

FBMH Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement Funding 2026-27

Assessing Risks

This guidance is designed to help you undertake proportionate risk assessments while ensuring the safety of participants, volunteers and members of the public.

Why do I need a risk assessment?

A risk assessment helps you to identify anything that could cause harm and decide what measures are needed to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. It should be completed before any activity takes place and reviewed if circumstances change.

Risk assessing an activity is not about stopping activities from happening. It is about making sure that risks have been considered and managed appropriately.

Step 1: Describe the Activity

Clearly define:

- What the activity involves
- Where it will take place
- When it will take place
- Who will be involved
- Whether members of the public will attend
- Whether travel is required
- Whether participants are under 18 years old
- Whether any specialist equipment or activities are involved

Examples:

- Science demonstration at a community event
 - Workshop at a local school
 - Overseas volunteering project
 - Fundraising event in Manchester city centre
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Step 2: Identify Who Might Be Harmed

Consider:

- Yourself/team
- Members of the public
- Volunteers
- Students
- Staff
- Children and young people
- Vulnerable adults
- Drivers and passengers
- Visitors unfamiliar with the venue

Pay particular attention to anyone who may require additional support or adjustments.

Step 3: Identify Hazards

Think about anything that could cause injury, ill health, distress, loss or damage.

General hazards

- Slips, trips and falls
- Adverse weather
- Road traffic
- Fire and emergency evacuation
- Personal security
- Lost participants
- Medical emergencies
- Fatigue

Public engagement hazards

- Large crowds
- Interaction with children or vulnerable people
- Safeguarding concerns
- Unauthorised access to restricted areas
- Demonstrations involving equipment or chemicals
- Manual handling of displays and equipment
- Photography and social media considerations

UK travel hazards

- Driving and transport arrangements
- Delays or cancellations
- Unfamiliar locations
- Overnight accommodation
- Lone working
- Personal security

Overseas travel hazards

- Political instability
- Local security risks
- Terrorism
- Health risks and infectious diseases
- Natural hazards
- Cultural and legal differences
- Access to medical care
- Language barriers
- Travel disruption
- Emergency communications

University overseas travel guidance recommends considering official government travel advice and current country-specific risks before travel.

Step 4: Decide on Control Measures

Ask yourself:

- Can the hazard be removed completely?
- If not, how can the risk be reduced?

Examples include:

Event controls

- Pre-event briefing
- Named event lead
- Adequate supervision
- First aid arrangements
- Emergency contact numbers available
- Attendance register
- Clear meeting points and evacuation arrangements

Public engagement controls

- Activities supervised at all times
- Appropriate safeguarding arrangements
- Suitable staff/student-to-participant ratios
- Barriers around demonstrations where needed
- Equipment inspected before use
- Members briefed on acceptable conduct

Travel controls

- Travel itinerary shared with organisers
- Reliable transport providers used
- Emergency contact procedures established
- Accommodation reviewed beforehand
- Participants advised about local risks
- Appropriate insurance in place

Overseas travel controls

- Review Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) advice before departure and monitor it up to the date of travel. <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
- Ensure travellers are fit to travel and have considered any health needs.
- Carry emergency contact details.
- Have a contingency plan for disruption, illness or emergencies.
- Consider local laws, customs and cultural requirements.
- Ensure appropriate approvals are obtained before committing to travel arrangements.

Step 5: Determine the Risk Level

Consider:

- How likely is harm?
- How severe could the harm be?

Focus additional controls on activities with higher likelihood or more serious consequences.

Examples of higher-risk activities:

- Overseas travel
- Activities involving children
- Large public events
- Activities near water
- Adventure activities
- Use of hazardous substances or equipment
- Overnight stays

Step 6: Record Actions

For each significant risk, record:

Hazard	Control Measures	Person Responsible	Date Completed
Lost participants during trip	Register, meeting points, emergency contact numbers	Trip Leader	Before departure
Demonstration equipment injury	Equipment inspection and supervision	Activity Lead	Event day

Step 7: Review the Assessment

Review:

- Before the activity starts
- If plans change
- If travel advice changes
- After any incident or near miss
- Before future similar activities

For overseas travel, the risk assessment should be reviewed if there is a significant change in circumstances or risk level before departure.

Risk Assessment Checklist

Before approval, confirm:

- ☐ Activity description completed
- ☐ Hazards identified
- ☐ Appropriate control measures implemented
- ☐ Emergency arrangements planned

- ☐ First aid arrangements considered
- ☐ Public liability and insurance requirements checked
- ☐ Safeguarding requirements considered
- ☐ Travel risks assessed
- ☐ Overseas travel advice reviewed (where applicable)
- ☐ Emergency contacts recorded
- ☐ Responsible person identified
- ☐ Risk assessment reviewed and approved

Remember

If an activity involves:

- Children or vulnerable adults
- Overseas travel
- Adventure activities
- Water-based activities
- Significant public attendance
- Hazardous equipment, chemicals or demonstrations

Seek advice from the responsible organisation i.e. Students' Union or the relevant Faculty/School teams before proceeding, as additional approvals or specific risk assessments may be required.

Resources:

[PPIE template Risk Assessment Form.docx](#) (University risk assessment adapted for PPIE)
[Risk assessments | Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health | StaffNet | The University of Manchester](#)
[Risk Assessments Frequently Asked Questions FAQs](#)
[Travel | Compliance and Risk | StaffNet | The University of Manchester](#)

The [PPIE toolkit](#) has multiple resources (e.g. distress protocols, payments guidance, etc)