

## 4.13 Fieldwork

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### Rationale and Scope

The University has an obligation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff members while undertaking fieldwork activities for University purposes. Fieldwork is often conducted off-campus and outdoors and therefore can expose participants to health and safety hazards different to those encountered in their normal on-campus duties and activities. This policy applies to the range of stages in the fieldwork process, including planning, preparation, travelling, fieldwork activity, returning and post-fieldwork follow up.

### Overview

The University has an obligation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff members while undertaking fieldwork activities for University purposes.

Fieldwork is often conducted off-campus and outdoors and therefore can expose participants to health and safety hazards different to those encountered in their normal on-campus duties and activities.

This policy applies to the range of stages in the fieldwork process, including planning, preparation, travelling, fieldwork activity, returning and post-fieldwork follow up.

### Policy

**4.13.01** 'Fieldwork' is 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 for the purposes of this policy, since the staff involved will be subject to the safety management systems applying in those workplaces.

- 4.13.02** Fieldwork may be undertaken by a single person or a group of people.
- 4.13.03** The fieldwork location will normally be regarded as a workplace of the University and all relevant UNE policies will apply. Where the location is a workplace under the control of another entity the rules of that workplace will apply.

#### **Responsibilities of the *Person in Control***

- 4.13.04** The *Person in Control* has responsibility and accountability for the particular fieldwork activity and for ensuring that adequate planning, risk assessment and management systems are implemented to ensure the health and safety of fieldworkers.

**N.B.** *Although one person must have overall control of the fieldwork, at times there may be several people in the field in control of particular activities.*

- 4.13.05** Prior to undertaking any fieldwork the *Person in Control* will carry out a risk assessment to identify and document hazards and associated risks.

- 4.13.06** In preparation and planning for the fieldwork activity, the *Person in Control* will:

implement the necessary risk control procedures;

develop appropriate communication and emergency plans;

obtain adequate information from the prospective fieldworkers about their health status to ensure that suitable measures can be implemented in a medical emergency;

consider the appropriate travel, accommodation and supervision arrangements for fieldworkers, taking into account the experience/maturity of all participants;

- 4.13.07** The *Person in Control* may or may not participate in the actual fieldwork activity. Responsibilities and accountabilities may be delegated to field supervisors or leaders undertaking fieldwork activities. If control is delegated, the exchange and extent of delegation must be documented.

- 4.13.08** The *Person in Control* has a duty and responsibility to maintain standards of behaviour in the group throughout the duration of the fieldwork exercise in order to protect the right of others to work and study in an environment free from personal intimidation, unpleasantness and harassment of any kind.

- 4.13.09** The *Person in Control* must keep a constant check on all environmental factors, including weather. This weather evaluation may include temperature range, rain or snow, climate conditions such as dry, hot

conditions and fire risk, UV exposure, tidal and weather events such as currents, cyclones and electrical storms

- 4.13.10** Any *Persons in Control* who is not a staff member must complete *Persons in Control Declaration* (Form **4.13e**)

### **Responsibilities of Fieldworkers**

- 4.13.11** Each member of a fieldwork party has a responsibility, under OHS legislation to work safely, taking all reasonable, practicable steps to protect the health and safety of themselves and others.
- 4.13.12** It is the responsibility of each member of the fieldwork party to bring to the attention of the *Person in Control* or any delegated supervisor, all situations which may pose a risk to an individual's health and safety.
- 4.13.13** Each person also has an obligation to minimise any impact on the environment.
- 4.13.14** Prior to undertaking any fieldwork the Fieldworker will be required to sign a declaration agreeing to comply with the requirements of the *General Fieldwork Risk Assessment*.
- 4.13.15** Where family members accompany a fieldworker the provision of *4.18 Children in the Workplace*, will apply.

### **Vehicles and Drivers**

- 4.13.16** Drivers of vehicles on fieldwork activities are required to comply with the *UNE Motor Vehicle requirements*.
- 4.13.17** Vehicles hired from outside companies will be subject to the provisions of those contracts.
- 4.13.18** All drivers of vehicles on fieldwork activities, whether they are University or privately-owned vehicles, are expected to comply with the Australian Road Rules and will be personally responsible for any traffic infringements incurred.

### **Communication and Emergency Procedures**

- 4.13.19** As part of the planning process, a designated contact person at the University should be identified prior to departure. This person needs to be someone who is available by phone, in case of emergency, throughout the period of the fieldwork activity. (Where this is Safety and Security, then this department needs contact details and full information about the trip prior to departure.)
- 4.13.20** Communication strategies and emergency procedures should be established before departure, including contact procedures for relevant local emergency agencies (e.g. police, ambulance, flying doctor, park ranger etc.) particularly when the fieldwork activity is undertaken in isolated or

remote locations. When developing communication plans, consideration must be given to the sensitivity of personal information.

- 4.13.21** Suitable first aid requirements should be identified as part of the initial risk assessment. (see **4.13a** *Fieldwork Planning Checklist* )

### Overseas Fieldwork

- 4.13.22** Fieldworkers going overseas should consult a doctor with experience in travel medicine. The consultation should take place at least six (6) months before departure, wherever possible, to ensure adequate time for completion of required immunisations, and the evaluation of protective measures against infectious diseases and other medical hazards that may be prevalent in the fieldwork location.

### Procedures

- 4.13.23** Prior to the commencement of the fieldwork activity, the *Person in Control* will complete:

*Fieldwork Planning Checklist* (Form **4.13a**);

*General Fieldwork Risk Assessment* (Form **4.13b**); and

*Person in Control Declaration* (Form **4.13e**)

and submit these forms, and any other required documentation, to the Head of School/Cost Centre for approval.

- 4.13.24** It is the responsibility of the Cost Centre to maintain records of the standard *General Fieldwork Risk Assessment* forms.

- 4.13.25** All staff required to participate in fieldwork must be given a copy of the relevant *General Fieldwork Risk Assessment*, and sign a declaration stating that they have read and understood the risk assessment and will comply with its requirements.

- 4.13.26** Students are to be given a *Fieldwork Participation Declaration* (Form **4.13d**), which they must sign stating that they will comply with its requirements and the instructions of the *Person in Control*.

### References

*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000*

*Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001*

### Further Information

Occupational Health and Safety Unit, ext 3232