



FIELD ACTIVITY GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES

1. INTRODUCTION

Field Activity involves work tasks undertaken by staff, students and volunteers for research, teaching or instruction at locations which may not be registered as University workplaces, but where the University is responsible for the safety of its staff and students and those exposed to their activities.

The University frequently conducts Field Activity activities which are diverse in their nature and which may take place in unfamiliar surroundings. Tasks undertaken during Field Activity may involve a potentially high level of risk to the health and safety of the participants, and the Field Activity environment may be potentially hazardous.

The Field Activity location is recognised as a workplace under The *Occupational Health & Safety Act 2000 (NSW)*. Accordingly, supervisors, staff and students are required to meet their legal obligations for occupational health and safety during Field Activity planning and participation. The policies, codes and rules in place at the University of Wollongong dealing with workplace behaviour include the following:

Health and Safety	UOW - OHS Roles & Responsibilities
Codes of Practice Students	UOW - Code of Practice - Students
Campus Access & Order	UOW - Campus Access and Order Rules
Staff Conduct Rules	UOW - University Code of Conduct (Staff)
Student Discipline Rules	UOW - Rules for Student Discipline
Research Ethics	UOW - RAID - RSO - Ethics committees

The University Field Activity Guideline was developed by Personnel & Financial Services in consultation with the Occupational Health & Safety Unit and relevant departments. Its objectives are to: -

- Outline responsibilities of heads of departments, supervisors, staff and students for planning and undertaking Field Activity;
- Provide information regarding hazards, risks, and risk assessment control measures for specific Field Activity activities.
- Provide methods for conducting risk assessment and control, and for the development of the Field Activity plan.

* *N.B Staff/students should also refer to Faculty Specific Guidelines, in particular the Faculty of Science Guidelines, available on the Department of Chemistry web site at:*
<http://www.uow.edu.au/science/chem/ohs.html>

2. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to this document:

- **Head of Unit:** person in charge of an Academic Unit or nominated substitute;
- **Supervisor:** Academic staff member responsible for the supervision of students undertaking Field Activity as part of their degree requirements;
- **Student:** Undergraduate, Honours or Postgraduate students;
- **Staff:** Academic and general staff;

- **Field Activity:** Field Activity involves work undertaken for or in support of research, teaching or instruction at a location off Campus and, in general, outside of an urban centre as part of the activities of a Unit;
- **Remote Field Activity:** Field Activity carried out by staff and students, defined both in terms of distance and inaccessibility from major roads, towns or facilities with telephone or radio communications. For example, you can be as isolated in a run down part of Sydney or on a rock platform at Bondi Beach as you can be in the middle of the Simpson Desert;
- **Honours/postgraduate Field Activity:** Field Activity normally carried out on a long-term basis, e.g. several field trips of 1 weeks duration, in remote locations. It is possible for the Honours/postgraduate Field Activity to have some periods of “non-remote” Field Activity interspersed with remote Field Activity;
- **Undergraduate Field Activity:** Field Activity normally carried out on a short-term basis, e.g. a half or one day field trip, or longer as specified by course requirements, in locations generally not classified as remote. The Field Activity party may have access to a base camp from which daily trips are made. It is possible for undergraduate Field Activity to have some periods of “remote” Field Activity interspersed with other Field Activity;
- **Field Activity Party:** comprises a party leader and students. Additional staff members or other approved persons may also participate in a Field Activity party;
- **Hazard Identification:** is the prior identification of hazards that can be associated with an activity. Potential hazards should be identified on the basis of previous experience or from the anticipation of problems that can be reasonably associated with an activity; and
- **Hazard Control:** is the prior allocation of physical, human and procedural resources to eliminate or to minimize, as far as is reasonably practicable, the risk to safety or health from the hazard.

3. RESPONSIBILITY DURING FIELD ACTIVITY ACTIVITIES

Field Activity can expose participants to a range of hazards not normally experienced in their work and study activities within the confines of a University classroom or laboratory. Furthermore, Field Activity is often undertaken at locations that isolate participants from ready access to the emergency services present in an urban centre.

It is the purpose of these guidelines and procedures to ensure that, when Field Activity is undertaken:

- Potential and existing hazards are identified and reported (as far as is reasonably practicable); and
- Identified risks are controlled.

3.1 Head of Unit

- Ensure that adequate resources have been allocated for carrying out the Field Activity in accordance with the Field Activity plan.
- Ensure that supervisors, staff and students are aware of their occupational health and safety responsibilities for Field Activity.
- Ensure that appropriate records are kept relating to Field Activity activities.

3.2 Academic Staff and General Staff Supervisors

- Provide appropriate supervision to ensure that staff, students and visitors comply with the Field Activity plan.
- Appoint a second in charge in case the supervisor is unavailable to perform his/her normal duty.

- Supervise the development of Field Activity plans and approve Field Activity plans carried out by staff, students and visitors under their supervision.
- Conduct a risk assessment on the field activity to be undertaken using the Field Activity Risk Assessment (refer to Appendix 2). Ensure that any required action is followed up prior to commencement of the Field Activity.
- Ensure that a safe work procedure is developed for each field activity task which is planned to be carried out (refer to the [Safe Work Procedure](#) template located on the OHS web site).
- Review the Field Activity plan and ensure that new Field Activity plans are developed if the nature of the work changes and/or a plan proves inappropriate.
- Provide induction and training for Field Activity participants, if necessary.
- Complete the Field Activity Participant Acknowledgement form.
- Ensure the provision, maintenance and proper use of Prescribed Protective Clothing & Equipment (PPCE) associated with the Field Activity.
- Ensure that corrective action is implemented for all accidents and incidents involving Field Activity, in accordance with OH&S "Incident/Accident Reporting" requirements.

3.3 Staff, Students and Visitors responsibilities for Field Activity

- Participate in development of Field Activity plans and obtain approval from the supervisor and Head of Department/School prior to the commencement of Field Activity (e.g. the planning stage of a PhD project or of a research diving excursion).
- Participate in completing a risk assessment on the field activity to be undertaken using the Field Activity Risk Assessment (refer to Appendix 2). Ensure that any required action is followed up prior to commencement of the Field Activity.
- Participate in the development of a safe work procedure for each field activity task which is planned to be carried out (refer to the [Safe Work Procedure](#) template located on the OHS web site).
- Follow the procedures set out in Field Activity plans on a day-to-day basis.
- Limit Field Activity to activities specified in the approved Field Activity plan.
- Participate in Field Activity induction and training programs as instructed by supervisors.
- Complete the Field Activity Participant Acknowledgement form.
- Report to the OH&S Unit any accident, injury, illness or near miss event associated with Field Activity as soon as practicable (refer to the University "Incident/Accident Reporting" guidelines on the OHS web site at: <http://staff.uow.edu.au/ohs/reporting/safetynet.html>).

4. FIELD ACTIVITY PLAN

The Field Activity plan should be completed by supervisors before any routine, new or occasional Field Activity is undertaken and the head of department/school has authorised such an activity. The more complicated and potentially hazardous the Field Activity, the more extensive the planning must be and expert advice should be sought where appropriate (e.g. local national park authorities).

The supervisor should ensure distribution of the Plan to all Field Activity participants (staff and students), non-University staff participating in the field trip, the Head of Department/School, security and other necessary participants.

A sample Field Activity plan is documented in Appendix 1 and includes; -

- Field Activity supervisor and participants
- Departure date and time
- Arrival date and time
- Accommodation
- Transport Arrangements
- Catering Arrangements
- Personal Protective Equipment and clothing requirements
- Expected weather conditions
- Certified copies of mandatory qualifications and training

Briefing sessions should occur at least two (2) weeks prior to commencing the Field Activity to ensure participants have time for preparation such as medical counselling or acquiring clothing. All participants should be familiar with the details in the Plan.

Please remember that Field Activity Plans are to be filed in a central location within the unit for record keeping purposes.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

The supervisor should ensure distribution of the Risk Assessment to all field activity participants (staff and students), non-University staff participating in the field trip, the Head of Department/School and other necessary participants.

The development of the Risk Assessment form requires a risk assessment for each Field Activity activity, so that risks can be measured and control strategies prioritised. Field Activity activities should be listed and for each, the following steps should be completed:

- a) identify the hazards associated with the activity;
- b) assess risks that may eventuate because of the existing and/or potential hazards;
- c) identify and document control measures to prevent, or minimise the level of risk;
- d) ensure adequate resources are provided to implement the necessary control measures; and
- e) monitor and review the effectiveness of the measures implemented during the Field Activity.

Refer to Appendix 2 the Field Activity Risk Assessment form for completion. Field Activity Risk Assessments are to be filed in a central location within the unit for record keeping purposes.

5.1 HIGH RISK FIELD ACTIVITY ACTIVITIES

Field Activity activities which are high risks and which require participants to have specific skills or qualifications include, but are not limited to the following:

- Boating
- Diving
- Snorkelling
- Cliff walking
- Climbing/Abseiling
- Use of high voltage equipment
- Tractor Driving
- Four Wheel driving
- Drilling

Field Activity supervisors should ensure that participants meet the minimum skill, experience and qualification requirements for such Field Activity activities prior to commencement of the Field Activity. The Field Activity Plan should require that certified copies of mandatory qualifications and training be provided by Field Activity participants and filed.

6. SAFE WORK PROCEDURES

The supervisor should ensure that a safe work procedure is developed for each activity/activities in consultation that is to be carried out in consultation by field activity participants (staff and students). The safe work procedure will outline the steps involved in the task/activity and outline how hazards are reduced/eliminated.

Please refer to the [Safe Work Procedures Guidelines](#) for assistance in developing a safe work procedure. Safe work procedures are to be filed in a central location within the unit for record keeping purposes.

7. CATERING AND HYGIENE

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that Field Activity participants are provided with hygienic and wholesome food. Food must be prepared in as hygienic manner as is practicable: gastrointestinal illness could incapacitate a whole group of participants. The following points should be observed:

- All food items must be prepared hygienically, using clean hands and utensils.
- Food should be selected and prepared carefully. In many parts of the world, raw food (salads, meat, seafood etc) should be avoided and fruit washed and peeled before consumption. In cases of doubt, food should be thoroughly cooked to kill any contaminating organisms.
- An adequate supply of safe drinking water should be available. If necessary, the water should be sterilised by boiling, filtration or use of purification tablets. Always assume stream and river waters are unsafe.
- People with hand, nose, and throat or bowel trouble should not prepare food.
- Cuts and sores should be covered with waterproof dressings.
- Smoking, coughing or sneezing over food is to be avoided.
- Food must be kept clean and covered to prevent contamination by dust, insect etc. Food that needs refrigerating should be kept below 5°C.
- Pre-prepared foods should be wrapped tightly or protected in sealed containers before packing them in a cooler. Raw meats should be placed at the bottom of the cooler and ready-to-eat items placed above.
- Pre-cooked food should be cooled as soon as possible and refrigerated within 2 hours. If served hot it must be thoroughly reheated.

8. VEHICLES AND DRIVING SAFETY

The following list warrants consideration in planning fieldwork for long trips or rough terrain.

- All seats must have seat belts.
- In station wagons and open cabin vehicles, safety screens or nets must be installed to prevent equipment entering the passenger section during an accident.
- Off-road vehicles should be reinforced inside the cabin to prevent collapse if the vehicle happens to roll over.
- Power steering is desirable for long trips. It improves control and reduces driver fatigue.
- Installation of Anti-lock Brake Systems (ABS) prevents the wheels from locking on slippery surfaces.
- A second battery with isolating diodes should be fitted to provide reserve power for radio communication, refrigeration etc.
- Additional lights for night and/or fog driving and a trouble light should be provided.
- Spare fuel tanks or extra jerry cans on racks on the vehicle are a requirement for long trips in isolated areas.
- The vehicle should incorporate a built in spare water tank.
- Heavy equipment such as refrigerators, data logging equipment, etc. should either be bolted to the floor or be stored in racks that are bolted to the vehicle.
- Bull bars should be fitted where there is likelihood of encountering animals whilst driving, particularly at night.
- Winches should be fitted to all special purpose off-road vehicles.
- Carry spare fanbelts for power steering, air-conditioner and alternator.
- Air bags can significantly reduce the severity of injuries in an accident and should be installed if they are not a standard fitting.
- Block and tackle.

Driving/Rest Regimes

In NSW on average

- Driver fatigue accounts for about 17% of fatal crashes per year.
- Country non-urban areas account for about 28% of fatigue related fatal crashes.
- Most fatigue related fatal crashes occur between midnight and 8 am.
- Early to mid-afternoon is also a high risk time.
- About 51% of fatigue related fatal crashes involve male drivers under 40.

These guidelines apply to staff and students driving on bitumen roads under normal conditions on long trips. Trips off road can be more tiring and allowances should be made to reduce driver fatigue in these circumstances.

Total Travel Time

Driving should take up no more than 8 hours in a period of 24 hours. The total time spent travelling, including breaks, should not exceed 12 hours, even where two, or more staff or students share the driving.

Total Duty per Day

Ordinary duty (which does not involve driving duty) combined with driving duty should not exceed 12 hours in any period of 24 hours.

Rest Periods

On completion of each period of 2 hours driving, a person who has driven continuously should take a rest period of at least 20 minutes away from the vehicle. Some form of light exercise, eg. Walking, is required. Where staff and students are sharing the driving, a change of driver should take place at hourly intervals.

Driving Roster

After a person has been the sole driver of a vehicle for three consecutive days, the fourth day should be a non-driving day.

Alcohol and Drugs

All potential drivers should avoid alcohol or drugs at least twelve hours before and whilst driving. Prescribed medication is permitted, if the medication does not interfere with the driver's concentration and reflexes. Some non-prescription medicines, eg., anti-hay fever tablets or decongestants, contain substances which can impair driver response and reflexes after prolonged usage, and staff and students taking these medicines should not drive within 24 hours of ceasing to administer them. If in doubt, consult a doctor or chemist or refer to the contraindications information, normally supplied with the medicine.

Distance per Day

Approximately 650 km should be the maximum any group travels by car in any one day. The distance that can be reasonably covered during a day will be governed by the type of vehicle, type of terrain, maximum time permitted to drive, and speed limits. Factors such as general safety, road and climatic conditions and weather should be taken into account as well as driver fatigue.

Time of Day

Be especially careful about driving long distances in the early afternoon or at night. Rest periods or driver relief should occur more frequently at these times. In unfenced areas, driving should not occur dusk-to-dawn because of the risk of hitting wildlife.

9. BIOSAFETY

It is important that fieldworkers recognise the possible biological hazards they may be exposed to or encounter while carrying out their work in the field.

Wildlife that has the ability to injure/bite/sting or cause some form of infection to fieldworkers may for example, include exposure to snakes, ticks, bees, spiders, wild pigs, cattle, bats and flying foxes, dingoes, crocodiles, sharks, jellyfish, stone-fish and blue-ringed octopus.

Some flora has the ability to cause severe stings and allergic reactions.

The necessary precautions should be taken when testing for contaminated soil or water samples.

10. OHS ADVICE FOR FIELD ACTIVITY PLANNING

The Risk Assessment and the Plan in Appendices 1& 2 should be applied to all Field Activity activities. This section will address specific activities and risks associated with Field Activity, and will assist the supervisor to approach Field Activity planning in a thorough manner. It is not intended to be an exhaustive overview of all activities and risks associated with the, but rather a starting point. Where appropriate the Field Activity supervisor should contact the OHS unit and/or seek appropriate advice for issues, which are not specifically addressed in this section.

Supervisors, staff and students when planning and conducting the field trip should review the University's OHS Policies, guidelines and procedures that are relevant to the Field Activity activities. A complete list of OHS policy documents is available on the OH&S Unit Web Page at: <http://staff.uow.edu.au/ohs/>.

The University Policies and Guidelines that are relevant to Field Activity are listed under subject headings as follows:

First Aid

[First Aid Guidelines](#)

Incident/Accident Reporting

[SafetyNET: Hazard and Incident reporting](#)

Personal Protective Clothing & Equipment (PPCE)

[Personal Protective Equipment](#)

Other OHS Policies

- [University Outdoor Staff Working in Wet Weather](#)
- [Safe use of Mobile Phone Guidelines](#)
- [Working with Sharps Guidelines](#)
- [Working with Blood and Bodily Fluids](#)
- [Working Alone Policy](#)
- [Drug and Alcohol Policy](#)

11. MEDICAL CONDITIONS AFFECTING FIELD ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

In the planning stage of Field Activity, the Field Activity supervisor should advise potential participants of their obligation to take appropriate medical advice and disclose any limitations imposed by their health, which may affect their ability to safely participate in the. This obligation applies before and during any.

In the case that the medical limitation is likely to impact on the safety of the Field Activity, the participant should discuss this directly with the Field Activity supervisor. Alternatively they should give written authority for their doctor to discuss the functional consequences of their medical condition and specific needs with the supervisor. A Risk Assessment approach should be used to determine whether it is suitable for the individual to participate in the Field Activity activity.

In the case of Field Activity at a remote location, all participants should be at an appropriate fitness level to carry out the tasks. When the Field Activity is physically demanding or strenuous, the University OH&S Unit should be contacted by the Field Activity supervisor regarding advice on the general assessment of fitness and capacity for Field Activity participants.

It is not appropriate for staff, students or employees with a potentially life threatening medical condition to participate in Field Activity at remote locations.

To ensure that the University meets its moral and legal obligations, it is vital that the supervisor confidentially maintains documents concerning relevant medical information. To ensure the safe keeping of documents in accordance with the University's Privacy guidelines, please refer to the University's Privacy web site at: <http://www.uow.edu.au/about/privacy/>.

12. HEALTH ADVICE & VACCINATIONS

Various field activities may require vaccinations. Vaccination may be required for fieldwork within Australia or international travel. For further information please refer to the [Immunisation Guidelines](#).

In addition to the above, Field Activity participants should also be aware that travellers' diarrhoea is the number one illness in travellers and can be caused by viruses, bacteria or parasites which contaminate food and water. Infections may cause diarrhoea and vomiting (E. coli, Salmonella, cholera and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis) or liver damage (hepatitis).

It is important to understand that recommendations regarding vaccination requirements and health precautions depend on various factors such as the duration of stay, living conditions and location. In

addition travel medicine advice changes over time depending on disease trends and medical advances. For this reason, it is important to obtain current advice before commencing on any fieldtrip regarding vaccination requirements. Overseas fieldwork may require specific vaccinations according to location/country of work. Medical advice should be sought from practitioners who specialise in overseas vaccinations.

13. INSURANCE COVER AND LIABILITY

Field Activity Supervisors should ensure they have knowledge of the extent of insurance provisions for the following categories of Field Activity participants where applicable:

- Staff
- Students
- Volunteers
- Honorary Employees.

Staff members are covered under the University's Worker's Compensation Policy. Workers Compensation provides injured workers with weekly payments to cover loss of earning capacity, payment of reasonable medical expenses and vocational rehabilitation expenses where necessary to assist a safe return to work.

On the basis of a risk assessment, the Field Activity supervisor should assess whether the insurance provisions are appropriate and ensure that suitable insurance is obtained prior to commencement of the Field Activity. Any questions should be directed to the Commercial Analyst, located in Financial Services.

Insurance provisions for vehicles and equipment should also be determined and clarified with the Commercial Analyst, located in Financial Services.

Field Activity participants should be informed of the extent of insurance provisions prior to commencing the Field Activity.

REFERENCES

1. *Field Activity Guidelines* - The University of Wollongong, Faculty of Science
2. *Field Activity Safety Guidelines, 1999*. The University of Queensland
3. *Field Activity Safety Guidelines, 1993* – The University of New South Wales
4. *Food Safety Practices & General Requirements Standard 3.2.2* – Food Standards Australia New Zealand
5. *Guidelines for the safe conduct of sport and physical activity in schools* – NSW Department of Education and Training
6. *Occupational Health & Safety Act 2000 (NSW)* – WorkCover NSW
7. *Travellers' Health, 2003* – Centre for Diseases Control & Prevention

The guidelines and forms outlined above should be supplemented with legislation, regulations, standards, and codes from government authorities and professional groups when planning Field Activity. Detailed below is a list of these authorities.

- Occupational Health & Safety Acts
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/
- Occupational Health & Safety Regulations
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_reg/
- WorkCover Authority NSW
<http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/>