24 FIELDFORK

All fieldwork, whether for teaching, research, contract, or consultancy, is covered by the Health & Safety at Work, etc., Act 1974 and all relevant regulations made under the Act. Risk assessment is central to UK Health & Safety legislation and risk assessment of fieldwork is no exception.

The Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and the Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA) definition of fieldwork is:

“Any work carried out by staff or students for the purposes of teaching, research or other activities while representing the institution off-site”

This definition also includes activities considered as low risk such as attendance at conferences, as well as the traditionally recognised fieldwork such as survey/collection work.

24.1 Risk Assessment

All official fieldwork is subject to the risk assessment procedure.

A risk assessment form must be completed by the individual or individuals carrying out the work, or by the group leader for escorted parties.

The risk assessment forms and Guidance Notes to accompany the form may be downloaded from:

https://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/internal/safety/Linksforms.html

Please follow the link to the WORD version which can be filled in electronically.

Risk Assessments may be counter signed by the Head of School.

All fieldwork risk assessment forms MUST be lodged with the School Health & Safety Manager (preferably in electronic form) prior to departure.

24.2 Travel Insurance

Insurance for overseas travel, including field excursions, is available through the University Insurance Office. Please contact them directly at Charles Stewart House 9-16 Chambers Street Edinburgh EH1 1HT E-mail: insurance@ed.ac.uk Telephone:0131 650 9154 Fax Number: 0131 650 9052. The insurance application can also be completed using the online form:

http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/finance/about/sections/insurance/online-forms

The cost of the insurance must be met by the School, or research grant etc.

For travel and fieldwork in Britain, Personal Accident Insurance can also be arranged if required through the Insurance Office. The cost is per person per week and is chargeable to cost centres or grants.

24.3 Liability

Staff and students undertaking any official field work, in the UK or overseas, are protected by the University’s Employers’ and Public Liability Insurance just as when working in an office or laboratory in School buildings.
The policy provides cover in the event of a civil claim being made against the University following negligence on the part of the University, or on the part of one or more of its employees.

In the event of a claim being brought against an employee, rather than against the University as a corporate body, the Insurers would, at the request of the University, indemnify the employee as though he/she were the insured.

**Public Liability** - deals with the University's legal liability for death or injury to third parties and loss or damage to third party property.

**Employers' Liability** - provides indemnity against the University's legal liability in respect of injury, death, disease, or illness of an employee.

Thus, staff and students organising, leading, supervising, or demonstrating, on field excursions, or undertaking fieldwork for research purposes, will be protected from civil claims for negligence by a third party, provided that they in turn have taken steps to protect the University from such actions both during the excursion and by suitable preparation prior to departure.

For field trips the requirements would, for example, include:

- All required risk assessments **MUST** be completed and communicated (if relevant) to all participants before departure.
- All necessary third-party permissions must be sought in advance for visits and activities.
- Carrying out and recording legally required inspections of equipment and safety items.
- Undertaking specified training courses.

There is no insurance against criminal prosecution for management or operational failures leading to a serious accident.

**24.4 FIELDWORK SAFETY**

**24.4.1 Safety Rules Applicable to ALL Field Work**

All members of the party **MUST** read the safety information and instructions provided before the trip departs.

**ALL** members of the party **MUST** cooperate fully with **ALL** safety instructions given by the field trip leader and supervising demonstrators.

**24.4.2 Personal clothing and safety equipment**

All students are responsible for providing their own personal protective clothing and personal safety items for field work.

Group leaders or supervisors may refuse to allow an inappropriately or inadequately clad person to take part in a field excursion.

**NOTE:** For many School trips clothing of denim fabric and 'fashion' trainers are not suitable.
24.5 Use of Hammers

Safety goggles to the required British Standard MUST ALWAYS be worn when hammering rocks.

ALWAYS CLEAR the area before hammering so others will not be injured by flying debris.

NEVER strike one hammer with another.

School ‘Rules’ for using hammers apply to ALL fieldwork: undergraduate field trips, research fieldwork, and to contract or consultancy fieldwork.

DO NOT use hammers on undergraduate field trips unless permission has been given by the fieldtrip leader.

24.6 Published guidance for Group Leaders and Supervisors

Group leaders and supervisors should be familiar with the information and advice contained in the following publications:


These publications form the core of our current Health & Safety Policy on Fieldwork. It should be read by all staff responsible for leading, supervising, or undertaking fieldwork of any kind.

Please note that academic supervisors and other fieldwork organisers are responsible to the Head of School for ensuring that adequate safety arrangements exist and are observed by all participants.

It is the intention of the School that all overseas fieldwork should also comply (so far as is practicable) with the USHA Guidance.

The USHA Guidance employs some useful definitions of direct and indirect supervision, individual placement (i.e. unaccompanied participants), and personal and down time. It also provides guidance on insurance, the contractual arrangements between provider and participants, and the implications of using third party providers (e.g. contracted services) and in-country representatives.

The central tenets of the USHA Guidance are:

- Collecting appropriate information in advance of the trip
- Allocating roles and responsibilities
- Assessing the threats and analysing the risks
- Incident and emergency planning
- Contingency planning

24.7 FIELD LOCATIONS with SEMI-PERMANENT FACILITIES and EQUIPMENT

Research facilities and equipment which are located away from the University campus on a semi-permanent basis (e.g. scaffold towers for forest canopy access, research aircraft) must have a ‘Responsible Person’ who manages the health and safety requirements in the same way as these aspects are managed for facilities and equipment located in University buildings.
An exception may be where equipment is located in an existing facility of another organisation where safety issues are managed by a representative of that organisation. In this case, a person must be nominated to liaise with the host facility representative on matters affecting health and safety.

24.7.1 Typical Safety Responsibilities of a Site Manager or ‘Responsible Person’

This list is not exhaustive and will vary with the fieldwork facility and equipment involved. In every case, the Health & Safety Manager should be consulted about the Regulations which apply and safety procedures which should be followed.

- Ensure all relevant permissions are obtained for the installations and work.
- Carry out appropriate risk assessments for the site and ensure appropriate risk assessments are completed for work to be carried out and any other visits made.
- Authorise access to those who are competent by virtue of training and experience.
- Ensure competency of users through appropriate safety instruction, or approving a system whereby this is achieved.
- Specify any additional training as appropriate.
- Circulate information about the site and/or equipment to all authorised users and update as appropriate.
- Manage lone working and agree tasks which may NOT be carried out alone.
- Ensure routine inspections, required by the relevant regulations, are undertaken and recorded according to on-site check lists.
- Specify safety equipment and ensure it is available on site in suitable storage facilities.
- Carry out formal inspections of safety equipment in line with regulations and manufacturers’ recommendations, or make arrangements for this.
- Arrange for replenishment of any first aid supplies, eyewash facilities, and disposable personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Maintain documentation on site: safety file on site containing a risk assessment for the site, details of approved safety equipment, formal inspection results, contact details for emergency services.
- Maintain documentation at base: list of authorised workers, copies of formal inspection reports and records of actions taken.
- Maintain contact with the School Health & Safety Manager and, if appropriate, the representative of any other organisation who might have responsibility for safety issues at the site.
- Make or oversee arrangements for dismantling, removing, and storage of structures and equipment, when all projects are completed. Decommissioning must include archiving relevant paperwork.
24.8 FIELDWORK FIRST AID

All teaching and research staff who supervise undergraduate field excursions (other than to urban environments in developed countries) must ensure that there is an adequate number of first aiders holding the fieldwork first aid qualification on the trip.

All undergraduate student parties must be accompanied by an appropriate number of qualified first aiders.

‘Appropriate number’ depends on the risk assessment. Consider the size of the party, number of sub-groups, the location of sub-groups with respect to each other, communications issues, the level of risk due to location, etc.

24.8.1 First Aid Courses

**Authorised First Aiders:** 3-day basic course ‘First Aid at Work’ (examinable) provided by the University Health & Safety Department and available to staff (but not students) free of charge. The same certificate may be obtained by taking courses provided by other organisations. Non-specialised ‘Appointed Person’ Courses are available from other organisations (e.g. St John’s Ambulance).

**Fieldwork First Aid:** 2-day course ‘Fieldwork and Outdoor Activities First Aid’ held in the School twice a year. Student demonstrators and those students working in remote areas are also encouraged to attend this course.

**Expedition First Aid (Advanced):** 2-day course held in the School about once a year (depending on demand and funding). For research staff and students who work in remote environments where assistance or medical treatment may be hours or days away. The Fieldwork First Aid course is a pre-requisite for this course.

All first aid certificates are valid for three years and must be renewed **BEFORE** expiry.

24.8.2 First Aid Kits

At least one Field First Aid kit should be taken on all undergraduate field trips and as many other kits as are considered necessary for the mode of working, and the number of qualified supervisory staff and demonstrators.

Field first aid kits may be obtained from:

- The Health & Safety Manager, Grant Institute, Room 141, Tel: 50 4906
- Graham Walker, Crew Building, Room 310, Tel: 50 5982
- Anthony Newton, Geography, Room 3.15, Tel: 50 2546

Small soft-packed basic first aid kits are available on loan for post graduate student fieldwork and undergraduate project work, and to any member of staff. Please contact the Health & Safety Manager in the Grant Institute, Room 141, Tel: 50 4906 if you would like to borrow a kit.