerary to the nominated person in the department. Please see below for an example risk assessment. Every participant will still need to ensure their details are up to date on ESS or CamSIS (as appropriate).

If your field trip is taking place in the UK, it will be sufficient for the organiser to provide a risk assessment of the activities using the University's [General Risk Assessment Form RA1](#), in addition to following your department's UK travel notification procedure. A separate travel risk assessment will not be required in these circumstances.

The Head of Department or Institution will usually delegate to the organisers of the fieldwork (such as the PI or academic supervisor) the responsibility for ensuring that adequate measures are in place to control risks, and that all participants observe them. Where appropriate, the organisers may appoint one or more competent leaders to act on their behalf when in the field. This may be necessary when parties split into groups or when a person other than the PI/academic supervisor has more experience of a locality or specific type of work.

Leaders may not necessarily be University employees; they may be specialists such as diving supervisors, mountain guides, site foremen, and experienced staff from other Universities depending on the nature, location and type of work. Organisers must ensure that any leaders have sufficient knowledge/skills/experience and appropriate licences to carry out the required duties. The identity of the designated leader should always be made clear to participants in written instructions or safety briefings. For the duration of the work, the designated leader is responsible for ensuring safety precautions are observed and for continuing to assess any new risks as they arise. Participants must be told that they must observe any instruction given by the leader and bring any safety issues to their attention.

Notifications/Communication

Organisers of fieldwork and other such activities must provide a copy of the relevant risk assessments to the person in the department/Institution designated by the Head of Department in their local procedures. The organiser is responsible for updating the itinerary and notifying the department if there are significant changes.

Emergency Plan

Suitable emergency procedures should be planned in advance of the trip to deal with late or non-arrival back at the base and these must be explained to the participants. If the work is in a remote or hazardous environment, the itinerary must include emergency contact details, and instructions for what to do in an emergency. This should be left with a suitable person or organisation who can provide help if the group leaders do not contact them as agreed.

Suitable persons and organisations include:

- Hostel or hotel owner
- Local police
- Local mountain rescue

- Local consul or embassy if outside the UK

Supervision

Supervision levels for trips will vary depending on the level of experience and maturity of participants, as well as the type of work and local conditions. An inexperienced group of first year students will require more supervision than an experienced group of post-doctoral researchers returning to a site on a long term research project. Both are equally required to complete a risk assessment. For repeat trips it may be sufficient to review an existing assessment before the next visit.

Work in hostile, remote, and/or inaccessible locations presents a higher degree of risk than standard expeditions. For this reason, it will be necessary to carry out a more detailed risk assessment and identify more robust control measures to reduce risks to a level that is acceptable to both the University and the individual participants.

As well as ensuring that the level of supervision is appropriate and adequate for the individual group and the location of the work, organisers must also ensure supervision is relevant for the particular situations listed below:

(i) Fully supervised courses

These will normally be of short duration (a working day or shorter) and conducted in low / medium risk environments. Participants may be inexperienced, so they should not normally be allowed to work alone and must not be intentionally exposed to hazardous situations. Organisers must provide a safety induction and instructions as an integral part of the course, including any local rules applying to industrial or construction sites [e.g., the Archaeology Unit working on local construction sites].

Where students are involved, organisers must ensure the staff/student ratio is appropriate to the activities undertaken and the nature of the site being visited. Each group should have an experienced member of staff appointed as leader supported by other experienced staff e.g. technical or postdoctoral staff where possible or other suitable appointed supervisors. The leader must have a suitable deputy in place in the case of incapacity.

Maximum and minimum party sizes should be set bearing in mind the environment, the activity undertaken and any foreseeable incidents. Parties of more than fifteen may be difficult to manage in rugged country and generally speaking a ratio of ten inexperienced students/employees to one experienced staff member is appropriate. A sub-group of at least four people will allow one person to stay with the ill/injured person while two others go for help in the case of an accident, injury, or illness.

The leader should not be afraid to use their authority to abandon the field trip if the situation starts to deteriorate.

(ii) Field expeditions

These may be prolonged and take place in environments that are remote and potentially hazardous. They tend to be research based rather than teaching based. Participants will often be experienced and/or will have received instruction in work techniques and safety procedures. The leader of such trips must be adequately trained in the necessary skills to ensure safety in such locations. This training may include emergency first aid, survival techniques, communication, navigation techniques and security management and procedures. The leader must be aware of local hazards and conditions and be familiar with the precautions to be taken especially where:

- The terrain is particularly hostile, such as glaciers, rock faces or tidal estuaries
- Weather conditions can change dramatically, such as katabatic winds or tropical storms
- Hazardous substances may be present, such as gases from volcanoes

- Dangerous animals may be in the locality, such as polar bears in the Arctic regions
- Infectious diseases may be prevalent, such as Ebola or Zika virus
- The context presents threats from people, such as road accidents, theft, kidnapping, demonstrations, political volatility and conflict
- Natural disasters are possible, such as earthquakes, landslides and flooding

The Head of Department or Institution must have a procedure in place to check that the leader has the personal capability, competence, and communication skills to lead, especially in adverse conditions. The leader's authority and responsibilities must be clearly defined and communicated to all members of the party and serious consideration must be given to excluding people unable to accept such authority. The leader should not be afraid to use their discretion to abandon the fieldwork if the situation starts to deteriorate. An adequate number of experienced and trained members of staff should be present so that suitable deputising arrangements can be put in place.

Catering

Organisers must plan food and drink needs in advance, and should aim to provide a wholesome balanced and varied diet, taking account of any individual special dietary needs. Every effort should be made to avoid malnutrition and maintain adequate food hygiene, even though this may be difficult. Ideally, cooks should have at least an entry-level food hygiene qualification. Local foods should be selected carefully and foods with a high risk of creating infections (e.g. some meats) avoided. Foods should be stored so as to minimise the risk of contamination/ spoilage and prepared in as hygienic a manner as possible, keeping preparation areas as clean as practicable.

People with skin, nose, throat, or vomiting/bowel infections must not prepare food for others. An adequate supply of potable water must be available. If necessary, water should be purified by boiling, ultra-filtration, or use of chemical treatments. If in doubt, only drink unopened bottled water.

Insurance

The organiser of the supervised trip is responsible for considering insurance requirements and ensuring these are in place if required. See the Insurance Section [travel pages here](#).

Injury and illness while away

In the field, relatively trivial injuries or conditions may become serious if not treated quickly. Leaders should be alert for signs of illness, injury, or fatigue in the party. Prompt medical attention must be sought and fieldworkers should be aware of the nearest healthcare facilities. Participants on trips abroad must be advised of necessary vaccinations, and the need to obtain adequate medical insurance. They must also be asked to notify the organisers in confidence if they have a condition that would need specialist medical treatment (e.g. haemophilia, diabetes).

First Aid

Every group carrying out field work should have one supervisor who has an approved first aid certificate and, if appropriate, a more specialist qualification such as Mountain First Aid Course certificate. This will depend on the risks of the field work.

Accident and emergency procedures

The leader is responsible for organising incident and emergency procedures and ensuring all members of the group are aware of them. Consider and plan your actions and response in events that are foreseeable for the destination:

- suspension of flights due to strikes, bad weather, closure of the airline (especially if small) or other reason, especially where there are connecting flights that will be affected
- serious illness or injury of a supervisor or participant

- natural disasters e.g. in areas prone to earthquake, volcano eruptions or major flooding
- withdrawal of visas and travel permissions by one of the countries being visited
- road traffic accident
- physical or sexual assault
- arrest, detention or kidnap
- crowd/riot situation
- crossfire or bombing
- significant deterioration in security, e.g. a coup
- any other risks reasonably foreseeable (from FCO and other advice)

There needs to be a clear plan for dealing with a serious accident, which should include the following actions:

- Make the area safe
- Attend and reassure any injured persons
- Keep the number of helping the injured person to a minimum, and withdraw the remainder of participants to a safe place if conditions are dangerous or might deteriorate
- Send for help if necessary and ensure that the emergency services are given an exact location by GPS co-ordinates or map reference
- Warn others of the danger if appropriate
- Inform the department
- Control the use of social network sites to avoid causing unnecessary panic
- Control discussion of the situation with anyone except the emergency services or University staff