

Concerning Risk to Students Undertaking Field Research

Graduate Program in Social Anthropology

Policies and Procedures

A. Policy

The Graduate Program in Social Anthropology recognizes the great importance of study and research by its students in field settings in Canada and internationally (hereinafter called field research).

However, the Program also recognizes that all research involves some risk and that anthropological field research frequently involves more and different kinds of risk than some other types of research. Two dimensions of risk in field research are (1) risk to human subjects who participate in the research, and (2) risk to the field researcher himself or herself. The first dimension of risk is dealt with in Ethics Procedures concerning research with human subjects at the levels of the Program, the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and York University. The purpose of the present document is to outline procedures dealing with the second dimension of risk, namely risk to the student field researcher.

Personal risk in field research includes, but is not limited to, risk to physical health, mental health and personal safety. Risk may arise in part because of the nature of the research itself; from the climate, the political, social, economic and cultural environment of the field research location; from the race, gender, religious or cultural background of the researcher; from the travel, living and working conditions required for the field research.

It is the objective of the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology to have its students do field research in circumstances in which the student has (1) reasonably documented and assessed the risk. (2) explicitly assumed the risk; and (3) taken steps to reduce the risk that are known to exist. To that end, before providing academic approval or internally funded assistance for field work, the Program requires a student to complete the Graduate Student Research Risk Assessment Checklist (attached below).

Should a student make a judgement not to undertake field research or to interrupt his or her field research due to reasonable concern regarding the level of risk associated with the field study, he or she will not be subject to any academic penalty.

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH RISK ASSESSMENT CHECK-LIST
GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY YORK UNIVERSITY
(2008)

This check list and release form must be completed in full and signed by the student and his or her supervisor. The checklist and release form are submitted to the graduate director along with the student's research proposal and ethics approval prior to departure to the field.

Personal risk in field research includes, but is not limited to, risks to physical health, mental health and personal safety. Risk may arise in part because of the nature of the research itself or from the climate, the political, social, economic, or cultural environment of the field research location; or from race, gender, religious or cultural background of the researcher; or from the travel, living and working conditions required for the field research. This risk assessment checklist will review with you that you have taken the utmost care in limiting the degree of foreseeable risk in the research setting.

NAME: _____

Risk Assessment

1. Have you ascertained the degree of personal risk in travelling to and within the country where you will be conducting your proposed research?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, please detail (e.g. Canadian consulate's confirmation of safe or unsafe travel conditions). If No, please explain.

2. Have you ascertained if there might be personal risk incurred as a result of either your gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or national origin?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, do you consider this risk to be (please check one only):

HIGH ☐ MEDIUM ☐ LOW ☐

3. As far as you are currently aware, will conducting your research pose a risk to you as a result of the local political or economic climate?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain:

4. Is there a direct risk to your health at your field site?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain:

5. What mode of travel will you be using in the field?

6. Have you already arranged field site accommodations? If so, please describe briefly:

Please complete the following checklist:

- ☐ I have fully informed my next of kin of the risks associated with my proposed field research.
- ☐ I have provided my next of kin and the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology with a complete itinerary of my travel plans (including carrier, dates, and flight numbers, if applicable).
- ☐ I have provided the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology with the name and contact information of my next of kin.
- ☐ I have adequate health and accident insurance for the duration of my stay at my field site.
- ☐ I have attached copies of all documentation confirming receipt of all required inoculations and personal medications.
- ☐ I have signed the "Undertaking and Release" Waiver Form.

NEXT OF KIN CONTACT INFORMATION:

Name: _____
Relationship: _____
Phone number: _____
Fax number: _____
Email: _____
Mailing address: _____

\ Signature of Graduate Student: _____ Date: _____

\ Signature of Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

UNDERTAKING AND RELEASE FORM
(2008)

In consideration of being permitted to conduct field research in _____ under the auspices of the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology, York University, Toronto, Canada, I agree that I shall conduct the research in a responsible and professional manner.

I have read the *Graduate Program in Social Anthropology's Policies and Procedures Concerning Risk to Students Undertaking Field Research*, I have completed and signed the *Graduate Student Risk Assessment Checklist* and I affirm that I have conformed to the requirements set forth in those two documents. I undertake to advise the Program Office of any changes in the arrangements for my field study (address, email etc.).

I acknowledge that there may be certain dangers inherent in undertaking this research in the proposed location(s) and I agree to take the risks associated with such location(s).

I have fully informed my next of kin regarding all aspects of my proposed field study, including the nature of any anticipated risks. I authorize the University to contact my next of kin for or with information about me in my absence.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____
