

Brief notes on risk assessment for researchers

The Tavistock/UEL Fieldwork Risk Assessment Audit form is a tool for assessing risk to the researcher. Any risk issues involved in research for the subjects of the research should be addressed within consideration of research ethics.

UEL considers all research carried out within the Tavistock postgraduate programmes to be fieldwork. Therefore all Tavistock research proposals should be accompanied by the Risk Assessment Audit form.

Researchers should carry identification and a means of communication, e.g. mobile phone, when carrying out fieldwork.

The research design and planning of interviews or observations should include considerations of potential risks in relation to:

1. Choice of methods e.g. participant observation in particular situations.
2. Recruitment should be by telephone, email or letter rather than 'cold-calling' and should provide opportunities for assessing individuals and/or their circumstances.
3. Location and environment of interview or observation sites, time of day and transport availability: are there local tensions and/or social divisions to be aware of; is there a possibility of hostility to the researcher?
4. Risk situations that may arise during the course of the interview. Researchers should be alert to any effects of the interview on respondents and have strategies to deal with them. Sensitive topics may provoke distress or hostility. Training may be necessary in inter-personal skills to enable researchers to manage the responses of interviewees. Often strong feelings can be acknowledged and contained, but very rarely it may be necessary to cease the interview.
5. The risks of lone working should be evaluated and if these are significant, working in teams or an alternative location should be considered. As in all lone working, others should know where you are and when. A schedule of appointments, interview times and venues should be lodged with your supervisor/manager.
6. Fieldwork can be tiring and sometimes stressful; the schedule should allow for rest and reflection. People are less alert to risks when they are tired and are better able to handle situations when they are alert.

For further information and for risks to be addressed if carrying out fieldwork abroad, researchers should consult see the Guidance Notes drafted by Professor Barbara Harrison, (June 2010).

Fieldwork Personal Risk to Researcher Assessment

Please note that this form is for assessing risk to yourself (not to others)

Name:	Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust
UEL student number:	Director of Studies:
Thesis Title:	
Fieldwork location:	Type of Fieldwork:
Proposed dates or periods of Fieldwork:	
Potential hazards or risks: <i>(please rate: high medium or low)</i>	
1.	2.
3.	4.
5.	6.
7.	8.
9.	10.
Potential Consequences for each hazard: <i>(please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)</i>	
Controls in place for each hazard in order of likely risk: <i>(please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)</i>	

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By signing this document you are indicating that you have fully considered the risks.

Signature of Student:

Date:

I agree to the risk assessment in relation to this project.

Signature of Director of Studies:

Date: