Travel and Outside Study (off-campus and abroad)
Guidance for Supervisors of Postgraduate Research Students

*Guidance approved by PGR Sub-Committee of UEC on 13th June 2019 and replaces the previous policy and guidance approved by UEC on 14 May 2015.*

*This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Travel and Outside Study Guidance for Postgraduate Research Students.*

The following information for University staff and is intended to:

- minimise the number of research students admitted where there is a prior commitment to primary or field research undertaken in a high-risk location identified by the FCO or insurance provider
- ensure that there are appropriate controls and approvals for any unavoidable travel, as primary or field research, to a high-risk location

The University will decide each case on its individual merits having regard to the best available information and FCO travel advice at the time.

**Admission**

All University staff involved in admission decisions for research students should be mindful of the possible constraints if a student submits a research proposal involving study in a high-risk location, as designated by the FCO or insurance provider. It is the responsibility of the academic unit (the Director of Postgraduate Studies or equivalent) to clarify whether primary or field research is intended to be undertaken in a high-risk location.

Subject to normal entry criteria being met:

*If there is no suggestion of primary or fieldwork in a high-risk location, an offer may be made in the usual way.*

Otherwise, the application must be carefully considered and if necessary further information obtained from the student and/or sponsor. Unless for a pre-defined and approved research project, particular attention should be paid to the research proposal and the associated practicalities of admitting a student proposing to undertake research in a high-risk location. This should include consideration of:

- the health and safety of the applicant and of others involved in the research process
- ethical questions that may arise when conducting fieldwork
- development of a plan to deal with any foreseeable potential risks in the fieldwork location

Where there is any doubt about the viability of a research project an offer should not be made, though some negotiation on the project proposal may be possible.

- If the academic unit intends to make an offer, it should prepare a summary document outlining the foreseeable risks, conditions and any restrictions upon which the offer is made and any specific controls to keep the student safe—this should be signed by the Head of School or nominee and sent to the Applicant. The application will then be referred to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for consideration. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies will allow an offer to be made if there is prima facie evidence of rigorous risk assessment protocols by the academic unit.

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If the academic unit cannot demonstrate effective risk mitigation strategies then the application must be rejected.

There will be instances where situations change post-admission, because of changes in the student’s project or changes in the risk status of particular locations. The University will therefore, need to manage carefully projects and their associated study or fieldwork in potentially high-risk locations and if travel risks cannot be suitably managed, in some circumstances the University may have to:

- Agree alternate programmes of study with a student and/or a sponsor;
- Decline to continue a student’s registration at the University

In these circumstances, the following guidance applies.

**Project Approval**

A student should submit their project proposal for approval within 3 months of initial registration. Students and supervisors should pay particular care regarding the health and safety issues involved in operationalising the project and should consult the University’s Travel Abroad Policy, if any travel is anticipated and complete a travel risk assessment for all travel outside the UK.

If there are significant issues of personal health and safety these must be addressed either through a thorough risk assessment, finding satisfactory ways of controlling the risk, and/or the development of an alternative plan should it not be possible to conduct the research as originally conceived. The methodological implications of any health and safety procedures should be considered.

Project proposals are considered by an Independent Panel which makes a recommendation on the proposal to the Head of School (or nominee, usually the Director of Postgraduate Studies), which is then passed to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for consideration. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure that the student and supervisory team have put in place arrangements for the work to be conducted safely and it is the responsibility of the Dean to confirm that this has been done sufficiently.

**Ethical Approval**

There may be significant ethical issues associated with study in high-risk locations. For example, a gatekeeper may be required for health and safety reasons, or health and safety considerations may necessitate the student being accompanied during the research, which may have ethical implications. These should be addressed where necessary through an application for full Ethical Approval immediately following Project Approval.

**Annual Progress Review**

Annual Progress Review, conducted towards the end of the first year, and each year thereafter, should check that the student is well prepared for fieldwork or study abroad and Project and Ethical Approval is in place. If it is apparent that health and safety issues have arisen which were not present at the time of Project Approval, then an alternative research plan needs to be considered or appropriate risk mitigation strategies agreed. Annual Progress Reviews are undertaken by an Independent Panel which makes a progress recommendation to the Head of School (or nominee), which is ultimately signed off by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

**Outside Study Approval**

The action required by the Postgraduate Research student depends upon the duration of the proposed outside study and the location.

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<tr>
<th>Duration and Location of Proposed Outside Study</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one month to a location with no specific travel restrictions</td>
<td>Normally approved using a ‘Student Notice of Absence’ form on the recommendation of the Head of School or nominee concerned, taking account of the provisions of the University’s Travel Abroad Management Standard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than one month to a location with no specific travel restrictions</td>
<td>Students apply using an ‘Outside Study’ form, normally three months in advance of the proposed travel for consideration by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies on the recommendation of the Head of School, or nominee, concerned.</td>
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<td>Any duration to a location identified as ‘Advise against all travel’ and ‘Advise against all but essential travel’</td>
<td>Students apply using an ‘Outside Study’ form, normally three months in advance of the proposed travel. It is unlikely that travel will be approved to ‘Advise against all travel’ locations, however, travel to ‘Advise against all but essential travel’ may be possible, subject to consideration and approval by the Faculty PVC.</td>
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A ‘Travel Risk Assessment Form’ is required for all travel/outside study and should detail the specific activities to be undertaken. The academic supervisor must consider and approve the Travel Risk Assessment Form, in accordance with the Travel Abroad Management Standards and the student should include this with any outside study application submitted to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for consideration.