

Aberystwyth University. Safety Management. Standard Practice Instruction	Safety in Fieldwork	Ref: S 008 Issue: 1.2 Page: 1 of 7 Date Issued: 1 st August, 2007
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1.0 Purpose

To provide guidance on the safety requirements to be incorporated into departmental procedures for the management of fieldwork that is undertaken as part of AU courses of study and/or research.

Note, that while most departments will need to ensure these procedures are in place, it is envisaged that they will be grouped into one of two sets: compact basic rules for those departments that organise low risk study visits (such as to museums and theatres in the UK) and wide-ranging procedures for those departments that engage in higher risk activities and/or visits to higher risk locations (natural or man-made).

2.0 Scope

2.1 All fieldwork (teaching and research) organised by the University with the exception of activities not required as part of a course of study (such as the Year in Employment scheme) which should have their own specific safety arrangements.

2.2 'Fieldwork' in this context includes:

- experimental and technical sampling or surveying work undertaken in a variety of situations, such as seashore; mountains; farmland; cities etc.,
- study visits to places external to AU facilities for the purposes of observation (including painting and sculpture) such as the countryside; art galleries; theatres etc.,
- participation in organised activities away from AU facilities such as team-building; outward-bound courses; student conferences etc.

2.3 Members of staff and postgraduate students undertaking or supervising fieldwork should be aware that even though they will be remote from AU premises, it is still a 'place of work' as defined in health and safety legislation, and so all relevant safety rules and regulations apply, as will AU rules regarding conduct of individuals.

3.0 Responsibility

3.1 Heads of Departments, to ensure procedures are carried out. The HoD can appoint one or more departmental fieldwork managers to assist in this duty.

3.2 Course supervisors, module coordinators, research supervisors and fieldwork managers (where appointed). To undertake risk assessments, devise and implement control measures and communicate these to all concerned.

3.3 Departmental Safety Committee. To monitor and review fieldwork risk assessments and associated safety arrangements.

4.0 Practice

4.1 Establish and maintain specific departmental procedures for safety in fieldwork based on this guidance.

4.2 Identify all departmental fieldwork activities (as defined in 2.2). Similar activities can be grouped together and a generic approach for each group adopted, with the proviso that the responsible member of staff must identify and make suitable adjustments for any unique

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elements (such as the participation of a student with special needs - guidance can be obtained from the Disabilities Officer in this case).

- 4.3 Conduct suitable and sufficient risk assessments of all fieldwork activities identified in 4.2. Checklists to assist in the risk assessment process are given in section 6. The layout of the documented risk assessment is not prescribed, but guidance is available via:
http://www.aber.ac.uk/safety-environment/handbook/proc_and_pracs/index.shtml

The wide range of types of fieldwork conducted by AU departments will result in the development of a variety of specific safety arrangements. However, there are certain elements that must be observed by all:

4.3.1 Medical Conditions.

Students may have a medical condition that affects their ability to undertake fieldwork safely. In most cases suitable arrangements can be made to allow the student to participate, but sometimes alternative coursework will need to be organised. To allow adjustments to be made it is recommended that medical questionnaires be issued as part of the registration process at the start of each academic session to those students known to be taking courses that include fieldwork. The completed questionnaires should be analysed and relevant information distributed to the appropriate members of academic staff early in the session to allow for arrangements to be made. (Note: section 31. – (1) of the Data Protection Act (1998) allows personal information to be accessed by those responsible “for securing the health, safety and welfare of persons at work.”)

Supervisory staff and research workers should also declare any relevant medical conditions for incorporation into their risk assessments.

Types of medical issues encountered at AU range from the obvious, such as a physical disability and fieldwork on rough terrain; to the hidden, such as a life-threatening allergy coupled with fieldwork in a remote environment containing the allergen; or a diabetic student with insufficient food supplies travelling on a coach, as part of a AU visit to a theatre performance, becoming stranded in a motorway traffic jam.

4.3.2 First Aid.

As a minimum, all relevant staff are advised to attend the in-house one-day AU course on first aid. Expeditions which call for more advanced knowledge of first aid, for example in wintry conditions or in remote areas/countries may indicate a requirement for more advanced training and experience, which clearly cannot be set up without a great deal of advance planning.

4.3.3 Supervision

Due to the diverse nature of fieldwork, the various existing codes of practice do not make hard and fast rules about staff/student ratios required. However, it should be noted that it is considered to be reasonable to have a ratio of not less than 1:10 for the type of fieldwork involving inexperienced students in low risk situations, with a minimum of two experienced staff members present. Parties of greater than 15 inexperienced people may be difficult to manage in rugged country but where possible, minimum size sub-groups are expected to be four (one to stay with casualty, assuming only one casualty, and two to go for help).

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Fieldwork of low risk (such as theatre visits) can have much smaller staff/student ratios, but there should always be a minimum of two supervisors to a group.

Some research activities may involve lone working. Such instances should be minimised, and safety measures subject to particular scrutiny by those responsible.

4.3.4 Transport

There are various legal requirements for the carriage of people in vehicles that need to be observed. Furthermore, the transport of hazardous materials is strictly controlled, so any fieldwork involving such materials will need to take due account of the regulations.

From the safety viewpoint, it is considered unreasonable to expect a member of staff who has spent the day teaching and supervising in the field, to then drive for extended periods. Therefore, provision must be made to have the services of driver/s not engaged in the fieldwork activities - for example by chartering minibuses from an external supplier (that has been checked for current licence and insurance).

4.3.5 Notification

Arrangements must be made to lodge the itinerary and a list of names of those participating in the fieldtrip with a suitable person / office in the department. These arrangements should be incorporated into the departmental procedures. The details of who is responsible for the control of the information and where it is lodged should be communicated to Student Support Services and the Health, Safety & Environment Office.

The notification procedure must be followed for all fieldtrips, be they to remote countryside locations or to city centre theatres or art galleries.

Arrangements must be made to inform AU (senior manager/s; Health, Safety & Environment Office; Student Support Services – when students are involved in the fieldwork) promptly of any serious incidents or accidents that occur in the field (and before any reports appear in the media).

4.3.6 Training

Suitable training should be arranged for individuals as identified in the risk assessments. Note: the giving of information alone does not equate to training. For instance, reading a book on scuba diving does not enable someone to dive safely in the open ocean. Similarly, map and compass work should be practised in a safe environment prior to visiting remote places.

4.3.7 Incident Reporting

All incidents involving injury, also any serious near misses, should be reported using the AU incident reporting procedure.

4.3.8 Third-Party Organisations

Reasonable investigation of third-parties used for fieldtrips (such as Outward-Bound type organisations) should be made regarding their safety arrangements and record.

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- 4.4 AU insurance arrangements must be implemented. Checks should be made with the Finance Office for current requirements and the need for any specialist cover to be arranged.
- 4.5 All members of staff responsible for fieldwork in environments of enhanced risk should read and follow the UCEA Guidance on Safety in Fieldwork, and where relevant, the UCEA Health and Safety Guidance when Working Overseas. Those involved in compiling fieldwork risk assessments are also advised to refer to these documents.
- 4.6 The outcomes of the risk assessments and associated control measures must be communicated to all those concerned.
- 4.7 Risk assessments should be reviewed on an annual basis (or when a substantive change occurs, such as involvement of new personnel or detrimental changes in the political situation of the state being visited) and adjustments made as necessary.

5.0 References

UCEA (2005). Guidance on Safety in Fieldwork.

http://www.aber.ac.uk/safety-environment/docs/protected/ucea_fieldwork.pdf

UCEA (1998). Health and Safety Guidance when Working Overseas (Universities and Colleges Employers Association).

AU. Incident reporting procedures (S002 and S002F)

Data Protection Act (1998) HMSO

6.0 Appendix - Risk Assessment Checklists

Notes on the checklists:

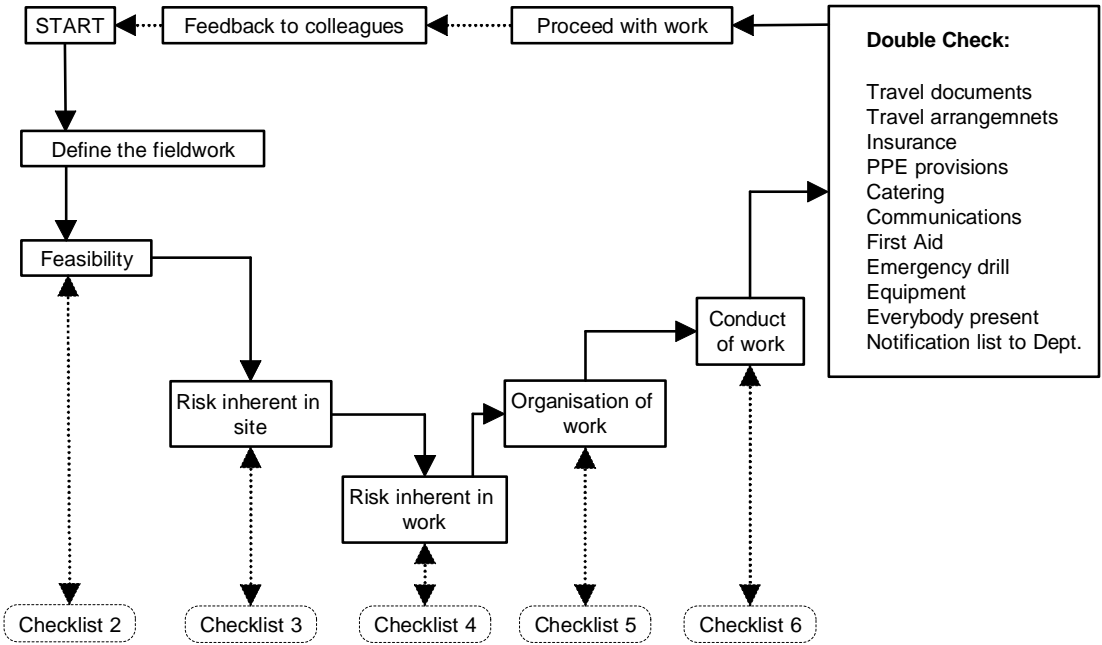
The checklists supplied are meant as an aid to planning rather than a means to planning. Because of the diversity of fieldwork, the hazards and risks will show great variation and it is for those leading, or otherwise responsible for the fieldwork, to make appropriate plans and risk assessments.

As with any form of risk assessment, there is a need for a careful and systematic approach and it is useful to talk through the assessment with a colleague who has some knowledge of the work to be undertaken and the conditions that are likely to be encountered. While there is no requirement to attempt to quantify the risk assessment, a semi-quantitative approach to the assessment does allow a more systematic approach to reducing risk scores.

The checklists can never be fully comprehensive, but checklist 1 gives a general flow chart to take the assessor through the basic planning stages, while the subsequent lists are directed to more specific items of the work.

The lists overlap, and although this is an inevitable part of the planning process, it may prove useful to rewrite and extend the checklists to meet specific requirements and to act as a more specific aid to memory.

Checklist 1



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Checklist 2 - Feasibility of Project

Access	Travel Arrangements Permission to work on site Provision for disabled Availability of assistance Accommodation Insurance
Fitness	Pre-expedition training
Training	Navigation First-aid Languages Interpersonal skills Hygiene/health education Specific skills - e.g. diving, chain saws, use of ropes
Health	Health questionnaire Medical/dental check-up Vaccination (especially tetanus) First-aid kit(s) Sterile packs
Staffing	Staff to student ratios Deputising arrangements Competence of all leaders

Checklist 3 - Risks inherent in the Site

Physical Hazards	Extreme weather Mountains and cliffs Glaciers, crevasses, ice falls etc Caves, mines and quarries Forests (including fire hazards) Freshwater Sea and seashore (tides, currents etc) Marshes and quicksand Roadside
Biological Hazards	Venomous, lively or aggressive animals Plants Pathogenic micro-organisms (tetanus, leptospirosis etc)
Chemical Hazards	Agrochemicals and pesticides Dusts (COSHH assessment) Chemicals on site (COSHH assessments)
Man Made Hazards	Machinery and vehicles Power lines and pipelines Electrical equipment Insecure buildings Slurry and silage pits Attack on the person or property Military activity
Hazards to Environment	Pollution Disturbance of ecosystems Waste minimisation

Checklist 4 - Risks Inherent in Work

Training	Navigation e.g. map and compass work Survival/rescue First-aid Specialist training e.g. Chainsaw Conduct on boats Defensive/advanced driving Diving Electric fishing Firearms Ladders and scaffolding Tree climbing Using machinery/vehicles
Chemical Hazards	COSHH assessments for the work on site
Biological Hazards	COSHH assessments for the work on site Animals Plants
Personal Safety	Risk of attack Routine communication Communication in emergency

Checklist 5 - Organisation of the Fieldwork

Pre-planning	Travel documents Next of kin and G P noted Medical problems noted Appropriate authorities informed (Police, Mountain Rescue, Coast Guard etc)
Catering	Provision of food Hygiene Potable water Food preparation and storage Fuel for cooking
The Group	Leader (experience, qualifications competence) Chain of Command (deputies etc) Staff to student ratios Personal intragroup relationships Size of working groups (max, min) Responsibilities for different aspects of work Accommodation
The Individual	Lone working avoided? Adequate clothing? PPE provided? Individual trained and fit?
Equipment	Fit for purpose? Used properly? Well maintained? Repairable on site? Need to duplicate?

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Checklist 6 - Conduct of Fieldwork

Local Conditions

Weather forecast
 Local knowledge/rules
 Farming practices
 Itinerary and return times
 Appropriate permission sought

Transport

Appropriately licensed driver(s)
 Correctly maintained
 Correctly loaded
 Appropriate spares
 Seat belts
 Fuel
 Maps and navigational aids
 Hazardous materials
 allowed?
 warning symbols on vehicle?

The Group

Present and correct? (roll calls)
 Correctly equipped (PPE etc)
 Not overloaded
 First-aid kit(s) and emergency equipment
 Survival aids
 Group size and supervision

Working Practices

Lone working avoided?
 Communication systems
 "Buddy" system or lookouts
 Provision of shelter
 Safety lines, nets, harnesses, boats etc
 Safe working systems
 Permit to work (confined spaces etc)
 Workers trained and fit?
 Limitation of time spent working

Emergencies

Communication
 Protection of remaining party
 Evacuation
 Recovery of casualties
 Chain of command