Quick Guide for Risk Assessments for PGR students undertaking Data Collection – University of Essex

The Academic Supervisor needs to ensure that all PGR students who are carrying out data collection research projects which involve face to face contact with human participants, have a suitable and sufficient risk assessment in place. The PGR student is responsible for following the safe working practices defined in the risk assessment. There is an additional requirement that risk assessments addressing the COVID-19 risk must also have authorisation by the Head of Department.

The Graduate Director will need to give final approval for each project before the research can commence.

**Step One** – A risk assessment must be carried out for the project, taking into account the additional risk from COVID-19. The process involves:

- Identifying risks for COVID-19 virus transmission
- Considering and implementing control measures
- Applying a risk judgement after control measures have been implemented.

**Departmental/Section Risk assessment of COVID-19 transmission risks** identifies the premises risks within your department or section and this must be shared with everyone in the department or section. A [Training webinar](#) covering this step is available for further support.

The PGR research project will require a separate assessment of the Covid-19 transmission risks for activities which are not covered by the Department/Section Risk Assessment. Refer to [Guidance for risk assessment of PhD student projects with face to face contact](#).
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Step Two – Use the Departmental/Section Risk Assessment and the Project Risk Assessment to identify environmental risks in the location and control measures. Every PGR student must have a Work (Research) Activity Risk Grid completed by their Academic Supervisor.

The control measures should be documented within the Work (Research) Activity Risk Grid. Guidance and a Training Webinar covering this step are available for further support.

Step Three - Once the Work (Research) Activity Risk Grid is completed by the Academic Supervisor they should then share this with the PGR student and ask them to complete the Individual Health Risk Assessment on the next page of this form. At this point you should discuss the research activity with the student explaining the process being undertaken¹.

Step Four - The student then needs to complete the Individual Health Risk Assessment, indicating if they fall into the Red, Amber Yellow or Green category only. This is done by circling or highlighting the words YES or NO. Guidance and a Training Webinar covering this step are available for further support.

The student is not required to give details to the academic supervisor of why they have ticked a specific category or give any detail on what their health issues are.

Step Five - The student needs to send this back to their academic supervisor for them to decide if they need a referral to Occupational Health.

When reviewing the Individual Health Risk Assessment and Work (Research) Activity Risk Grid these are the likely actions to be taken:

- Students in Red and Amber categories will require a referral to Occupational Health. The only exception to this is if the person is between 60-70 (Red

¹. The processing of the data is the responsibility of the Academic Supervisor and the student is responsible for the completion of the Work Activity Risk Grid.
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Category), but has no health concerns or other risk factors identified on the form then it will not be necessary for the manager to refer them

- Students in the Yellow category enables the individual or manager to decide (following discussion with the individual) if they wish to pursue a referral with Occupational Health. You can also contact Occupational Health for advice on whether a referral is required
- Students in the Green Category do not need to be referred

A Training Webinar covering this step is available for further support.

Step Six – If a referral is required, the academic supervisor must complete a COVID-19 referral form and send this to Occupational Health, attaching both the completed Work (Research) Activity Risk Grid, Individual Health Risk Assessment and Overall Outcome to Occupational Health.

Occupational Health will email the member of staff a supplementary health questionnaire asking for more detailed health information. This is to be returned and remains confidential to Occupational Health.

Step Seven - Occupational Health will make contact with the student to undertake an assessment if necessary and inform them of the outcome that will be sent to their academic supervisor.

The outcome report that goes back to the Academic Supervisor and Head of Department only indicates which risk area the student is in and if additional control measures are recommended.
It is recommended that academic supervisors have a return to campus conversation with the student to discuss the following topics:

- How their psychological wellbeing has been during this pandemic
- Do they have any concerns practically for example travel to work, childcare or care commitments or specific to the workplace/study space?
- Explore their ideas on practical strategies or workplace measures that could address any concerns raised
- Their expectations on the likely adequacy of COVID-19 work-related control measures and workplace safety