Policy on Field Research and Field Safety

Field research by graduate students consists of activities conducted for the purposes of study or research. Such activities can take students to various locations across the city, country, or world. In some cases, field research can expose participants to significant risks to their health, safety or well-being, at locations outside the direct supervisory control of the University. For example:

- Work involving isolated or remote or politically unstable locations;
- Extreme weather conditions;
- Hazardous terrain;
- Harmful wildlife;
- Lack of ready access to emergency services.

Some field research activities may not impose risk beyond those experienced in daily life, and as such, are deemed to be low risk activity. For example, collection of data in the vicinity of campus or in settings encountered on a day-to-day basis.

Academic supervisors are expected to exercise appropriate discretion in evaluating risks.

Procedures

1. Students and supervisors are required to meet prior to undertaking field research to ensure the following:
   a. All concerned parties are aware of their responsibilities for field research and adhere to the Guidelines on Safety in Field Research;
   b. A risk assessment is carried out to identify potential hazards associated with the field research and to establish appropriate controls to eliminate or minimize such hazards; and
   c. All participants have an informed understanding of the associated risks and provide their consent to assuming the risks of participation.

2. Where proposed activities expose students to significant risks as described above, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring the following documents are completed, signed and submitted to the Graduate Administrator for inclusion in the student’s official records:
   a. Field Safety Planning Record;
   b. Consent and Liability Waivers.

   Please note that these are not required for low risk activities as described above.

3. In cases where research activities take place outside of Canada, the student must also adhere to the Travel Abroad Policy and complete the Safety Abroad Office workshop and registration.

Further Information and Questions

Please visit the Environmental Health and Safety Field Research website for additional resources, including:

- Framework on Off-Campus Safety
- Guidelines on Safety in Field Research
- Field Research Safety Planning Record

Please contact the Graduate Administrator, Jessica Finlayson at finlayson@geog.utoronto.ca.

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