

Guidance on Working Off-Site and Fieldwork, including Placements

Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	2
2.0	Executive Summary.....	3
3.0	Roles and responsibilities.....	4
4.0	Risk Assessment.....	4
4.1	General.....	4
4.2	Off-site Working and Fieldwork.....	5
4.3	Working Overseas.....	7
5.0	Personal Safety and Security.....	9
6.0	Placements.....	10
7.0	References	13

1.0 Introduction

The University of Westminster has a duty of care for staff and students wherever they are located whilst they are working and / or studying on university business.

Off-Site will mean any location other than a University Of Westminster Campus or Halls of Residence. Fieldwork is a generic term for any work or study undertaken off-site in either a rural or urban landscape.

The Health and Safety at work Act 1974 does not apply overseas, however, it is the intention of the University to ensure that whilst staff and students are engaged in University activity overseas they adopt high standards for health and safety. This document compliments the ['Guidance on Travelling Overseas on University Business'](#) and as with that guidance document 'Business' is the generic term used for activities associated and agreed through the University; such as lecturing, research, student placements, visits, fieldwork, business promotion and conference attendance. The guidance covers:

- All staff, postgraduate and research students working off site including overseas.
- All undergraduate students who are off-site including overseas on work study organised by their faculty or other exchange, partnership studies, placements and programmes supported by the University e.g. Erasmus.
- Alumni / others working on the University's behalf who are off-site or overseas.

If the purpose of your visit is to undertake research as with any such proposal the Supervisor must consider whether prior ethical approval is required and if so refer to the University's Framework for Research Governance. This maybe particularly relevant if including members of the public who must always be included in any health and safety considerations.

2.0 Executive Summary

- Guidance to be used by students, staff and Alumni engaged on University business off-site.
- Off-site is any location other than University of Westminster Campus or Halls of Residence.
- The purpose of this document is to compliment the 'Guidance on travelling Overseas on University Business' and focus on the work activity rather than the travel.
- Risk assessment must be completed for all off-site work / study.
- Risk assessment must take into account the environment, personal safety, communication issues and other potential risks, as detailed in the guidance below that are more relevant when not on campus or Halls of Residence.
- Plan in detail in advance, if possible do not leave it to the last minute.
- Always let someone know where you are and what your itinerary is.
- Risk assessments to be reviewed and any lessons learnt for the future.
- Any training / information requirement identified by the risk assessment to be completed in time.
- Site visits – always have permission to be on the site and comply with any safe systems of work in place.
- Lone working – be aware of the [lone working safety guidance](#).
- Driving – make appropriate checks and be aware of the [Driving at work guidance](#).
- Environment – always wear appropriate clothing.
- Equipment – always check any machinery / equipment you have taken to use.

Overseas

- Be aware of the [Overseas Travel](#) pages on the intranet. Research the areas you intend to visit.
- Insurance – information also available from the Overseas Travel link above.
- Risk assessment templates for [High risk](#) and [Low risk](#) travel can be found at (link). Work activity and travel risk assessment can be combined.
- Give extra thought to potential hazards you would not anticipate in the UK.
- Always give thought to personal safety and security, be aware of any political unrest, terrorist or criminal activity in the areas you will be visiting.

Placements

- Placement process already established for UK and Overseas. The University has a Policy and Guidance on Placement and Work-based Learning.
- Includes risk assessment as part of the placement process.
- Placement provider is required to complete a health and safety statement.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Dean - is responsible for ensuring that provision has been made for undertaking suitable and sufficient risk assessment and that adequate resources are available for students and / or staff with regard to their safety when working off-site, including Overseas and Placements.

Trip Leader / Supervisor / Placement Officer – must arrange for the risk assessment to be undertaken in order to identify any hazards which could pose a health and safety risk to staff and / or students involved in working off-site including Overseas and Placements. They must ask the student(s) and / or members of staff to help with the risk assessment or where appropriate undertake the risk assessment themselves. In addition, where training has been identified to mitigate the risk they must ensure that all staff and / or students identified receive the training required. They must also ensure risk assessments are reviewed and at the appropriate time any lessons that can be learned and which can positively inform future off-site working is captured and recorded. To encourage good communications at all times as part of the planning, action and review process.

Staff and / or Students – must behave responsibly at all times to safeguard their own health and safety and those around them. They must co-operate fully with their supervisor(s) and management in undertaking a suitable and sufficient risk assessment with regard to their proposed off-site working including Overseas and Placements. They must inform the University promptly of any implications that may affect their health and safety whilst working and / or studying off-site.

4.0 Risk Assessment

4.1 General

A risk assessment must take into account all the hazards and risks associated with working off-site together with suitable and sufficient controls which need to be implemented in order to mitigate those risks. Risks associated with working off-site will include travel risks together with the work itself and also risks that arise from security issues, particularly in some areas overseas. Additional risks that need to be considered may include:

- Personal safety, especially remote areas, cities and politically unstable areas.
- Poor communication
- Lack of immediate back-up in the event of an emergency
- Never really being 'off-duty'
- Unfamiliar diseases and medical conditions
- The possibility of causing offence due to cultural differences
- Suitability and safe use of equipment.

These risks can be mitigated by detailed planning in advance which should include knowledge gained from previous experience and being prepared to change plans if required if the level of risk increases dynamically. Risk assessments should be reviewed thoroughly on returning to the normal work environment. The detail required for the risk assessment will vary with the type of activity and should be commensurate with the level of risk involved, however, even for low risk activities it is useful to highlight the most significant hazards and summarize how these will be managed. Where a risk assessment identifies the need for training and information it is important to ensure this is completed in time.

When travelling and working off-site, either overseas or the UK, it is extremely important that a full itinerary is available to the University.

4.2 Off-site Working and Fieldwork

A risk assessment is required, it would be acceptable to complete a risk assessment that included hazards and risk management for both the work and travel related activities. A general risk assessment [form](#) can be used for off-site working and fieldwork.

It is important to establish a point of contact at the university who knows your plans and who you can contact if anything changes and / or when you return.

If you invite a visitor or guest to participate or collaborate in working or studying off-site on university business it is important to make them aware of any safety requirements and safe systems of work emanating from the risk assessment that affects them as the university will have primary responsibility for their safety whilst they are engaged on university business.

Risk assessments for off-site working, and fieldwork will require a number of considerations regarding hazards and risks that would not necessarily need to be considered if working in a campus environment. These may include:

- **Site Visits** – when working or visiting sites that are operating under the control of a third party.
Potential control measures – always comply with the safe systems of working that are in place at the site. Prepare before visiting by establishing what is expected in terms of health and safety compliance. Always have permission to be on land or property belonging to third party. Ensure that any required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is available for all those visiting / working on the site. If visiting the site with a group it may be worth considering reducing the numbers to a more manageable level. A generic risk assessment can be considered for occasional, low risk site visits where the level of planning and risk assessment does not need to be specific for the location concerned.

- **Personal safety, lone-working and security of accommodation.**
Potential control measures – always be aware of your surroundings, be cautious but act confidently, avoid confrontations and work with colleague(s) or companion(s). Follow the [Lone working safety guidance](#). In urban areas consider wearing a high –visibility jacket. Do not enter areas of private property, schools or hospitals without first obtaining permission. Always be ready to explain yourself and have your pass / id available to show.
Always research accommodation thoroughly and take note of special precautions with regard to fire safety, fire alarm procedures and fire escape routes.
- **Driving to and from the site.**
Potential control measures – always use an appropriate vehicle for your needs which is checked before leaving on a journey. Ensure it has sufficient seating and room for any equipment needed. As a driver you are responsible for the road worthiness of the vehicle and driving the vehicle under the Road Traffic Act. Stow all luggage and equipment securely, be careful when loading and unloading, load the vehicle evenly and do not exceed load ratings, ensure the vehicle is parked on level ground. Take regular breaks, do not allow yourself to drive feeling tired. Be aware of the [Driving at work guidance](#).
- **Physical and environmental conditions** - extreme weather conditions, mountains, rivers, remote areas, cliffs, mines, quarries, forests, seashore and coastal terrain.
Potential control measures – always wear appropriate clothing and if needed carry a reserve of warm clothing. Avoid getting over tired and do not go too long without food. Always assess the ground and weather conditions beware of potentially soft or slippery ground. Avoid areas where growth is dense and have appropriate maps / navigation aids. Always let others know where you are and how long you will be. Ensure means of communication are in full working order.
- **Animals and Plants.**
Potential control measures - In most scenarios animals (wild, domestic or farm) will flee from people, however occasionally an animal may attack if it feels threatened. If possible avoid contact with animals, heed warning signs. Bees and wasps are common in warmer periods – it is possible for someone to develop an allergy to bee or wasp venom, this tends to become more severe each time someone is stung, if you suspect you may have such an allergy inform your colleagues and seek medical advice. Health hazards relating to animal and plant diseases transmitted to humans is relatively rare in the UK but can be more common overseas. Cuts or abrasions incurred during fieldwork should be thoroughly cleaned as soon as possible and covered by a clean dressing. Should any adverse symptoms continue seek medical advice as soon as possible.

- **Chemical hazards such as agrochemicals.**
Potential control measures – if working in areas that may be affected by agriculture spraying or dusting be prepared to leave the area promptly, stay up wind of any spraying operations. If in doubt ask the landowner what spray is being used. Wash any affected skin copiously in clean running water or use medical wipes. Wear rubber gloves when handling samples or equipment which could have been sprayed.
- **Equipment, tools and machinery.**
Potential control measures – always check machinery / equipment that you have taken to use, ensure that it has not been damaged in transit. Stay away from farm / forest machinery whether in use or not and assume operators are unaware of your presence unless you have clear evidence that they have seen you.

4.3 Working Overseas

Before making arrangements to travel and work overseas you will need to visit the [Overseas Travel](#) pages to obtain the information you will need to plan a safe trip. This will include the authorisation process and forms required to be completed prior to travel. This information includes insurance details.

Insurance

The university holds a comprehensive travel insurance policy and certain details are required prior to travel. A Travel Insurance Request Form is available to complete via the intranet using the above link. The link enables you to gain information from a FAQ section which covers common questions around what is covered by the policy including pre-existing conditions and what is not included.

Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment examples for both [high](#) risk and [low](#) risk travel are available and these can be used as a template for identifying the relevant hazards and control measures that will apply and can be expanded to encompass the work related activities which also need to be considered, some examples of which are detailed below.

As mentioned in the introduction working overseas can be wide ranging from fieldwork, lecturing, research, research collaborations, visits, placements, business promotion and conference attendance. It is important, therefore, to determine the level of risk by undertaking a risk assessment and ensuring that the control measures are suitable and sufficient. The risk assessment may need to take into account the following items in order to determine the level of risk involved.

- Fitness to undertake the work
- Access – special medical requirements and assistance arranged, if necessary. Provision made for disabled, if required.
- Pre-planning – local conditions evaluated, this can be done through the F&CO website and Red24. Identify how funds will be accessed. Medical problems identified. Vaccinations completed in time to give protection and continued on return, if necessary. U.K. contact informed of details.
- Health – appropriate first aid facilities in place.
- Training – hygiene / health education advice if appropriate. First –aid cover if required.
- Always have a point of contact in place at the university who knows your itinerary and plans and who you can contact if any changes need to be made.
- Equipment – suitability and availability of equipment assessed.
- Accommodation / Catering – availability of acceptable accommodation. Availability and access to drinkable water. Ability to cater for special dietary needs. Availability of food and water if working remotely, also storage, transport of supplies may need to be considered.
- Personal safety – risk of attack / harassment assessed and mitigated. Method of routine communication established. System for communication in an emergency. Reporting schedule established. Accident and emergency plans in place.
- Hazards – see below.

Potential Hazard checklist and associated problems for consideration whilst travelling and working overseas. This will depend on the nature of your work and location whilst working overseas.

- Climatic extremes or remote location – heat, humidity rarefied air, sunburn, skin cancer, extreme cold.
- Contact with animals – allergies, asthma, bites and other physical contact, dermatitis and rabies.
- Contact with insects – bites / stings, malaria, yellow fever, dengue fever etc.
- Contact with venomous animals – availability of antidotes / medical back up.
- Contaminated food – allergies, food poisoning, hepatitis A
- Contaminated water – cholera, polio, typhoid and diarrhea.
- Electricity – compatibility of equipment and supply, safety standards.
- Emergencies – first aid arrangements and procedures, emergency contact numbers, travel insurance arrangements.
- Endemic diseases – TB, tropical diseases.
- Environment – culture, customs, dress, religion, festivals.
- Hazardous substances – containment (laboratory work), emergency treatment availability, labelling, transport, waste / disposal.
- Legal differences – local codes / guidance, information and research if required. In certain countries there may be a lack of health and safety legislation, if this is the case then it becomes

very important to identify potential hazards beforehand and put suitable control measures in place.

- Natural phenomena – avalanche, earthquake, volcano, severe weather e.g. tornado, hurricane.
- Contaminated needles / sexual contact – HIV, Hepatitis B / C etc.
- Stress – accommodation problems, civil unrest, crime, vandalism and violence, language / communication problems, lack of support, loneliness, sickness, unfriendly environment.
- Transportation – travel sickness, suitable transport, hazardous terrain, local drivers / competence. Jet lag and DVT for long journeys by air.

Further examples of potential [hazards and control measures](#).

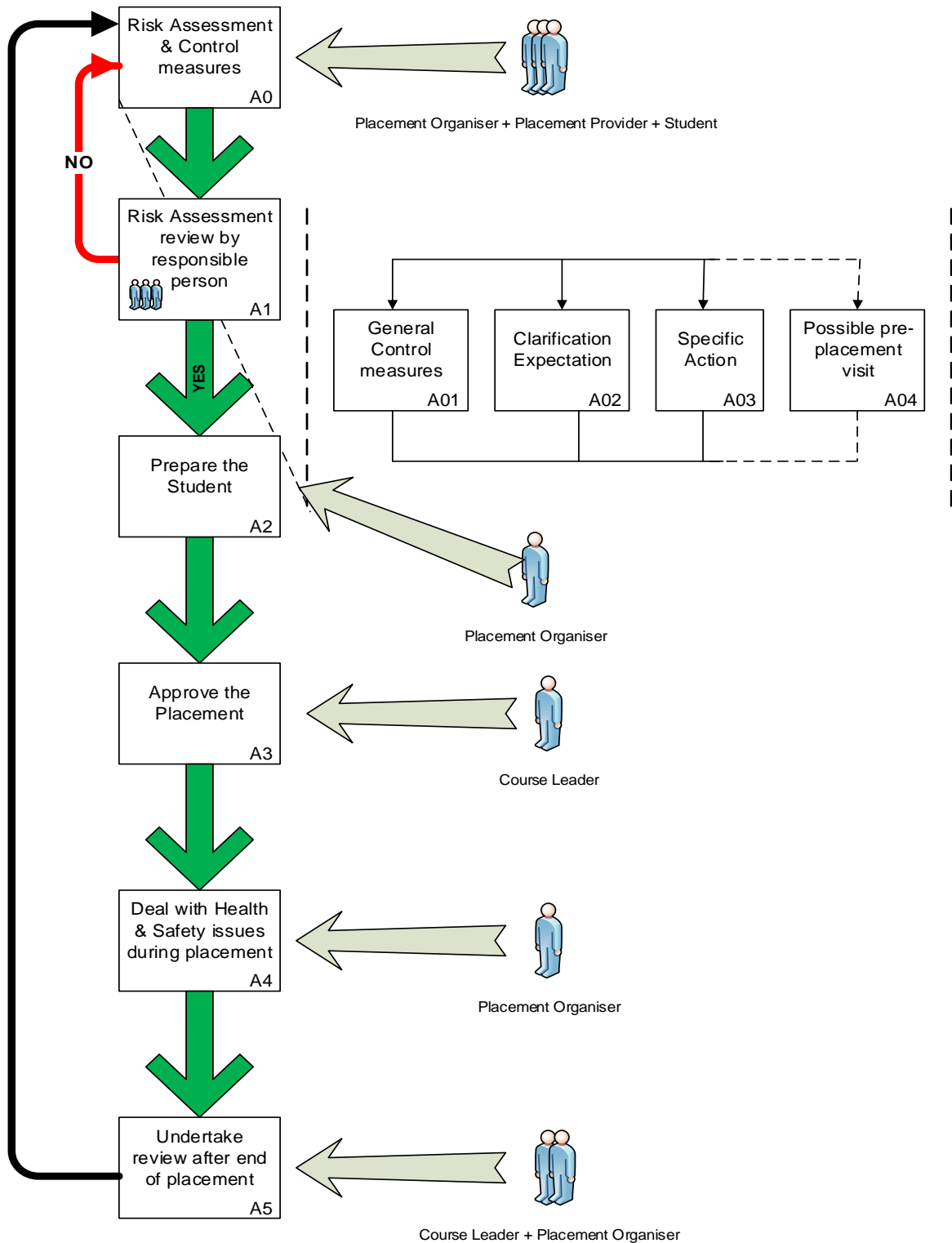
5.0. Personal safety and security.

Safety aims to prevent harm to individuals from unintended occurrences arising from and during the work. Security aims to prevent threats normally arising from intentional acts. When working overseas both aspects need to be recognized. In recent years there has been an increase in areas of political unrest, terrorist activity and activity of criminal groups and whilst this guidance is primarily aimed for working overseas it will also be pertinent for some work and travel activity in the U.K. It is important that prior to travel individuals have as much information as possible about the proposed location and that the information is sufficient to allow safe travel and work. There are a few basic security related guidelines which are useful in order to minimize any such risk.

- General awareness of surroundings, be low key and don't draw attention to yourself if at all possible.
- Avoid conspicuous luggage
- Do not carry large amounts of cash
- Ensure you have telephone numbers to cancel credit cards in the event of loss.
- Keep luggage in sight as much as possible
- Use hotel safe for valuables
- Keep hotel door locked.
- Only use proprietary taxi / cars.
- If setting out on foot, prepare your journey. Wandering aimlessly can lead to inadvertently going into undesirable areas.
- Avoid disputes and large gatherings if possible.
- Consider carrying a personal alarm.
- If driving / parking use well-lit areas and park as close to your destination as possible.
- Keep valuables out of sight e.g. laptops / mobile phones.

6.0 Placements - A placement is where a student undertakes a period of work as an integral part of their course with a third party who is responsible for their direct supervision including their health and safety. Before such a placement can be made a number of safety related measures need to be considered. The faculties and schools have teams in place who manage the placement process.

Chronology of the Placement Process



Additional details on the Placement Process Diagram

A0 / A1 - The Placement companies are contacted by the course leader / academic and/or Placement Officer or depending on the nature and duration of the placement sometimes visited. Informal risk assessments are carried out, job descriptions checked, working hours established and any foreseeable health and safety hazards identified. In the event the student has identified their own placement all these stages would be followed.

A2 - The students are prepared for their placement in a number of ways by the Work Placement Office, this includes lectures, presentations, workshops, 1-1 appointments, CV, cover letter, applications, interviews, video interviews and portfolio reviews.

A3 – The work placement will be approved by the course leader / academic and/or Work Placement Officer. Approval of the work placement will be dependent on the placements relevance to course requirements and results of the process followed in A0 and A1 above including the resolution of any health and safety concerns.

A4 – Once the student has been accepted a placement agreement together with a health and safety agreement is signed prior to the placement starting. Appropriate checks made and contact established dependent on the length of the placement.

A5 – Feedback requested from employer and student unless the placement is short term. Processes are reviewed at the end of each academic year.

The University has a Policy and Guidance on Placement and Work-Based Learning which must be adhered to in all cases for placements in both the U.K. and Overseas. This includes a process for risk assessment and as part of the placement process the third party or placement provider will be required to complete a health and safety statement which informs the university that they have a suitable health and safety regime in place. The placement provider's induction process would need to include health and safety training and information pertinent to the role so that the student is clear about health and safety within the host organisation and their role within it. It is important that students have a point of contact at the university during their placement period so that any issues, including health and safety, can be addressed quickly.

Regardless of whether the placement is in or outside the U.K. the university health and safety management approach should include:-

- Review and approval of placements
- Process of raising and resolving problems
- Planning for contingencies
- Ensuring each party understands their roles and responsibilities
- Preparation of students
- Training of staff

All placements should consider the following factors with regard to health and safety:-

- Work activity to be undertaken
- Travel and transportation
- Location and / or region
- General / Environmental health
- Individual Student
- Any insurance limitations

It is important to assign a high risk profile if there is a lack of information with regard to any of the factors above, once further information is obtained and it is satisfactory then the risk profile can be reduced accordingly.

The placement process needs to ensure that the possibility of a student being injured or suffering ill-health as a result of working at a placement provider is as low as reasonably practicable. For placements in the U.K. primary responsibility for the management of health and safety for a student while on a placement lies with the placement provider. The student also has responsibility to follow instruction and act sensibly to protect their own health and safety and that of others. For placements outside the U.K. health and safety responsibility will ultimately be a matter for the enforcing authorities in both the U.K. and the country for the placement, however, the university must establish that a sensible risk management system is in place prior to any placement being made outside the U.K.

7.0 References

UCEA Health and Safety Guidance for placement of Higher Education Students 2009

University Of Westminster On-line Accident Reporting System:-

<https://westminsterhealthandsafety.co.uk/Home/home.aspx>

NERC – Health, Safety and Security When Travelling and Working Overseas 2014

NERC Guidance Note: A Safe System of Fieldwork 2007

World Health Organisation (WHO) <http://www.euro.who.int/en/home>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office>

University Of Westminster - Guidance on Travelling Overseas on University Business:-

<https://myintranet.westminster.ac.uk/my-journey/health-and-wellbeing/health-and-safety-policies-and-guidance/>

University of Westminster – Driving at Work Safety Guidance:-

<https://myintranet.westminster.ac.uk/my-journey/health-and-wellbeing/health-and-safety-policies-and-guidance/>

University of Westminster Policy and Guidance on Placement and Work-Based Learning