

# Fieldwork Guidelines/Procedure

Fieldwork is an integral part of most degrees in social sciences, and is a major tool of social science research. It covers a wide range of data gathering activities of different natures, such as conducting formal interviewing, analytical study, informal observation, archive research. It may take place many miles away from the researcher's own home and in a very different social and political context, or even in the researcher's own household; a fieldwork study may last a few weeks or more than a year.

Because of the diversity of forms and objectives of fieldwork, the wide range of situations that may be experienced, and outcomes that may be achieved, fieldwork requires very careful planning. This means not only the planning of the travel and the research itself, but also of how data will be accumulated and handled during the fieldwork and afterwards, and how researchers will resume their more usual pattern of life and work after the fieldwork is complete.

Fieldwork is considered part of your programme. You remain enrolled during the absence from campus and liable for tuition fees, if applicable. Student Service will record details of your Fieldwork absences in your Student File and a chart.

Students undertaking fieldwork must follow the procedures outlined below at least one month BEFORE travelling in order to ensure that their research and travel are safe, insured and in compliance with the Graduate Institute policies.

## Research Ethics

While doing fieldwork, students represent the Graduate Institute. Students have a responsibility to work safely in the field, taking reasonable care and practical steps to protect their own health and safety in the field, and that of any other people at the fieldwork location.

Students must read the Graduate Institute Research Ethics Guidelines and Research Ethics Checklist (<https://graduateinstitute.ch/research-support/research-ethics>). Both documents are designed to offer guidance to researchers and students of the Institute, to allow them to self-assess whether their research may be ethically sensitive, and to take appropriate measures as needed.

## Fieldwork plan and procedure

Students should discuss fieldwork plans with their supervisor. Two forms must be completed, discussed with the supervisor and signed by the student and the supervisor before fieldwork (even if travel insurance is not required):

- the Fieldwork Travel Evaluation Form
- the Fieldwork Full Risk Assessment Form (compulsory for medium and high risk activities/regions)

When completing the Fieldwork Full Risk Assessment form the first step is to consider the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of your country. It details current travel advice for each country and on the risk assessment check-list, you should describe how the advice relates to the activities you will be conducting. The form asks you to consider the risks you may encounter and describe the measures you will take to minimise risk. Some items on the list may not be applicable and the list is not intended to be exhaustive. The object of any full risk assessment is to identify all the hazards associated with the work, to assess the risk that these hazards present under particular circumstances, and to plan mitigation. On completion the written assessment should evidence that you have identified the areas of work that present particular problems and put plans in place to reduce the risks to an acceptable level. Please note Travel Advice websites should be consulted on a regular basis before travel and a risk assessment updated where necessary should a situation in a country change.

You should also plan to have contact with your supervisor at least once a month while on fieldwork, and **at least every two weeks** in High-Risk destinations or when carrying out other activities identified as high-risk.

### **Travel Insurance**

Once the Full Risk Assessment has been signed off by the Supervisor, your Programme Manager will either classify the document in your student file (low risk destinations and/or activities) or forward it to the academic adviser (medium/high risk destinations and/or activities) who will evaluate on a case to case basis whether you will be subscribed into the Institute's Travel Insurance in the case you are not already covered by a personal insurance.

If your request is accepted, you will then have to fill in an ad-hoc form and register on the Insurance provider platform. Once these formalities have been completed and the Travel Advice agreement obtained, you will be considered covered by the travel insurance.

### **Contact**

All completed travel-related forms should be returned to your Programme Manager ([madis@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:madis@graduateinstitute.ch), [mint@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:mint@graduateinstitute.ch) or [secretariatphd@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:secretariatphd@graduateinstitute.ch)) **at least 3 weeks before** departure. If you have any questions, please contact your Programme Manager.

### **After return**

Students must debrief with their Supervisor or another Professor/Researcher/Academic Staff on problems encountered. Medical or psychological support can be organised via the Institute's Student Support Service if needed, email: [wellbeing-support@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:wellbeing-support@graduateinstitute.ch)