

Safety Guidance for undertaking off campus activities (fieldwork) during Covid-19

Introduction

Off campus working is often an integral part of University teaching and research, which is a significant site of learning for some disciplines and which enables academic and personal development. Staff members organising student off campus working or responsible for the supervision of independent student field working need to use a risk assessment process to ensure that, as a University, we fulfil our duty of care to protect staff, students and other affected people.

Students on taught programmes can work and study off campus across a broad spectrum of activities. Placements where students are located in an industrial or work environment for a semester or longer are covered separately as is study abroad.

[Placements | Teaching, Learning and Student Development - Academic Development and Policy | StaffNet | The University of Manchester](#)

This guidance is for non-placement i.e. shorter duration off campus activities and includes for example environmental sampling, social surveys, visits to venues (museums, galleries and industrial sites). The guidance also includes student independent working e.g., dissertation research. For brevity, the term 'fieldwork' will be used to encompass all of these.

This Guidance is subject to modification following Government COVID-19 updates.

[National lockdown: Stay at Home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Tier 3: Very High alert - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Tier 2: High alert - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Tier 1: Medium alert - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Travel advice: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The uncertainty over future restrictions requires plans for fieldwork include contingency for cancellation.

Scope

This guidance has been introduced as a temporary measure to cover integral fieldwork during the Covid-19 pandemic, in relation to taught Undergraduate and Postgraduate taught programmes of study. The scope does not include postgraduate research students nor staff fieldwork. It augments rather than replaces existing requirements for fieldwork safety for example restrictions around lone working. This guidance may be updated or amended as government guidance changes. The guidance is intended to support the continuation of fieldwork where further interruption is likely to be highly damaging to the project or programme of study and where essential work, which cannot be carried out remotely, can be completed in line with government COVID-19 guidance.

Risk assessment – COVID-19 specific considerations (see [General risk assessment for essential field courses](#))

In addition to the normal risk assessments required for fieldwork, special consideration must be given to risks of transmission of Covid-19. The risk assessment must specify how social distancing will be maintained, use of hand sanitiser, disinfection of equipment, and safe travel to fieldwork sites, taking government advice on use of public transport and multi occupant vehicles. Note that any person using their own vehicle to travel to a field site must check with their insurance company to ensure that they are covered. Risks of interaction with members of the public must also be considered, including any concerns that the fieldwork activity might raise with local communities. Under these conditions, having clear permissions to operate in any private indoor or outdoor space is particularly important and must be sought and achieved prior to any fieldwork taking place.

General risk assessment: The General Risk Assessment Form in the [General risk assessment for essential field courses](#) has been compiled based on the University Safety Services risk assessment form and guidance notes from March 2015 and should be completed prior to any planned essential fieldwork. The associated Notes to accompany General Risk Assessment Form are also included and should be read in conjunction with the General Risk Assessment Form

Permission to Proceed

For each fieldwork activity, permission should be sought from the Head of School through the School office including relevant risk assessments and self-declarations (see below). Fieldwork must not proceed until permission has been given.

Self-Declaration

All participants must complete a self-declaration which must be submitted with the risk assessment to the School office (for HoS approval) stating that the participant is well, they are not self-isolating, they are not at particular risk and that they or members of their household are not shielding.

Roles and Responsibilities

Heads of School have overall responsibility for health and safety in the department including fieldwork activities. The Head of School will delegate the practical management of all aspects of fieldwork, including the health and safety requirements, to the fieldwork leader or dissertation supervisor.

The Fieldwork Leader/ supervisor is responsible for the overall supervision of the activity. There should only be one leader per group activity. They must ensure that health or safety issues are considered that any precautions required are put in place, communicated to all participants and are adhered to for the duration of the activity. Levels of supervision need to be assessed as appropriate for the activity and environment and there needs to be the potential to change this with a fluid situation. This will include if necessary, ceasing the activity if it cannot be completed safely.

Participants must ensure they understand and comply with any instruction given to them by a leader or supervisor, as well as reporting any potential hazard. They must accept responsibility for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by them.

Table 1. University of Manchester Off-Campus (Fieldwork) Responses to COVID-19 (6 January 2021)

	Staying safe (hands, face, space)	Meeting People	Travel	Hospitality and Accommodation	Venues	Visiting England Tier 3 areas	Visiting England Tier 2 areas	Visiting England Tier 1 areas	Visiting elsewhere UK	Organised overseas Fieldwork
Manchester in Tier 4 or under national lockdown	No fieldwork to take place	No fieldwork to take place	No fieldwork to take place	No fieldwork to take place	No fieldwork to take place	No fieldwork to take place	No fieldwork to take place	No fieldwork to take place	No fieldwork to take place	No fieldwork to take place
Manchester in Tier 3 Very High Alert	Applies in full	No interaction with human subjects	Stay in area, follow government advice on public transport	No overnight stops; be self-reliant for food and drink	Do not visit venues	N/A	Tier 3 restrictions apply	Tier 3 restrictions apply	Tier 3 restrictions apply as a minimum	Seek FCO advice before organising travel
Manchester in Tier 2 High Alert	Applies in full	No interaction with human subjects	Stay in area, follow government advice on public transport	Overnight accommodation is permitted; check food and drink is available.	Venues can be visited	Avoid. if essential Tier 3 restrictions apply	N/A	Tier 2 restrictions apply	Tier 2 restrictions apply as a minimum	Seek FCO advice before organising travel
Manchester in Tier 1 Medium Alert	Applies in full	Interactions with people permissible subject to 'staying safe' and rule of 6	Stay in area, follow government advice on public transport	Overnight accommodation is permitted; check food and drink is available.	Venues can be visited	Avoid. if essential Tier 3 restrictions apply	Avoid. if essential Tier 2 restrictions apply	N/A	Tier 1 restrictions apply as a minimum	Seek FCO advice before organising travel

Notes	See risk assessment	Outdoors environmental fieldwork feasible	Essential travel across tiers requires Faculty and HoS approval							

Explanation of Table 1 Guidance for student off campus working (including fieldwork) for taught programmes during COVID-19 restrictions

Current from 6 January 2021 for students studying at Manchester and working in the UK.

No fieldwork to take place.

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In anticipation of Manchester moving to Tier 4 in future:

No fieldwork to take place.

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In anticipation of Manchester moving to Tier 3 in future:

Restrictions for Manchester will apply to University of Manchester students, unless they are undertaking individual fieldwork e.g., dissertation research and will be resident elsewhere for the duration of this fieldwork. In this instance, an individual risk assessment will need to be agreed with their school based on the UK tier or overseas location in which they are resident.

England COVID-19 tiers restrictions pertaining to fieldwork i.e., off campus activities

Tier 3

This is highly restrictive for student fieldwork and little will be feasible under this very high COVID-19 alert. In summary no social interactions with members of the public, venues will be closed, no overnight stops and no travel across tiers.

[Tier 3: Very High alert - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Staying safe (hands, face, space): See risk assessment for advice on hand washing; provision of sanitiser, need for face coverings and requirement for social distancing.

Meeting people: students may not meet members of the public indoors or in household gardens. In outdoor public spaces, there is a 6-person limit to meetings. There are exceptions 'for registered childcare, education or training – meaning education related to a formal curriculum or training that relates to work or obtaining work'. The University believes the risks under Tier 3 are such fieldwork carried out under this guidance should not involve interaction with human subjects even if physically distanced (for the avoidance of doubt, collecting environmental data is likely to be acceptable but interviews and focus groups are not).

Travel: students can travel within the tier 3 area for educational purposes but should avoid travelling out of the area. Although the government advice states 'other than where necessary...for education' while in tier 3, the University believes travel across tiers should be avoided. If it is necessary to use public transport, government advice should be followed.

Hospitality and Accommodation: Only take-out food and drink will be available so fieldwork should be self-reliant for food and drink. Accommodation will not be available in tier 3 so over-night stops will not be possible.

Venues: most venues will be closed e.g., museums, zoos, heritage sites and galleries. While public toilets can remain open, fieldwork organiser should check local arrangements.

The guidance has sought to avoid risk to students and staff. The Government advice allows for some flexibility around education and necessity. Any relaxation of the above guidance e.g., travel to another tier, would require both Faculty (Vice Dean TL&S) and Head of School approval based on the risk assessment.

England Tier 2 areas (Manchester in Tier 3)

All tier 3 restrictions apply for University of Manchester students.

England Tier 1 areas (Manchester in Tier 3)

All tier 3 restrictions apply for University of Manchester students.

Elsewhere in UK (Manchester in Tier 3)

All England tier 3 restrictions apply for University of Manchester students, but some higher restrictions may also be in place.

Overseas (Manchester in Tier 3)

For overseas fieldwork, Government Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice on travel abroad should be observed. [Travel advice: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/travel-advice/coronavirus)

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In anticipation of Manchester moving to Tier 2 in future:

England COVID-19 tiers restrictions pertaining to fieldwork

England Tier 2 (Current for Manchester) High Alert

This COVID-19 alert remains high and there are restrictions for student fieldwork. In summary, while it is possible to visit venues and even stay overnight within the tier 2 area there are to be no social interactions with members of the public i.e., no interviews and or 'focus group' discussions.

[Tier 2: High alert - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/travel-advice/coronavirus)

Tier 2 Restrictions for Manchester will apply to University of Manchester students, unless they are working in a tier 3 area or are undertaking individual fieldwork e.g., dissertation research and will be resident elsewhere for the duration of the fieldwork. In the latter case, an individual risk assessment will need to be agreed with the student's school based on the UK tier or overseas location in which they will be resident.

Staying safe (hands, face, space): See risk assessment for advice on hand washing; provision of sanitiser, need for face coverings and requirement for social distancing.

Meeting people: Students may not meet members of the public indoors for fieldwork. Outdoor meeting may be permissible under the government restrictions but under tier 2 the University believes the risks are such that fieldwork carried out under this guidance should not involve interaction with human subjects even if physically distanced (for the avoidance of doubt, collecting environmental data is likely to be acceptable but interviews and focus groups are not).

Travel: students can travel within their area for educational purposes but should avoid fieldwork in tier 3 areas unless necessary when the guidance for tier 3 (see above) should be followed. In tier 1 areas, the tier 2 restrictions continue to apply. If students need to use public transport, follow government advice.

Hospitality and Accommodation: Restaurants and cafes can be open and overnight accommodation is permitted.

Venues: It is possible to visit venues that have been given permission to open. Under tier 2, venues can host multiple groups.

The advice has sought to avoid risk to students and staff. The Government advice allows for some flexibility around education and necessity. Any relaxation of the above guidance would require both Faculty (Vice Dean TL&S) and Head of School approval based on the risk assessment.

England Tier 3 areas (Manchester in Tier 2)

Fieldwork in Tier 3 areas should be avoided. If essential England tier 3 area restrictions will apply (see above), taking note to

[Tier 3: Very High alert - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

England Tier 1 areas (Manchester in Tier 2)

All tier 2 restrictions apply for University of Manchester students.

Elsewhere in UK (Manchester in Tier 2)

All England tier 2 restrictions apply for University of Manchester students, but some higher restrictions may also be in place.

Overseas

For overseas fieldwork, Government Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice on travel abroad should be observed. [Travel advice: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/travel-advice-coronavirus-covid-19)

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In anticipation of Manchester moving to Tier 1 in future:

England Tier 1 (Current for Manchester) Medium Alert

[Tier 1: Medium alert - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/tier-1-medium-alert)

Staying safe (hands, face, space): See risk assessment for advice on hand washing; provision of sanitiser, need for face coverings and requirement for social distancing.

Meeting people: Students may meet members of the public outdoors in a group of no more than six. Interviews and discussion groups are permitted but with adherence to 'staying safe' requirements. Any indoor meeting will require a venue specific risk assessment, for example to take into account ventilation and safe distancing.

Travel: students can travel within the tier 1 area for educational purposes but should avoid fieldwork in tier 2 or 3 areas unless necessary. If you need to use public transport, follow government advice.

Hospitality and Accommodation: Restaurants and cafes can be open and overnight accommodation is permitted but students must not mix in groups larger than six.

Venues: It is possible to visit venues that have been given permission to open.

The advice has sought to avoid risk to students and staff. The Government advice allows for some flexibility around education and necessity. Any relaxation of the above guidance would require both Faculty (Vice Dean TL&S) and Head of School approval based on the risk assessment.

England Tier 2 or 3 areas (Manchester in Tier 1)

Fieldwork in Tier 3 or 2 areas should be avoided. If essential, the higher tier restrictions apply.

Elsewhere in UK (Manchester in Tier 1)

All England tier 1 restrictions apply for University of Manchester students, but some higher restrictions may also be in place.

Overseas

For overseas fieldwork, Government Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice on travel abroad should be observed. [Travel advice: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/travel-advice-coronavirus-covid-19)

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Policy Owner	Head of Student and Academic Services (SAS)
Lead contact	Teaching and Learning Manager (Policies and Degree Apprenticeships), Teaching and Learning Delivery, Division of SAS <i>For any queries or questions relating to this document, please direct your email to teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk</i>