

# SUPPORT FOR RESEARCHERS UNDERTAKING INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

**This Policy sets out the support that the University will provide to Researchers working in Developing Countries.**

In this Policy:

“Developing Countries” means countries who are eligible to receive Official Development Assistance from the UK.

“In-country Staff” means individuals directly employed or engaged on their own account by the University to support the Researcher, such as translators, enumerators or local research assistants. It does not include staff or students of collaborating institutions or those employed by overseas companies or other organisations.

“Researchers” means employees and students of the University engaged in research activity.

“Risk” means a risk that may arise by virtue of a Researcher conducting University research activity in a Developing Country, and may include but is not limited to:

- (i) military conflict;
- (ii) natural disaster;
- (iii) environmental damage/disaster;
- (iv) extreme poverty;
- (v) civil unrest;
- (vi) political or economic instability;
- (vii) bribery and/or corruption; or
- (viii) Poor infrastructure.

The University takes seriously its responsibility to Researchers working in Developing Countries where they may be exposed to Risks. We have a number of support processes and mechanisms to minimise risk and seek to keep Researchers safe when working in areas of Risk. To make this support as effective as possible, however, Researchers need to actively engage with this Policy and security issues both during the development of research projects, and the actual conduct of the research. This document outlines some of the key issues to consider and steps to take, and provides a brief outline of the support that is in place in the case of emergencies.

## ISSUES TO CONSIDER

### **Cover under the University of Reading’s travel insurance policy**

When Researchers travel on the business of the University of Reading they are covered by its travel/emergency medical insurance. This cover includes emergency medical and travel assistance, Fast Track Money and personal property claims. More details about the University’s travel insurance policy

can be found on the [University's insurance page](#). The University insurance also covers [Public liability](#) and [Professional indemnity insurance](#). To be eligible for this cover it is mandatory that Researchers first fill out and submit a [travel form](#).

## Proposal development

When developing a project which involves Researchers from the University working in Developing Countries where they may be exposed to Risk, or which is led by the University and employs Researchers in such environments, there are certain processes which must be followed to ensure the University is able to provide appropriate support for the Researchers.

- **Risk Assessment:** All international projects in both medium and high risk areas, determined by Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO), require a bespoke risk assessment. The risk assessment form, guidance and previous risk assessment documents for reference can be found [here](#). For advice on how to complete the form, please contact your Head of School. Post docs and PhDs should contact their supervisors in the first instance to review risk assessments.
- **Mitigation Strategies:** The risk assessment form requires the inclusion of mitigation strategies for possible emergencies (e.g. potential extreme weather events or political unrest in the country). Where appropriate these should include the provision of check-in points and emergency numbers. The online resources listed at the end of this document include further sources of information that can help with developing the risk assessment and mitigation strategies and should be looked at in conjunction with information on the University's [Health and Safety](#) and [Insurance Office](#) webpages.
- **In-country Staff:** If the project involves In-country Staff contingency plans, risk assessment and ongoing security support should be considered for them if appropriate. Any financial cost for this should be costed into any proposals at the outset.
- The ultimate decision if you can travel will lie with your Head of School if the country in question is on the "all but essential travel list" or the Vice Chancellor if the country is on a "restricted travel" warning. If Researchers are going to Developing Countries where there is Risk then they must be able to make a clear business case, signed by their Head of School, that the benefits of travel justify the risks and that they understand and accept these risks, will comply with mitigation strategies and know what to do in an emergency. The first point of call therefore should always be the FCO travel advice page to check on the latest advice.
- If there is a need for any additional training then it may be possible for this to be specifically costed in your grant. Your research development manager will be able to advise on this
- The insurance office should be contacted directly with regards to all travel in medium and high risk countries, as identified by the FCO. This is to ensure that the University is able to provide the most comprehensive and appropriate policy as possible and to better understand additional cost which may be incurred at this stage.

## During a project

- To effectively support Researchers, the University needs to know that they are traveling for research purposes. To enable support in an emergency, and to ensure that Researchers are covered by the University's insurance policy, it is **mandatory** to fill out the overseas travel form before each journey: <https://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/atoz/stafftravel/>

- The initial risk assessment should be updated periodically and risk should be monitored and updated with each visit to the Developing Country or if there are any significant changes to Risks during a visit. Please inform your Head of School of any changes to Risks while you are travelling, studying or working abroad. If in doubt, you should contact your Head of School or your health and safety co-ordinator for advice.
- When arriving, leaving and travelling within Developing Countries there is a possibility that Researchers may be encounter public officials, such as at border controls or when requesting licences to carry out research, who ask you for a cash payment or other advantage (eg. gifts, hospitality, charitable donation) before they will carry out their public function. As part of the initial risk assessment, you should ascertain whether such payments are legitimate, otherwise this may be a request to make an illegal bribe. If you believe that the payment is a bribe, you will need to assess whether or not it is safe to challenge the request (eg. ask to speak to the official's supervisor, or to be shown an official tarrif document) and ultimately refuse to pay. If you are able to do so, call the emergency telephone number (see below) to seek advice. If refusal would endanger your life, make the payment and report the incident to [the Director of Legal Services] at the earliest opportunity. Researchers must also report to [the Director of Legal Services] any financial or other advantage which is offered, promised or given by In-country Staff to any third parties which the Researchers believe might amount to unlawful bribery.
- In the case of an emergency all university staff can contact the 24/7 emergency telephone number **+44 (0)1273 400 850** and will need to quote the following policy number **0015865874**
- Researchers should ensure that all vaccinations required by FCO advice are completed before departure and should check country-specific advice on Embassy websites (eg. yellow fever injections, which are required in a number of African countries)

## **Training**

- Additional training requirements should initially be discussed with Head of School. The University also runs a separate course on first-aid for field work which can be found on the [staff intranet](#).
- For some projects, Researchers may want to undertake the University's fragile environment training. The course is a five day course and should be costed into any grant proposals. For more information about the course please speak to [Katja Samuel](#).

## Online risk assessment resources

Before conducting work in a given area we advise that a risk assessment is done of not only the immediate area but also the wider geographical region. The FCO travel advice should always be the first port of call but there are a number of other on line resources which may be consulted to gain a clearer picture of the risks which the researcher may encounter.

- [FCO travel advice page](#)
- [ACLED \(Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project\) Provides update on ongoing conflict in a number of regions globally in close to real time.](#)
- [Crisis Group: The Crisis Group provides regular updates on political and security developments across a large number of countries.](#)
- [Global kidnap review provides up to date information on kidnap occurrence globally](#)
- [Institution of Occupational Safety and Health- guidelines for overseas work contains some generic advice on conducting work overseas](#)
- [University of Reading overseas travel guide.](#)
- [Details of ODA countries](#)
- [University of Reading anti-bribery and corruption policy](#)
- For information on the corruption and bribery risks Researchers might encounter in Developing Countries - [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)

VERSION	SECTION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVING AUTHORITY	APPROVAL DATE	START DATE	NEXT REVIEW
1.0		Anne-Marie van Dodeweerd	Annually	URC			