



University of  
St Andrews

## Fieldwork for postgraduate research students

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| <b>Purpose</b>                    | This policy relates to postgraduate research activities and outlines the approval process and the requirements and responsibilities of the University and postgraduate research students in relation to fieldwork. |

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| 1.1                   | Changes to Associate Provost titles | Approved               | Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office | 03/08/2021  |

# UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

## POLICY ON FIELDWORK FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

### 1. Introduction

The University recognizes that fieldwork forms an integral part of some postgraduate research degrees, although the format of fieldwork can vary greatly depending on the academic area. The University seeks to support these valuable learning experiences while continuing to fulfil its quality assurance and statutory reporting obligations by providing an appropriate level of supervision and support.

### 2. Definition

For the purpose of this policy, fieldwork is defined as research activity undertaken by a matriculated postgraduate research student in the course of their study for a Degree, which takes place outside the control and infrastructure of the University and similar institutions such as libraries, archives and laboratories, and necessitates a change in location of study outside the student's normal term-time address. The normal period of fieldwork is between 28 days and 1 year (exceptions to this must be approved by the Provost). Fieldwork thus includes activities such as the conduct of interviews, surveys and periods of immersion and observation, but not reading in libraries, archival searches or the continuation of a candidate's scientific work in another laboratory. Medical elective placements are included, but work experience placements, leisure and voluntary activities are not. In case of doubt as to whether a Degree candidate should be regarded as taking part in fieldwork, the Provost will provide a ruling.

### 3. Principles

The University seeks to maintain a high-quality learning experience for all students, whether in St Andrews or elsewhere. Students remain registered at St Andrews while on fieldwork and should receive ongoing support from the University. This includes supervision (electronically or by other means as appropriate), coverage under university insurance, access to advice and guidance, (e.g. from CEED or Student Services), and access to electronic resources as available based on the student's location.

Students will continue to pay full fees at the appropriate rate while on fieldwork, in accordance with the [Length of studies and associated fees for postgraduate research students](#) policy. The University will make available a [fieldwork fund](#) to help supplement the additional costs associated with fieldwork. Students with research council funding must comply with the terms of their funding when going away on fieldwork.

### 4. Approval Process

It is expected that students will outline the need for fieldwork in their original research proposal and will agree the details with their supervisor. Requests for fieldwork not outlined in the original research proposal will be considered but will require justification by the supervisor.

[Applications](#) must be received at least three months before the intended date of travel.

All applications will be considered but are not guaranteed approval and there is no right of appeal against the decision.

One of the University's primary concerns is the safety of the student, therefore, all fieldwork applications must be assessed and approved by the Associate Provost Education to ensure that all required training and risk assessments have been completed, and that any risks associated with a period of fieldwork are removed where possible, or managed and planned for where not possible.

Students are expected to check in with the supervisor at least once every six weeks while on fieldwork. This check in may be part of the normal supervisory meeting or, where there is a gap of more than six weeks between supervisory meetings, this should be a shorter check-in to verify the student's wellbeing. This check-in can take a number of forms, including email, videoconferencing, telephone or post.

An agreed supervisory plan must be submitted with the fieldwork request.

In order to have fieldwork approved, the student must provide the following information to the Associate Provost Education:

- Name, ID and Year of Study of the student going on fieldwork
- School/department
- Reason for undertaking fieldwork
- A full itinerary of locations to be visited while on fieldwork
- Emergency contacts both on location and at home
- The agreed supervisory arrangements (taking account of the University's policy of 10 supervisory contacts per year)
- Confirmation that all required training and risk assessments have been completed
- Confirmation that ethical clearance has been granted where applicable
- Confirmation that the student is in compliance with the policy on [Location of Studies](#).

All applications must be supported by the student's Supervisor.

Following approval from the Associate Provost Education, supervisors should arrange pre-departure and post-return meetings to make sure the student has a clear plan for the fieldwork trip and to help them take stock of the experience and plan next steps upon their return.

## **5. Requirements and Responsibilities**

It is important that each of the parties involved in fieldwork has a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. These are detailed below.

The Associate Provost Education:

- has final approval on all fieldwork applications from postgraduate research students.

The Head of School and/or Director of Postgraduate Studies is responsible for ensuring that:

- these guidelines are implemented in their School and that relevant staff are aware of and comply with the guidelines.
- that all Health and Safety and Risk Assessment checks are properly conducted before a student undertakes the fieldwork.
- each individual fieldwork placement and its structure and content are appropriate to the degree programme.

The Supervisor is responsible for :

Before

- providing students with clear guidance on the fieldwork requirement or expectation and how this fits into the overall degree programme.

- helping the student to identify key research and learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, data collection, skills and competencies to be acquired through fieldwork.
- supporting the student in finding an appropriate fieldwork placement.
- informing students of the approval process for fieldwork and ensuring that they receive all of the correct approvals.

#### During

- monitoring the student's progress and providing ongoing and regular support as agreed in the fieldwork proposal.

#### After

- debriefing with the student to evaluate their fieldwork experience and decide on next steps.
- where appropriate, provide the student with advice and support to ease their transition back to St Andrews.

#### The student is responsible for:

##### Before

- outlining the need for fieldwork in their original proposal, or as soon as it becomes clear that a period of fieldwork will be required.
- securing fieldwork approval in advance and making the necessary arrangements to secure a suitable placement.
- completing all Health and Safety and Risk Assessment requirements.
- ensuring they have valid passports and visas, if required, for their destination and their return to the UK and where necessary checking UKVI compliance.
- seeking relevant advice from their own GP in relation to immunisations and health issues.

##### During

- complying with all arrangements agreed and approaching the opportunity in a professional manner which upholds and enhances the University's reputation.
- being fully aware of the health and safety aspects of the fieldwork destination and complying with all guidance issues by the School and University.
- communicating with their supervisor and the University proactively, especially if a problem arises or there are any concerns about the fieldwork arrangements.
- establishing a successful working pattern which will allow them to collect the relevant data within the allocated time and remain on track to complete their research degree in a timely fashion.
- complying with any Visa requirements as detailed by the University (or UKVI).
- complying with all relevant University policies and procedures.

##### After

- attending a debriefing session with their supervisor to assess the outcomes of the fieldwork trip and amend or revise their completion plan accordingly.
- proactively work towards integrating back in to their normal learning environment and incorporating the data they collected into their thesis.

## Provisions

### Financial

The University will make available a fieldwork fund to assist students with the additional costs associated with fieldwork. Students may apply for support based on the actual costs of their period

of fieldwork. Other funding sources available to the student will be considered. Therefore, students without access to other sources of fieldwork funding will be given priority access to the funds.

An application to the fieldwork fund does not necessarily guarantee funding, or funding that matches the level of the request. Students must provide a rationale for the amount of support they request and provide evidence of expenditure upon their return. The University may require any portion of the funding not accounted for by the student to be returned. This will follow the same procedure as travel reimbursement requests.

### Time to degree

In most cases any periods of fieldwork will be contained within the normal period of study laid out by the [Length of Study Policy for Postgraduate Research Students](#). The University recognises, however, that in some situations a period of fieldwork may lead to a student requiring longer to complete their degree: this may for example be occasioned by the need to learn a difficult language not taught outside the fieldwork location. Extended periods of study due to fieldwork may be granted at the discretion of the Provost.

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