

## **NATURAL HAZARDS FOR INSURERS**

### **GEOLGH03 INDEPENDENT PROJECT 2010**

The aim of the independent project is to undertake a desk study of an issue or problem in natural hazard or risk science. It is not necessary for the study to involve original research, but it is essential that it incorporates an element of critical evaluation of the chosen theme, whether this be a particular data-set, model, problem, or hypothesis. Straightforward description or summarisation will not be acceptable.

#### **Project scope**

Any issue or problem in the fields of natural hazard or risk science research is acceptable. Ideally, the chosen theme would be one of interest to your company, although this is by no means essential. As projects will be marked by an external examiner, copies lodged at UCL, and the results presented to an audience, it is probably best if the focus of the study is not confidential.

#### **Choosing a project topic**

Topics should be chosen in the light of discussions with one of the course tutors and a one-page abstract submitted to Bill McGuire to be signed off. Ideally this should happen as soon as possible after the end of April.

#### **Important dates**

The project report must be submitted by **Monday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>**. Oral presentation of the results are planned to take place around one week later at the Aon Benfield offices at 55 Bishopsgate. You will receive your results after the final Examination Board, which is normally scheduled for the second half of August.

#### **Help and support**

Each participant will be allocated a tutor on the basis of the project topic, who will be able to advise during the course of the study. A number of evening surgery dates may also be allotted, which you may attend if you wish to discuss more general issues related to the projects.

#### **Report structure and format**

The report should be A4 size, word-processed, and not longer than 10,000 words (about 30 pages of double-spaced text) It may, and indeed should, be illustrated with photographs and figures as appropriate. Two copies of the report should be submitted UNBOUND. We will bind the reports and add a standard NHFI cover. Please ensure that the text is double spaced, that pages are numbered, and that the left-hand margin is 4cm.

It is recommended that the report be structured along the following lines, although this may not be absolutely appropriate to all topics. Consult your tutor if in doubt.

- ❖ **Title page.** This should include the title of the study and your name. It should also include the following statement: 'a report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of postgraduate certificate in Natural Hazards for Insurers at University College London'
- ❖ **Abstract.** This should be a maximum of 1 page in length and should summarise the results of your study in succinct terms. The reader should be able to determine the gist of the report by reading the abstract alone. Write the abstract **last**, after the rest of the report has been completed.
- ❖ **Acknowledgments.** Self-explanatory.
- ❖ **Content list.** Self-explanatory. You may also provide a separate list of figures if you wish.
- ❖ **Introduction.** This should address the aim(s) and objective(s) of the study, and the rationale underpinning your choice. As such it should set the scene for what is to follow in later chapters
- ❖ **Previous work.** This will focus on research already undertaken on the problem or issue you are addressing, and should incorporate the findings of published works (books, articles, reports, scientific papers etc) relevant to the study. This will provide the background against which you will develop your ideas and interpretations.
- ❖ **Data chapter.** This will form the core of the study. Here you will dissect and analyse the problem or issue you are addressing. If you are using a data-set, this is where you will present the results of its evaluation or manipulation. If your chosen topic is more ideas/issues-centred, this is where you will describe these in detail.
- ❖ **Interpretation and discussion chapter.** Whether you are analysing or manipulating data or critically evaluating ideas or models, your interpretation should be kept separate from the data chapter. This is a critical element of the report as it will (or should) reveal the reasoning behind your evaluation and the thinking underpinning your conclusions. Note: you may wish to keep interpretation separate and incorporate discussion into the conclusions chapter. This is equally acceptable.
- ❖ **Conclusions.** Here you will summarise the conclusions of the study. This does not have to be a long chapter and often short, bullet pointed conclusions are far more worthy than several pages of waffle. It might also

be useful here, to draw attention to possible future directions of research that might logically follow on from your work.

- ❖ **Bibliography.** This should include full details of every book, report, article, or paper mentioned in the report. See below for format.

### **Some hints to ensure a well-presented and readable report**

- Ask someone to read the final draft to ensure that it is readable and to check for mistakes that you might have missed.
- Number the pages.
- Ensure that all figures have a number, key, a title, an explanation and an indication of their source.
- Make certain that all figures are referred to in the text and ensure that the figure follows its mention in the text or at least appears on the same page.
- Make certain that all references in the text are contained within the bibliography.
- An appropriate header and/or footer often improves the appearance of the report.

### **Bibliography and references**

In the body of the text, information sources should be referenced in the following manner:

'Sadler & Grattan (1999) address questions arising about the cause, scale and patterns of post-eruption cooling.....'

*and*

'It has been suggested that large volcanic eruptions might be capable of triggering El Ninos (Handler 1986, Hirono, 1988).

In the **bibliography**, information sources should be referenced in the following format:

Robock, A. 2000 Volcanic eruptions and climate. *Reviews in Geophysics* **38**, 191-219.

Lamb, H. H. 1988 *Weather, climate and human affairs*. Routledge, London. 218pp.

Jones, P. D. and Kelly, P. M. 1996 The effect of tropical explosive eruptions on surface air temperatures. In: Fiocchi, G., Fu'a, D. and Visconti, G. (eds). *The*

*NHFI Independent Project*

*Pinatubo eruption: effects on the atmosphere and climate.* NATO ASI Series **42**, 95-112. Springer-Verlag, Berlin and Heidelberg.

*Bill McGuire*

*Updated March 2010*