

4.13F UNE Code of Practice for the Conduct of Fieldwork

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Related policies or other documents:

- 4.01 WHS Policy
- 4.13 Fieldwork Policy
- 4.13a Fieldwork Planning Checklist
- 4.13b General Fieldwork Risk
- 4.13c Fieldwork Trip Form
- 4.13d Fieldwork Participation Declaration
- 4.13e Fieldwork Persons in Control
- 4.18 Children in the Workplace
- Travel booking tool*
- Requisition for use of a UNE Motor Vehicle*

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Field activities out of doors and in rural and remote locations form an essential part of the academic (teaching, research and outreach) activities of many disciplines at the University of New England. Fieldwork out of doors entails different considerations and risks from activities indoors during normal campus, intensive school and academic work.
- 1.2** This Code of Practice sets out guidelines and requirements to be followed by members of the University community in the planning, conduct and evaluation of fieldwork.

2. Scope

- 2.1** This Code of Practice applies to all staff, students and volunteers of the University of New England undertaking approved fieldwork out of doors in Australia.
- 2.2** The Code outlines necessary steps for safe management of fieldwork out of doors. It requires members of the University community to work with UNE's framework for identification of hazards, assessment of risks and determination of risk control strategies so that everyone involved with fieldwork out of doors is pro-active about safety.

3. Definitions

- 3.1** FIELDTRIP LEADER is the person who is in charge of and participates in the fieldwork. In some instances, this person is the same as the Fieldwork Person in Control.

- 3.2** FIELDWORK is defined under the UNE policy 4.13 as any off-campus activity for purposes of teaching, research or other educational pursuit (including relevant community service) under the control of the University. Indicative examples include the systematic collection of information, data or specific source material, practical and demonstration activities. N.B. Practicum supervision and workplace-based training are not considered fieldwork, since the staff members involved are subject to the safety management systems applying in those workplaces.
- 3.3** FIELDWORK PERSON IN CONTROL is the University staff member who plans and organises the fieldwork, and supervises the Fieldtrip Leader.
- 3.4** FIELDWORK PLAN lists the fieldwork to be carried out, description, proposed itinerary, where, by whom, participants, start date, finish date, hazard identification, risk assessment and risk controls.
- 3.5** HAZARD is the potential for something to cause injury or harm.
- 3.6** REMOTE AREA means a place that is isolated from assistance that might be rendered by people other than fieldtrip participants because of the time, location or nature of the work.
- 3.7** RISK is the likelihood that a hazard will cause injury or harm.
- 3.8** RISK ASSESSMENT is a structured process designed to assess the hazards that may be present or occur during a particular fieldtrip, the likelihood of them causing injury or harm and the likely consequences.
- 3.9** RISK CONTROL is the implementation of strategies to minimise hazards and reduce the level of risk.
- 3.10** VOLUNTEER is a 'pre-recognised' person willing to participate in the fieldwork activities, offering their time and services for no financial remuneration. They are obliged to follow any directions issued by the Fieldtrip Leader in the same way as University staff and students.

4. Legal Responsibilities

- 4.1** The University must exercise a duty of care under relevant WHS legislation. All staff involved in the conduct of field activities should be familiar with the University's 4.01 Work Health & Safety Policy, in particular, the responsibilities of Heads of Cost Centres, Managers/Supervisors, Staff, Students, and Visitors and Others. A summary of the important responsibilities relevant to field activities is provided below.

4.A Head of Cost Centre

- 4.2** It is the responsibility of the Head of Cost Centre to ensure that satisfactory provisions for safety and health are made for field activities approved by their unit. Heads of Cost Centres must institute a system for assessment, approval and review of all field

activities in their unit and ensure that occupational safety and health issues are reported and resolved. The Head may delegate this duty to the Fieldwork Person in Control but responsibility for ensuring satisfactory provisions for fieldwork safety and health is not delegable. The Head must be satisfied that the Fieldwork Person in Control and the Fieldtrip Leader are competent.

- 4.3** It is a responsibility of the Head to ensure that all fieldwork participants are adequately trained as well as being adequately informed. The distinction between information and training is significant and should not be underestimated.

4.B Fieldwork Person in Control

4.4 The Fieldwork Person in Control must:

- Ensure that the risks associated with fieldwork are managed effectively. To do this they must:
 - determine the possible hazards that may be encountered during the activity;
 - assess the risks associated with the possible hazards;
 - Incorporate strategies to minimise the risks to safety and health.
- ensure that the responsibilities for safety and health are communicated to all participants, and
- Provide appropriate information, instruction and training to all participants, well ahead of time as necessary.

4.5 UNE provides a 4.13a Fieldwork Planning Checklist for hazard identification and 4.13b General Fieldwork Risk Assessment form to assist the Fieldwork Person in Control to identify hazards, assess risks and incorporate strategies to minimise risks to safety and health.

4.6 The Fieldwork Person in Control can delegate the supervision or training of fieldwork participants to a suitably qualified or experienced person, as appropriate for the task. The Fieldwork Person in Control is, however, responsible for ensuring that each participant has received appropriate instruction and training and has gained sufficient competence to undertake the task.

4.C Fieldtrip Leader

4.7 The Fieldtrip Leader has a particular responsibility for safeguarding the safety and health of all staff, undergraduate, honours and postgraduate students in their charge, as well as any volunteers who may be assisting.

4.8 Fieldtrip Leaders must:

- ensure that safe work procedures are developed and used at all times;
- arrange for participants to be instructed in safe and healthy working procedures;
- ensure that participants are warned about hazards, and how to avoid, eliminate or minimise them, and
- ensure that participants under their control use safety equipment provided in the correct manner.

4.D Postgraduate/Honours Student Researchers

4.9 In a fieldwork situation where a postgraduate or honours research student is in charge of the fieldwork (i.e. is the Fieldtrip Leader), it is part of the duty of care of their research supervisor (i.e. the Fieldwork Person in Control) to instruct the student (i.e. the Fieldtrip Leader) in their responsibilities and to ensure that a General Fieldwork Risk Assessment and associated documents have been submitted, approved and are adhered to.

4.E Individuals (Staff, Students, Volunteers)

4.10 Each staff member, student and volunteer has a moral and legal responsibility for ensuring that his or her work environment is conducive to good safety and health by:

- undertaking relevant safety and health training;
- reading any notices relating to the field activity, attending any briefing sessions and returning any forms to the Fieldwork Person in Control or Fieldtrip Leader, including a 4.13d Fieldwork Participant Declaration;
- taking action to eliminate, minimise, avoid or report hazards of which they are aware;
- complying with all occupational safety and health instructions;
- making proper use of all safety devices and personal protective equipment;
- not placing at risk the safety and health of themselves or any other person, and
- maintaining dress standards appropriate for the work undertaken.

4.11 Volunteers must fill out a Form 4.52a Volunteer Acknowledgement Form to record the details of approved volunteers and verify they understand their and the University's liability with regard to their involvement in fieldwork activities.

4.F Medical Conditions Affecting Fieldwork Participation

4.12 All participants involved in fieldwork must be mentally and physically fit for the tasks required. They must accept appropriate medical advice where relevant and disclose to the Fieldwork Person in Control/Fieldtrip Leader or Head of Cost Centre any limitation imposed by their health that may affect their ability or other participants' ability to undertake the proposed fieldwork activities safely. This obligation applies both before and during fieldwork. Information provided must be treated as confidential information, unless non-disclosure creates a risk to other participants. Examples of limitations that should be disclosed include heart, respiratory or psychiatric disorders or allergic reactions that might be triggered by walking through the bush or an outdoor location.

4.G Students and Staff with Disabilities

4.13 The University of New England is committed to being fair, equitable and sensitive to the diverse needs of its staff and students in all its policies and practices and to supporting access by disadvantaged groups with due regard and respect for the sensitivities of all stakeholders. With respect to field activities, it is the University's responsibility to avoid discrimination against people who have a disability by making reasonable adjustments to the working environment and arrangements.

4.14 When students are undertaking a field activity as part of their course or unit requirement, reasonable accommodation must be made to ensure that students who

have a disability can participate. Some students may not, however, be able to undertake some activities. Alternative arrangements must be made to ensure that these students can meet the inherent requirements of the course or unit. Both students and staff are encouraged to seek advice from the University's Disability Support Office.

4.15 Adjustments to the working environment and arrangements for students and staff with disabilities may include:

- (a) Transport:** the type of transport used for the field activity will be accessible for the staff and students with disabilities attending the activity. Alternative forms of transport or frequent, scheduled breaks may be required for participants who have disabilities.
- (b) Facilities:** the facilities and accommodation for the field activity will (where reasonable) be accessible for the participants who have disabilities attending the activity.
- (c) Communication:** communications regarding the field activity will be provided in a form that is accessible for the participants who have disabilities attending the activity. Alternative formats may have to be provided for specific participants.

5. Planning Fieldwork

5.1 There are several steps. First, a 4.13b General Fieldwork Risk Assessment form should be completed by the Fieldwork Person in Control and lodged with the Head of Cost Centre. This form includes a description of the fieldwork to be carried out, proposed itinerary (or locations and approximate times in the case of multiple fieldtrips), participants, start date, finish date, etc. The form requires the Person in Control to identify fieldwork hazards, assess risks, and document and implement control strategies associated with the planned fieldwork. The Fieldwork Person in Control should complete the Assessment with any Fieldtrip Leaders who will be in charge of the fieldwork, so that Fieldtrip Leaders are aware of and have thought through the associated hazards, risks and controls. Note that the form 4.13B General Fieldwork Risk Assessment can apply to multiple separate fieldtrips provided that all the activities to be undertaken during the fieldwork are described and evaluated in the Assessment. As soon as it is likely that planned fieldwork will depart from the provisions of an approved Assessment, a new Assessment including the new activities should be submitted to the Head of Cost Centre for approval.

5.2 At the same time as lodging the 4.13b Assessment, a 4.13e Fieldwork Person in Control form should be completed and lodged with the Head of Cost Centre.

5.3 The process of completing a 4.13b General Fieldwork Risk Assessment may identify the need for training of fieldwork participants prior to a fieldtrip (e.g. the need for participants to undertake a chemical handling course or 4wd off-road driver training course). Instruction and training of participants must occur before the fieldwork is undertaken.

5.4 Fieldtrip Leaders and staff undertaking fieldwork must be trained in at least Senior First Aid and the fieldwork risk assessment may indicate that they be trained in Remote Area First Aid. By law, users of some equipment need to be formally qualified in its use. For example, users of chainsaws must have a current Chainsaw Level 1 certificate to cut a tree off a track. Falling trees needs a different certificate. Firearms users need appropriate personal licenses to operate firearms. Working at heights greater than 1.8 m above the ground requires that fieldworkers use suitable fall prevention or fall arrest equipment and are trained in its use. Training in what to do in the event of a bushfire, flood, swollen river and getting lost may also be indicated by the risk assessment.

5.5 The process of completing a 4.13b General Fieldwork Risk Assessment will likely identify important information that fieldwork participants need to know prior to departing on the fieldtrip and, in the case of external students undertaking fieldwork during an intensive school, prior to leaving home to attend the school. The Fieldwork Person in Control should prepare a Fieldwork Information Sheet for each fieldtrip participant, describing:

- itinerary (dates, times, locations);
- means of transport;
- activities expected of participants to be undertaken at each location;
- facilities available at each location and en route (i.e. ablutions, shelter, shops etc.);
- what provisions (e.g. food, drink, personal protective equipment), if any, will be provided for participants;
- likely environmental conditions to be experienced;
- what participants should bring (e.g. food, drink) or wear (e.g. clothing, boots, broad-brimmed hat, personal protective equipment) for the expected weather conditions and terrain, and
- phone number of any remote location out of mobile service range in case a participant needs to be contacted in an emergency.

In the case of fieldwork conducted as part of teaching, the Fieldwork Information Sheet should be included in unit materials received by students well before the date of the fieldtrip (e.g. at the start of the semester as part of the Unit Outline or Handbook).

5.6 At least 1 day prior to a fieldtrip, the Fieldwork Person In Control should:

- complete a form 4.13c Fieldwork Trip Form (detailing the itinerary, emergency contact details and vehicles for the fieldtrip);
- arrange to have every fieldwork participant complete a Form 4.13d Fieldwork Participant Declaration. This form indicates that the participant has received, read and understood the Fieldwork Information Sheet provided, and asks the participant to identify any health problems that might restrict them from participating fully in the fieldtrip. This form also gathers details for contacting next of kin in the event of an emergency;
- arrange to have every volunteer participant complete a Form 4.52a Volunteer Acknowledgement Form, and
- lodge the 4.13c Fieldwork Trip Form and every 4.13d Fieldwork Participant Declaration and 4.52a Volunteer Acknowledgement Form, along with a copy of the

4.13b General Fieldwork Risk Assessment, with the Head of Cost Centre, and issue (a) duplicate set(s) to the Fieldtrip Leader(s).

- 5.7** Consideration should be given to appropriate staff: student ratios, which may vary according to the activities being carried out and the nature of the site being visited. As a basic standard, the maximum number of inexperienced students involved in low risk activities (e.g. geological or botanical specimen collection, or surveying) should be ten per experienced staff member. For daylong and overnight fieldtrips, each party should contain at least two staff members, and adequate deputising provision should be made for the Fieldtrip Leader and driver(s) in case of incapacity.
- 5.8** Expeditions may be prolonged and in environments that are remote and potentially hazardous. Participants will normally be experienced or will have received instruction in safe work procedures and WHS. The Fieldtrip Leader of such a trip must be adequately trained in appropriate skills and procedures, which may include survival, communication and navigational techniques, or be supported by an expedition participant who is. The Fieldtrip Leader should be aware of local hazards and conditions and be familiar with precautions to be taken where the terrain is particularly hazardous or where dangerous animals, diseases or substances may be present. Adequate deputising arrangements should be made in case of incapacity or if the party splits up into smaller groups, meaning that an adequate number of experienced and trained persons should accompany the expedition.
- 5.9** Having staff and students working alone in the field is to be discouraged, but it is recognised that in some situations the risks of working alone in the field are tolerable. Fieldwork alone should only be sanctioned after a thorough assessment of the risks has been carried out, taking into account the nature of the work, the hostility and location of the site, and the experience of the worker. In many cases, the lone worker will be a postgraduate or final-year undergraduate student undertaking field research. The worker, as Fieldtrip Leader, must be involved in the risk assessment process and must be made aware that he or she is still under the supervision of their academic supervisor (Fieldwork Person in Control) on campus, who must take responsibility for their safety. At least 1 day prior to departing on the fieldtrip, the worker must complete the steps outlined in paragraphs 5.1–5.5 above. That means an appropriate emergency plan should be in place should the lone worker fail to check in at arranged times. Any safe system of work should include arrangements to determine the whereabouts of a lone worker and contingency plans in case of failure to make contact. If contact is made through intermediaries, the Fieldwork Person in Control must ensure that these are reliable.

6. Specific WHS Considerations

6.A Number of Fieldwork Participants

- 6.1** Wherever possible, a minimum of two people should undertake fieldwork together. According to the level of risk, more people may be required. Likewise for safety

reasons, maximum numbers may need to be enforced, for example boat trips in vessels licensed to carry a maximum number of people.

- 6.2** In certain circumstances, and as indicated in paragraph 5.9, the Fieldwork Risk Assessment may indicate that the risk of an experienced fieldworker working alone in the field is tolerable.

6.B First Aid

- 6.3** First aid provision must be made in line with the University's 4.06 First Aid Policy and the WHS Act 2011, the *WHS Regulation 2011* and guidance material such as *Safe Work Australia's First aid in the workplace COP 2012*. Remote area field work requires a currently qualified first aid attendant to be present. Senior First Aid or Remote Area First Aid qualifications are preferred and the latter may be required for all participants in remote area fieldwork. Contents of first aid kits need to reflect the types of hazards likely to cause injury in the particular fieldwork environment.

6.C Training

- 6.4** Various skills may be required for fieldtrips and it is important that personnel are adequately trained before or during the fieldwork. Training requirements should be clearly specified. All staff engaged in trips to remote locations must be trained in first aid and, if the expedition is particularly remote or long-term, there might be a case for training all group members in first aid, survival and rescue techniques. At least one other member should be qualified to take over should the Fieldtrip Leader become incapacitated, and at least one reserve driver (or pilot, boat handler etc.) should be included in the party. All participants in activities on water should be able to swim at least 50 m under the conditions expected, and an appropriate level of physical fitness for the activities to be undertaken should be attained.

6.D Communication with the University

- 6.5** The method of communication and frequency of communication must be agreed in the 4.13b General Fieldwork Risk Assessment. Mobile phones (where reception is available), UHF radio, satellite phones or beacons and EPIRBs (for when other forms of communication fail) may need to be considered. Frequent (e.g. daily) contact shall be made at agreed intervals with a nominated person (e.g. family member, fellow student, University staff member on campus) identified in Form 4.13c Fieldwork Trip Form. With some types of fieldwork, it may be more appropriate to set up an alternative communication arrangement made with a reputable contact (e.g. police station, national parks ranger, mine site manager, farmer etc.). The contact must be instructed to get in touch with the University (Fieldwork Person in Control, or Safety & Security) should the Fieldtrip Leader fail to make contact. The underpinning principles are that wherever possible, communication should occur daily, and there must be a documented emergency back-up plan in the event that contact is not made.

6.E Awareness of University Policies

6.6 All University policies and procedures apply throughout the duration of the fieldwork. It is the Fieldwork Person in Control's responsibility to ensure that people involved in the fieldwork are aware of all relevant University policies such as:

- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Student Behavioural Misconduct Rules
- Sex Based Harassment
- Disabled Students
- Fieldwork
- First Aid
- Incident Reporting including critical incident reporting for international students
- Work Health & Safety
- Risk Management—Policy—Guidelines
- Student Alcohol and Other Drug
- Travel
- Travel Guidelines

6.F Catering

6.7 Food hygiene in the field is essential to minimise gastro-intestinal upsets. Procedures appropriate to each fieldtrip form part of the planning and risk assessment for that fieldtrip.

6.G Leisure Time

6.8 In many respects, the potential for injuries is greatest during student leisure time. Students may wander off without providing information about where they are going and may engage in dangerous activities such as swimming alone or climbing cliffs.

6.9 The abuse of alcohol during leisure time can be a problem on field trips. Drunken field workers may engage in dangerous pranks, provoke the aggressive attention of local inhabitants, become aggressive towards one another, or otherwise cause offence. In addition to the risks to the health and safety of fieldwork participants, drunken behaviour may impact on the reputation of the University.

6.10 The Fieldwork Person in Control and Fieldtrip Leader should set clear guidelines for appropriate behaviour for all fieldwork participants, and communicate these in the Fieldwork Information Sheet prior to departing on the fieldtrip. These guidelines should be reaffirmed by the Fieldtrip Leader on a frequent basis during the fieldtrip. Fieldwork participants should be in no doubt as to the penalties (e.g. immediate exclusion from the fieldtrip) for unacceptable behaviour.

6.H Reporting Hazards, Incidents and Injuries

6.11 The University's requirements on reporting hazards, incidents and injuries must be adhered to in the event of any injury occurring or where a hazard may have resulted in an injury.

6.I Notification of Next of Kin

6.12 Prior to a field trip, the Fieldtrip Leader must ensure that a list of all participants' next of kin details has been provided to the School/Unit office. These should be retained for the duration of the fieldwork. The Fieldtrip Leader should have a copy on the fieldtrip.

7. Conduct of Fieldwork

- 7.1** At the commencement of the fieldtrip and at least on a daily basis while on the fieldtrip, the Fieldtrip Leader must induct all participants and instruct them on safety and health matters related to the day's fieldwork. They should explain:
- the schedule of the day's activities;
 - what will be expected of each participant through the day;
 - what facilities (toilets, shelter, drinking water, etc.) will be available for participants at different times and locations during the day;
 - what provision will be made for meals and rest breaks through the day;
 - the likely environmental conditions to be experienced;
 - the hazards and risks associated with the day's environments and activities;
 - the specific controls that participants must observe in order to minimise identified risks, and
 - guidelines for appropriate and unacceptable behaviour in any leisure time scheduled during the day or evening.
- 7.2** For fieldwork involving extended walking, itineraries must be carefully planned with adequate time allowed for all in the group to accomplish objectives.
- 7.3** Fieldwork participants working near roads or moving vehicles should wear fluorescent safety vests and workers on roads at night should wear reflective clothing.
- 7.4** For travel, vehicle suitability, prevention of driver fatigue and provision of adequate rest periods are important. Vehicles must be maintained in a safe state by competent persons. Lights, indicators, brakes, tyres, etc. must be checked as appropriate. Adequate rest breaks must be taken during journeys. Transport must not be used in a reckless, careless or dangerous manner. Loads must not be excessive, dangerously distributed or improperly secured. Local regulations (e.g. speed limits) must be observed and other rules of the road obeyed.
- 7.5** Equipment must be checked and tested before use and at appropriate predetermined intervals during use. Inspection and service schedules must be drawn up and carried out by competent persons, where necessary. Equipment must be maintained in a safe state by competent persons and damaged equipment repaired or taken out of service.
- 7.6** Adequate and appropriate protective clothing must be worn by all participants. Fieldwork participants must be informed of the dress code and requirements (e.g. covered shoes, long pants) for a particular trip in the Fieldwork Information Sheet and at least 1 day prior to departure. The following items may need to be provided to fieldwork participants by the Fieldwork Person in Control and Fieldtrip Leader: safety

helmets, eye or face protection, ear defenders, respiratory protection, warm or weatherproof clothing, high visibility clothing, wet suits, life jackets, waders, aprons, gloves, or additional foot protection.

8. Associated Documents

- 4.13 Fieldwork Policy
- 4.13a Fieldwork Planning Checklist
- 4.13b General Fieldwork Risk Assessment
- 4.13c Fieldwork Trip Form
- 4.13d Fieldwork Participant Declaration Form
- 4.13e Person in Control Declaration
- 4.52 Volunteer Guidelines
- 4.52a Volunteer Acknowledgement Form

9. Acknowledgements

Monash University: Guidelines for health and safety during field activities in country and remote areas. February 2002

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Hydro Tasmania: Hydrosafe Procedure. Remote Area and Working Alone Procedure, No date

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