UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**FIELDWORK OR RELATED ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING.**

1. INTRODUCTION
   1. Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic the University has suspended all fieldwork, with very few exceptions. This has been in line with Government guidance and the University’s own H&S procedures to ensure the safety of our staff and students and wider communities that we interact with.
   2. There has been a strict risk assessed approach to the approval of teaching fieldwork. Such approvals have been few as again we are aiming to limit our potential spread of COVID and delay activities wherever possible.
   3. There is a need to provide guidance in relation to fieldwork, both in terms of day trips and residential trips, with different considerations for UG/PGT.
   4. This paper addresses solely fieldwork activities that do not involve human participants; this is being addressed in a separate paper.
   5. Decisions and consultation on this process has involved discussion with BLITFG, BLITFG School Reps, Campus Planning Group, H&S and regular discussions with other HEIs.
   6. It is important that decision-making remains fluid through this time, with the University, in discussion with Schools, having the agility to respond to external situations in good time with regular review of field provision.
   7. NOTE: with respect to field teaching for UG/PGT, there should always be an alternative available for those students who are unable to go to the field as has been the case throughout the pandemic.
2. APPROVED FIELDWORK PROVISION
   1. Proposals below include UG/PGT field trip scenarios
   2. If any fieldwork is to proceed overseas, then there must be involvement with the International Travel Group. Two dates below relating Scottish Government easing of restrictions.
   3. PRIOR to 19th July (Subject to change):
      1. Fieldwork can proceed outdoors providing numbers do not exceed Scottish Government guidance on permitted households – currently 12 outdoors.
   4. AFTER 19th July (subject to change): Physical distancing outdoors no longer required and no longer limits on outdoor gatherings:
      1. Large field classes (more than 12) can take place
3. APPROVAL OF STANDARD AND COVID RISK ASSESSMENT
   1. Field based activities will require Risk Assessment procedures and these will differ depending on the nature of work:
      1. Standard Risk Assessment as per School procedures alongside COVID Overlay (Appendix gives prepopulated COVID section: other rows should be added to reflect specific activities). This template can be used for teaching and/or research fieldwork.
      2. Appendix for other RAs for required trip (e.g. coach travel or accommodation – see below)
      3. Completed RAs are then held by the School to allow for auditing of all activities. If the School has one, then a Teams site for their H&S Committee would be an ideal location to log all RAs.
      4. It is to be encouraged to take a lateral flow test (showing negative) prior to fieldwork. This can be arranged at the University’s Community Testing Centre.
      5. This process is NOT for studies involving human participants.
4. COACH TRAVEL
   1. This will only be considered if Coach Operator’s own RA procedures appended to any RA submission.
   2. The justification for such transport must be clear in any risk assessment documentation.
5. ACCOMMODATION
   1. If fieldwork requires an overnight stay then this must be clearly Risk Assessed with justification as to why accommodation is required.
   2. Self-catering accommodation can only be used in line with number of permitted households under Scottish Government guidance or if there is a an essential reason to fall under the [workers accommodation route.](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-workers-accomodation/)
   3. Hotels and B&Bs can be used provided the Scottish Government guidance on socialising and permitted numbers are adhered to for the time of the planned fieldwork.
   4. Field centres/bases can be used under the Educational facility route provided theier own RAs are appended to the RA submission.
   5. Accommodation provider’s own RA procedures should be appended to all RAs submitted to School H&S committee.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

1. Field data collection will require a COVID overlay risk assessment (as well as standard RA) to be completed by the student and supervisor and submitted for approval to the School in advance of any field work. No work may be undertaken until the risk assessment is formally approved.

2. The risk assessment will demonstrate compliance with all the restrictions and guidelines for Covid-19 in the relevant nation[[1]](#footnote-1).

3. The risk assessment must explain how you will travel to from the field site/s. Independent travel is preferred[[2]](#footnote-2). Please consider if this creates any disadvantages to any students, if so, reconsider the activity.

4. As independent field work carries risks associated with lone-working, the risk assessment will be required to demonstrate that the field sites are benign in character, that exact locations are given to allow an effective emergency response, and a daily check-in/out system is operated with either the supervisor, or a named friend or family member.

5. Supervisors, at their discretion, may meet students in the field.

6. Students based in Aberdeen may, with the approval of the supervisor, sign out small items of field equipment. A strict protocol will be developed in Schools for hand-over at University Buildings[[3]](#footnote-3)

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| --- | --- | --- |
| School of XXXXXX COVID RA Overlay | Work activity: e.g. fieldwork | |
| Assessment completed by: | Date completed: | Review Period: |

APPENDIX

| Activity  (task step) | Hazard | who might be harmed | Existing Control Measures  (what are you already doing) | Severity  (1-4) | Likelihood  (1-4) | Risk Level (L,M,H, VH) | Additional controls required to achieve an acceptable level of risk | Final risk rating | Action by whom  & by when |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Equipment deployment | COVID-19 | Student/staff | * Work will be carried out alone wherever possible, following our Lone Working Policy * When working together is required, individuals will avoid enclosed spaces. * Hand sanitiser will be used regularly. | 2 | 3 | Medium | * If the University/Government guidelines change preventing working generally or in the field location, all participants will immediately halt work and return to their homes. | 1 | Staff name/ when Government/University advice changes |
| Transport to field sites | COVID-19 | Student/staff | * All individuals will travel in separate vehicles unless not preacticable. * Hand sanitiser will be used regularly. * All reasonable precautions will be taken to avoid contaminating the field site e.g. gates, fences. * Guidelines such as covering your mouth with a tissue or elbow when sneezing or coughing will be followed. * Encourage testing (later flow test) of all participants | 2 | 3 | Medium | * If the university/government guidelines change preventing work to continue, all participants will immediately halt work and return to their homes. | 1 | Staff name/when government/university advice changes |

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| **Severity** | **Likelihood** | | | | |  | **Risk Rating** | | **Action** | |
| Unlikely | Possible | Likely | Very likely |  | | Score | Risk Level | |  | |
| Very Minor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |  | | 1-2 | Low | | No further action necessary | |
| Minor | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 |  | | 3-6 | Medium | | Although tolerable – monitor activity | |
| Significant | 3 | 6 | 9 | 12 |  | | 8-9 | High | | Further measures required | |
| Major | 4 | 8 | 12 | 16 |  | | 12-16 | Very High | | Immediate action required – cease activity | |

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| Signed.........................................................................................................................(Student/Staff)  Signed........................................................................................................................(Academic Supervisor)  Signed........................................................................................................................(Head of School) | Date:  Date:  Date: |

1. It is recognised that there are differences between the rules in each of the UK nations. It is recognised that there may yet be new restrictions imposed for instance in the form of local lock-downs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Car sharing wil be considered in the exception. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. At the discretion of the supervisor, field equipment from University buildings may be bagged and collected with strict social distancing. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)