



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

Department of Social  
Anthropology

## Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form for Graduate Students

### Additional Form for those wishing to go to a high risk area

This form should be completed by any graduate student planning to engage in fieldwork activity, of whatever duration, to a high risk area such as a location where travel is advised against by the UK's FCO website. If your proposed fieldwork is in a high-risk country, or where the work will place the individual at personal risk, or where there are health concerns, be that either the student's health or because of more general risks, e.g. an outbreak of disease in the country of destination, this risk assessment and any related application for Leave to Work Away may need consideration and approval by the University Study Away Risk Assessment Committee.

Before completing this form your proposed fieldwork should be discussed with your Supervisor.

Once complete, this form should be submitted to your Supervisor for approval. Submission should occur in line with the deadline proposed for your cohort (contact the Graduate Administrator [graduate-secretary@socanth.cam.ac.uk](mailto:graduate-secretary@socanth.cam.ac.uk) if you have any questions about the submission deadline).

## Section 3 – Context Risk Assessment

To be completed by all individuals travelling to locations which the FCO advises against all travel/all but essential travel.

Guidance on how to complete this table can be found in Annex 1.

Threats specific factors in the environment which may cause you harm	Threat Description	Personal Vulnerabilities the extent to which you are exposed to threats	Likelihood of the threat occurring to you Rank 1-5	Impact if the threat does occur Rank 1-5	Risk Level Likelihood x Impact	Mitigation Measures (actions to reduce risk level)
<i>e.g. Carjacking</i>		<i>Multiple road journeys planned Carrying laptops, money etc.</i>	2	4	8	<i>Keep valuables out of view Hire low-profile vehicles Drive only during daylight hours</i>
Road/travel accidents						
Health/medical issues						
Natural disasters						
Fire/electrocution						
Animals						
Mugging/physical Attack						
Sexual harassment/assault						
Burglary						
Carjacking						
Civil unrest/riots						
Crossfire						
Shelling						
Landmines						
Terrorist attack/bombing						
Arrest/detention						
Kidnap						

Severe Risk	20-25	Immediate action required; is risk acceptable? Can it be mitigated by contingency plans?
High Risk	12-19	Priority action; contingency plans in place and tested
Moderate Risk	8-11	Required heightened awareness and specific procedures
Low Risk	4-7	Managed by routine procedures and covered in normal security regulations
Insignificant Risk	0-3	Maintain awareness in case of context change

## Managing Identified Risks

### Preparedness

Have you travelled to this location(s) before? Detail previous experience/family links	
Have you travelled to other similar locations before? Detail previous experience	
Have you previously completed any health, safety or security training? Please give details	

### Safety & Security Arrangements

If travelling to an existing project is there a health & safety plan, risk assessment and/or emergency plan in place?	<i>If so, please describe what they cover and attach copies when submitting this form</i>
Are you being hosted by a partner organisation/local host?	<i>If so, which organisation, and in what ways are you making use of/relying on their safety and security arrangements</i>
Will you receive a briefing about the context and recommended safety & security procedure when you arrive?	
Are there any festivals, public holidays or elections happening during your trip? If so, what additional considerations/provision are you making?	
Are there any environmental issues/natural disasters that could arise during your trip? If so, what additional considerations/provisions are you making?	

### Personal and Cultural Considerations

What information sources do you intend to use to keep up-to-date with safety, security or political developments in country?	
Is there any cultural issues or aspects you need to consider to avoid offending local people? (Dress, greetings, behaviour, language skills?)	
Is it necessary to have a curfew (latest time of return to your accommodation)?	
What specific measures will you put in place to reduce the chances of illness and/or injury?	
Do you require any specialist equipment for this trip (first aid kit, mosquito net etc.)?	

### Communications

How widespread and reliable are internet and mobile phone communications in your location(s) of travel?	<i>Consider the coverage of different areas by mobile network providers, coverage blackspots and reliability of service. Also consider the possibility of government shut-down of key communications infrastructure.</i>
What contingency options do you have for communications if normal options are not available?	<i>Consider access to alternative methods of communication (e.g. a second local sim card, access to a radio network, or carrying a satellite phone) or who else might be able to help with communications if needed</i>

### Transport

What arrangements are in place for transport when you arrive at the airport(s)?	
Which international and national airlines will you travelling with? <sup>1</sup>	
What transport will you use for the rest of your trip?	<i>Please detail method of transport, type of vehicle, use of drivers, convoy arrangement</i>
Will you be accompanied for all/part of your trip? If so, by whom and when?	
What limits will you place on the times of travel? (e.g. no travel after dark, no travel before 6am)	
Have you checked whether it is safe for you to travel on foot? Is it safe to do this at night?	

### Accommodation

Where will you be staying during your trip?	<i>Please list all locations and types of accommodation</i>
Has this accommodation been recommended/approved by your host/someone else?	
What other venues will you be visiting? What safety/security arrangements will you put in place?	

### Contingency Plans

List medical facilities that you could use in case of an emergency?	
What are your in-country emergency contact points?	<i>Consider local host/contact, police, relevant Embassy or High Commission, government authorities etc.</i>
If you need to leave your location of travel where will you relocate/evacuate to?	<i>Detail which alternative locations you will travel to, which routes you will use and what methods of transport</i>

<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/air/safety/air-ban/doc/list\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/air/safety/air-ban/doc/list_en.pdf)

## Authorisation

*This is to confirm and certify the following:*

1. That the prospective research student and his/her supervisor have discussed all the foreseeable risks (medical, political, financial and otherwise), which might attend the projected fieldwork in relation to a post-graduate degree course. They have worked out relevant ways of minimising these risks.
2. Any particular risks have been brought to the attention of the Department through the Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form for Graduate Students in addition to this Additional Form for high risk areas, and through the 'field clearance' procedure in the form of a written submission as part of the fieldwork project outline.
3. The student has taken appropriate guidance from the relevant authorities to avoid undue risk.  
The supervisor's signature does NOT absolve you of the responsibility to act in a safe and responsible fashion at all times; nor can it be taken as an admission of liability in any respect by the supervisor in the event of your negligence.

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
<b>Student</b>			
<b>Supervisor</b>			
<b><i>MPhil/PhD Committee Approval</i></b>			

## Annex 1: Risk Assessment Guidance Note for Additional Form

### Information Sources

Information that informs a risk assessment can be obtained via a variety of sources. You should always assess how trustworthy the source of information is, and seek to triangulate/cross-check any information find.

### Useful Documentation and Links

- University of Cambridge Guidance for the Safe Conduct of Fieldwork and Work Away - <http://www.safety.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/hsd055m.pdf>
- University Travel Insurance - <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/insurance/travel/>
- ASA Ethics Guidelines - <https://www.theasa.org/ethics.shtml>
- ESRC Framework for Research Ethics - <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/>
- UK Government Foreign Travel Advice - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
- CIA World Factbook - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
- Thompson Reuters Foundation Global News Updates - <http://news.trust.org//humanitarian/>
- Reliefweb - <https://reliefweb.int/>

### Completing the Risk Assessment Table

#### Threat Analysis

A threat is defined as ‘**specific factors in the environment which may cause you harm**’. Threats should be as specific as possible as this will allow identification of more appropriate mitigation measures. It is also important to understand who/what is perpetrating the threat (e.g. local police involved in arrest and detention; bad wiring causing fires) and how the mechanism of harm occurs (e.g. violent attacks by local gangs usually after dark in unlit market areas; bombings by terrorist groups using vehicle and person-based IEDs targeting churches and other public buildings).

The first column of the risk assessment table lists the possible threats that should be considered. The second column is for a description of the threat specific to the environment you are travelling to (e.g. who perpetrates it, how it occurs, when/where it is likely to happen etc.). Additional threats should be added to the table if required.

#### Vulnerability Analysis

Vulnerability is defined as ‘**the extent to which the individual (or organisation) is exposed to threats**’. It is important to remember that vulnerabilities may arise not only from your own actions/behaviour but also from the perception that other stakeholders have of you, the work you are doing, the organisation you work for and the people you associate with.

The third column of the risk assessment table is for listing the vulnerabilities that cause you to be exposed to the threat listed. For example travelling in expensive vehicles in Nairobi makes you more vulnerable to carjacking.

The table below lists a variety of vulnerability factors that should be considered. This list is not exhaustive and wider consideration of vulnerabilities should be undertaken

Personal Vulnerabilities	Work-related Vulnerabilities	External Vulnerabilities
Gender	Type of work and/or activities being carried out	Vehicles used
Nationality/ethnicity	Type of issues being addressed/discussed	Location of work/travel/accommodation
Appearance (height, weight, hair colour, skin colour etc.)	Perception of wealth	Accommodation
Dress (clothing, jewellery, belongings)	Engagement with specific communities/individuals	Colleagues/partners
Sexual orientation	Mandate of local partner organisation	Engagement or non-engagement with other actors (e.g. local government, militia groups etc.)
Psychological issues/trauma		
Medical issues		

### Risk Rating

The risk faced is a combination of the threat and the vulnerability to that threat - **Risk = Threat x Vulnerability**. The simplest way to visualise or analyse the severity of the risk faced is to understand the probability, or **likelihood** of the threat happening to you, and the **impact** when it does happen. Impacts may include personal injury/death/psychological trauma, added financial costs, disruption to programmes, reputational damage. Definitions of the likelihood and impact levels are:

Probability	Description
Certain/ Imminent	Will occur/on-going active threat
Highly likely	A very high probability of occurring
Likely	A high probability of occurring
Possible	A reasonable probability of occurring
Unlikely	Not probable that it will occur

Impact	Description
Critical	Death/severe injury/loss of vital equipment/cancellation of activities
Severe	Severe injury/possible death/loss of equipment/major disruption of activities
Moderate	Injury/loss of equipment/delay in activities
Minor	Possible injury/possible loss of equipment/limited delay in activities
Negligible	Minor disruption in activities

Columns 5 and 6 on the risk assessment table are for detailing the expected likelihood and impact of each threat, based on your understanding of the actor, the mechanisms of the threat and your vulnerabilities to that threat. Column 6 (risk level) can then be completed, and it is recommended that the cell in the table is colour coded appropriately to provide a visual reference to the risk level of any given threat.

e.g. a road traffic accident is of medium likelihood in Nairobi due to the volume of traffic on the roads, but the impact when it does occur is low to medium as the speed of the traffic is quite slow.

### Mitigation Measures

Once threats and risk levels have been assessed, mitigating actions should be considered to determine if the risk levels can be reduced to an acceptable level. It is important to consider mitigation for all threats, but particular attention should be given to those identified as higher risks.

Mitigation measures should either reduce the likelihood of the threat occurring, or reduce the impact of the threat if it does occur. Vulnerabilities are the elements you have most control over, so the majority of mitigation measures should focus on reducing the individual and work-related vulnerabilities to the threats present in the environment.

Mitigation measures can be of two types:

- **Preventative measures** – actions that are put into practice on a routine basis in order to minimise the likelihood of the threat affecting you
  - E.g. communications check-ins, travel curfews, driving regulations, personal behaviour and dress, documentation required, movement restrictions etc.
- **Reactive measures** – actions that are followed once a threat does affect you. Also called emergency or contingency plans.
  - E.g. what to do if you get in a road accident, or experience a carjacking or kidnap, hibernation/relocation/ evacuation options etc.

Prevention is the preferred method of mitigating risk wherever possible, and appropriate emphasis should be placed on developing preventative mitigation measures. Emergency or contingency plans should also be determined for likely threats so that you know how to behave in the event of an incident.