Procedure: Fieldwork health and off-campus work safety

Purpose

To set out the procedure for fieldwork and off-campus work safety.

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this Procedure:

**Authorised Officer** is someone who can be contacted by the field party 24 hours per day 7 days per week and is authorised by the Director to initiate search and rescue requests. They would be the local liaison between the field party and the University. This role may be split between people to cover required access times.

**Budget Unit** is a College, School, Centre, Division, Department, Branch or Unit designated by the Vice-Chancellor as responsible for an activity of the University.

**Field Party** is a group of people (minimum of 2) undertaking fieldwork.

**Fieldwork** is work undertaken for or in support of research, teaching, or instruction at an off-campus location as part of the activities of a Budget Unit. It may involve remote locations.

**Fieldwork supervisor** is a participant in a fieldwork operation who has been approved by the Budget Unit to supervise that particular fieldwork operation for its duration.

**Fieldworker** is a staff member, student or volunteer undertaking or assisting in fieldwork.

**Hazard recognition** is the (prior) identification of hazards that can be associated with an activity. Potential hazards could be identified on the basis of previous experience or from the anticipation of problems that can be reasonably associated with the activity.

**Off-campus work** is work undertaken away from the person's normal work environment and not on-campus. Fieldwork is a type of off-campus work. Work off-campus is aimed at (low risk) activities in an urban environment. For example: interviewing commuters at a bus stop, or attending a conference. The supervisor of an off-campus work project may remain ANU based.
Remote is a location separated from an appropriately resourced urban centre by distance, terrain, access, time and/or available communication links. A remote area may be on land or water. A remote area is not necessarily related to the distance from an urban centre. In the event of an emergency, assistance would be delayed, with the possibility of adverse outcomes.

Risk control is the prior allocation of physical, human, and procedural resources to eliminate or to minimise, as far as is reasonably practicable, the risk to safety or health from a hazard.

Urban Areas are locations where there are appropriate facilities available, if required (e.g. medical treatment, fuel supply) within an appropriate time frame.

Volunteer is generally an unpaid member of the field party. A volunteer is still under the general control of the Fieldwork Supervisor and should comply with this procedure. An agreement should exist between the University and a volunteer.

Procedure

Introduction

1. The University has developed this procedure to help Budget Units evaluate and manage OHS risks associated with fieldwork and off-campus work; in particular, to ensure Budget Units:
   - Identify all hazards and their associated risks by conducting a risk assessment and setting up controls to reduce risk to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP); and
   - Set up and use common practices and standards, including suitable communication and emergency procedures so they minimise the likelihood of unwanted results where problems do arise.

2. Fieldwork can range from simple local excursions to complex international expeditions. It can expose participants to hazards they don't normally experience on or off campus. It is often undertaken at places that isolate participants from emergency services present in urban centres.

Scope

3. This procedure applies to all University managers, staff, students and other approved participants organising or taking part in any fieldwork or work off-campus in local, national or international remote or urban areas.

Note: Urban fieldwork may also be referred to as "off-campus work".
Exemptions & exceptions

4. The following exemptions and exceptions apply:
   - When working at another organisation that has its own procedures, e.g. another University, CSIRO, working mines and other work sites;
   - Home-based work, which is not fieldwork or off-campus work. For further details, see home-based work; and
   - Work on an ANU Campus.

Note: Where there are no local procedures, ANU policies and procedures apply.

Responsibilities

Director or nominated representative

5. The Director (or nominated representative) is responsible for:
   - Approving all fieldwork and off-campus work;
   - Approving the participation of all volunteers in the fieldwork or off-campus work;
   - Developing management and administrative processes for fieldwork and work off-campus work that comply with University policies and procedures;
   - Considering the research and teaching objectives of the fieldwork or off-campus work against the associated risks before granting approval;
   - Ensuring they provide training for Fieldwork Supervisors in how to minimise the risks of any approved fieldwork or off-campus work; and
   - Ensuring they provide induction for all potential Fieldworkers and off-campus workers, and they identify and action any skills and training needs early; and
   - Providing the resources to undertake the field work.

Warning: No fieldwork is to be undertaken without the approval of the Director or nominated representative of the Budget Unit.

6. A Director may appoint:
   - A Safety Officer (with suitable qualifications, skills and experience) to help them manage fieldwork and off-campus work risks; and
   - Authorised Officers who may launch search and rescue if the Field Party:
     - fails to make the agreed contact, or
- fails to return by the agreed time, or
- requests assistance, or
- is working in an area where a significant event such as wild fire or flood prompts early action.

**Fieldwork Supervisor**

7. The Fieldwork Supervisor is responsible for:

   a. Planning and documenting information about the fieldwork or off-campus work, including considering relevant aspects and risks in the requirements table (see: Appendix 1). This includes:
      - Conducting a risk assessment of the proposed fieldwork or off-campus work, including travel, location, fieldwork and anything else relevant;
      - Considering the skills (including physical and mental fitness) of participants in undertaking the proposed fieldwork or off-campus work; and
      - Setting up an agreed timetable (including contact schedules), method of communication, contact details and an evacuation plan.

   **Note:** These items must be in enough detail to ensure emergency services can locate a field party.

   b. Organising and conducting field trips, taking all reasonably practicable steps to ensure they are safe for staff, students and volunteers, including being free from any harassment. This includes:
      - Providing a briefing (induction) on the fieldwork or off-campus work to participants and local university contacts, e.g. the Safety Officer and Authorised Officer that includes ensuring that all fieldwork or off-campus work participants;
      - Are conversant with all relevant policies and procedures;
      - Are familiar with the plans and arrangements of the fieldwork or off-campus work before proceeding into the field; and
      - Clearly understand their responsibilities in relation to cultural issues, permits, intellectual property and confidentiality relating to study sites. This should include reinforcing the University's expectations on behaviour, alcohol abuse and sexual harassment; and

   c. Mentoring and providing guidance to other fieldwork leaders.
8. The Fieldwork Supervisor may cancel, postpone or modify the planned schedule at any time during the trip. Any significant changes must be communicated back to the University (Authorised Officer or Safety Officer) according to the pre-arranged process.

9. To assist Fieldwork Supervisors, the Table in Appendix 1 provides suggested elements for the fieldwork plan. The Table consists of elements that are either:
   - Key elements – mandatory requirements for fieldworkers to have in place, e.g. documentation, transport, communication, emergency processes; and
   - Suggested elements – optional for fieldworkers to have in place, but must be considered during the planning and risk assessment process.

10. The level of detail for each element may vary relative to its significance and associated risk.

Field party members

11. Each member of a Field Party must:
   - Comply with all reasonable directions of the Fieldwork Supervisor;
   - Familiarise themselves with the hazards pertaining to the fieldwork or off-campus work and the practices that minimise the associated risks;
   - Participate in the development of fieldwork or work off-campus plans and arrangements;
   - Participate in any induction, information or training program as instructed by the Fieldwork Supervisor;
   - Exhibit a duty of care for themselves and others;
   - Wear personal protective equipment and use safety equipment as required;
   - Express the values of the Australian National University;
   - Minimise impact on the environment;
   - Bring to the attention of the Fieldwork Supervisor any incident, or a situation contrary to University procedures.
   - Report any accident, injury, illness or dangerous occurrence in the agreed manner; and
   - Discuss any pre-existing injury/illness of relevance with the Fieldwork Supervisor, and, if deemed necessary, obtain a medical management plan from the doctor. The medical management plan will assist with; appropriate
treatment in the field, and maintaining the field party member's safety.

**Note:** Unusual preventatives and treatments are the responsibility of the individual (e.g. epi-pens for the treatment of anaphylaxis associated with bee stings).

**Volunteers**

12. All volunteers participating in fieldwork or off-campus work must complete the Volunteer Declaration Form and gain the approval of the Director or nominated representative.

*See:* [Volunteer Declaration Form](#)

**Size and composition of the fieldwork party**

**Fieldwork not involving undergraduates**

13. Ideally, a field party should have a minimum of 2 persons. Where the type of fieldwork prevents this, and a fieldworker works alone, the Fieldwork Supervisor must have in place all key and suggested elements of the fieldwork plan, particularly those involving communication, that will reduce the risk of working alone to as low as reasonably practicable. Fieldworkers working alone should consider as a minimum an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) with GPS.

**Undergraduate fieldwork**

14. Fieldwork involving undergraduate teaching needs to have acceptable student-to-staff ratios so that appropriate transport and supervision arrangements can be implemented to ensure effective risk control. An acceptable ratio of students to staff will depend on the:

- Prior training, experience and maturity of the students; and
- Nature of the fieldwork.

15. A ratio of ten-to-one is the recommended maximum student-to-staff ratio for fieldwork involving undergraduate teaching. A higher ratio may be acceptable for routine operations with an established safe history.

*Note:* The Director is the only person authorised to approve a higher student-to-staff ratio and then only after careful consideration of all the appropriate criteria.

**Off-campus work**

16. As a minimum it is desirable to have at least two persons per party.
Behaviour in the field

Smoking

17. In accordance with University policy to provide a smoke-free workplace, smoking is prohibited in all vehicles and in shared places during fieldwork. In all other circumstances smokers should consider the rights and comfort of non-smoking companions. Smokers should take all due care to prevent starting a fire.

18. Fieldworkers should be aware of the University's policy on smoking.

Alcohol Consumption

19. Alcohol is a significant contributing factor in many incidents and acts of prejudicial conduct. Alcohol should not be consumed when undertaking fieldwork. The field is a workplace and appropriate standards of workplace behaviour must be maintained.

20. Some participants may choose to consume alcohol after work. It is the individual's responsibility to ensure they do not contravene acceptable standards of behaviour and are not affected by alcohol when next they undertake work.

21. The rules associated with alcohol on student field trips must be clearly communicated, managed and supervised. Any student (or Field Party member) suffering from excessive alcohol consumption or displaying inappropriate behaviour may be removed from the field trip by the Field Supervisor. Any unresolved disputes which arise concerning this issue shall be referred to the Director.

22. Fieldworkers should be aware of the University's policy on alcohol and other drugs in the workplace.

Sexual Harassment

23. The field is a workplace and appropriate standards of workplace behaviour are to be maintained, including a person's right to work and study in an environment free from personal intimidation and harassment.

24. Fieldworkers should be aware of the University's policy on preventing discrimination, harassment and bullying.

25. Fieldwork Supervisors must ensure that:
   
   • Discrimination does not occur;
   
   • Fieldworkers maintain appropriate standards of behaviour; and
   
   • If a situation arises, they act quickly to minimise its effects.
Personal Security

26. Before proceeding on a field trip, fieldworkers should evaluate their personal security and implement recommended practices to minimise any risks.

27. Information may be available from:
   - Contacts in the local area or destination country;
   - Experiences of previous fieldworkers; and
   - Current recommendations from the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade published under “Consular Travel Advice” at their "Hints for Australian Travellers" website.

Note: Special procedures exist for travel into DFAT travel advisory level 4 or 5 countries.

See: Smart Traveller and Travel to High Risk Destinations.

Communication

General

28. If a safety or health problem occurs during fieldwork, then its potential severity can be minimised if effective communication and emergency procedures are in place, including facilities to allow communication within the field party and between the field party, the Budget Unit’s Authorised Officers, and local emergency services.

29. The facilities required for good communication will depend upon a number of factors including:
   - Location, terrain and weather;
   - Type of operation;
   - Number and type of vehicles (including boats and other forms of transport); and
   - Number of participants.

30. Communication solutions may include any of the following:
   - Near–by phone links;
   - Mobile phones;
   - CB or other radio;
   - Flying Doctor radios;
• Satellite phone;
• Internet phone, e.g. Skype
• Email;
• Web-based communications, e.g. Facebook;
• Personal security system; and
• Emergency location beacons.

31. At least one form of communication device must be taken on fieldwork and off-campus work. All party members are to be given information or training in the use of the communication devices, including, where appropriate, the EPIRB and/or the Personal Locating Beacon (PLB).

Communication between the field party and the local Budget Unit contact

32. Whilst in the field, the Field Party must communicate with the Budget Unit Authorised Person according to a pre-arranged communication schedule.

Emergency procedures

33. Emergency procedures should be established before departure, to allow the Budget Unit to respond quickly to any emergency situation. These should include:

• Contact procedures/details for relevant local emergency agencies (e.g. police, ambulance, (Flying) Doctor, Park Ranger); and
• Emergency contact procedures with the Authorised Officer, including a call-out system where the Authorised Officer is informed when a Field Party is overdue.

34. Where emergency beacons are used, appropriate registration details should link to the local Budget Unit contact (Safety Officer or Authorised Officer).

Transport

Vehicles

35. Vehicles used on fieldwork are:

• Of an appropriate type;
• Well-maintained; and
• Suitably equipped.

36. Depending on the nature of the fieldwork, the suggested/recommended
equipment for road vehicles, is given in Appendix 1 and in the References for this Procedure.

Drivers

37. People operating vehicles during fieldwork shall:
   - Hold a relevant and current government licence for each type of vehicle operated (e.g. car, bus, truck, boat, helicopter, airplane) and comply with all relevant regulations;
   - Be trained in the use of such vehicles (including four-wheel drive) under relevant operating conditions, and have obtained a satisfactory level of competence; and
   - Be trained in basic vehicle maintenance and the use of recovery equipment, if supplied.

Limits on Driving and Work Time

38. As a guideline it is recommended that:
   - Drivers should not exceed two hours continuous driving without a break away from the vehicle;
   - When the driving is shared, drivers should change over every two hours;
   - Cumulative driving time for any one driver should not exceed 8 hours in any 24-hour period;
   - The total time spent by any one person in fieldwork or in fieldwork plus driving should not exceed 12 hours in any 24-hour period. However, the Budget Unit or the fieldwork supervisor may set more stringent limits after giving consideration to work and driving conditions and the experience of participants and drivers;
   - Field Party members drive according to their natural wake–sleep patterns. They should avoid driving when they would normally be asleep.

Note: Driver fatigue is increased by excessive vibrations, e.g. through poor suspension. In these circumstances consider additional rest stops.

See: Fatigue the hidden killer for further information.

Warning: The risk of encountering native wildlife on the roads increases in early mornings and dusk. Additional care is required at these times.
Navigation

39. Appropriate navigation aids should be provided for field operations. These may include:

- Appropriate large-scale maps;
- Aerial photographs;
- A compass of proven standard;
- GPS (global positioning system) latitude and longitude indicator, and spare batteries;
- PLB, and spare batteries;
- EPIRB, preferably with GPS, and spare batteries.

40. Participants must have the skills to read maps, use a compass and understand GPS coordinates.

See: Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRB)

Environment

41. All expected or possible conditions within the environment must be considered in preparing for fieldwork or off-campus work.

Weather Evaluation

42. Fieldworkers should make themselves aware of the climatic conditions, tidal data and weather events that can be encountered in the location and obtain current weather forecasts regularly during the time in the field. Consider postponing trips or returning early if weather conditions pose an unacceptable risk.

Fire

43. Fieldworkers should be aware of, or find out from the relevant land manager (e.g. Bushfire Council, Shire Council, Park Ranger), the fire regulations that will apply throughout the duration of their fieldwork operation.

Warning: During extreme or catastrophic fire rating periods consider postponing fieldwork taking into account local conditions and activity type. Exercise extreme caution with all field activities if a high fire rating is suspected.

44. Special consideration should be given in periods of high and extreme fire danger as restrictions on access, processes, equipment and vehicles can apply. Carefully consider the risk of the fieldwork starting a fire. Ensure the field party:
• Has appropriate protective clothing;
• Can identify fire warning signs;
• Has a reasonable evacuation route, and
• Is aware of what to do if it becomes trapped.

**Warning:** Vehicles should not be parked in long grass because of the risk that hot metal will start a bushfire.

**Fauna and flora**

45. Fieldworkers should be aware of the hazards that may result from contact with local fauna and flora. The Fieldwork Supervisors should implement practicable risk control measures, including:
   - Informing participants of the hazards associated with the fieldwork;
   - Implementing specific work procedures that eliminate or reduce the risks associated with the hazards;
   - Providing appropriate personal protective equipment; and
   - Providing suitable first aid equipment.

46. Field work participants must be made aware of common Zoonoses and their treatments, including those associated with mosquitoes and ticks.

47. Participants should recognise that most native fauna and flora in Australia are protected by law.

See: [Malaria and Dengue Fever](#)

[Ticks](#)

**Equipment**

**Apparel and Personal Protective Equipment**

48. Fieldworkers should ensure they are appropriately attired for the fieldwork to be undertaken and for the weather conditions they are likely to encounter. Consider both hot and cold weather extremes and physical protection from the physical environment.

49. Fieldworkers should use personal protective equipment provided for the tasks to be undertaken. The equipment should:
   - Be appropriate for the tasks to be undertaken;
   - Comply with relevant Australian Standards,
• Be in good condition; and  
• Be adequately maintained.

50. Additional equipment may be required if it is likely to be damaged (e.g. gloves) or consumed (e.g. sunscreen).

**Accommodation**

51. Accommodation facilities should be appropriate for the requirements of the fieldwork and the hazards likely to be encountered. As a minimum, people should have access to shelter to protect them from adverse weather conditions, e.g. sheds, caravans, tents, windbreaks, shade canopies. The accommodation must allow for suitable/comfortable sleeping conditions.

**Provisions**

52. Appropriate provisions, e.g. food and water, with a margin for safety, should be provided and appropriately stored.

**Firearms and prohibited weapons**

53. Firearms based in the A.C.T. are controlled under the Prohibited Weapons Act 1996. A licence is required for the weapon and each user. Firearms shall not be permitted on fieldwork, except where approved by the Director.

54. If a firearm or item listed as a Prohibited Weapon is required, then please contact the OHS Branch for advice.

**Medical**

**General**

55. In general terms, personnel undertaking fieldwork or work off-campus should be fit for the task and fit for travel. Persons with a pre-existing medical condition that may be an issue should discuss this with the Fieldwork Supervisor/organizer. In some instances the Fieldwork Supervisor may request a written recommendation (such as an appropriate medical management plan) from the Doctor before accepting the person on the field trip. This is to ensure that tasking is appropriate and triggers/first aid/treatment measures are known.

**First Aid personnel**

56. The following are the University's requirements for First Aid personnel on fieldwork or off-campus work:
   - Fieldwork parties – each party should have two or more participants
currently certified in First Aid. A single fieldworker must be certified in remote area First Aid;

- Fieldwork in remote areas – First Aid personnel should be trained in remote area First Aid. At least one field party member must have remote area First Aid training/certification; and

- Off-campus work – at least one currently certified First Aid attendant. In an urban area this requirement may be relaxed after considering the risks associated with the off-campus work.

**Note**: Additional First Aid attendants may be required when considering the risks associated with the fieldwork and numbers of people (such as with undergraduate field classes).

57. The Director should encourage regular participants in fieldwork to undertake certification in First Aid or remote area First Aid and training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

See: [OHS Training/General Courses](#) for course information.

**First Aid kits**

58. Each fieldwork party should carry an occupational first aid kit. Additional first aid kits will need to be carried when away from the vehicle or campsite.

See: [Appendix C of the University's First Aid Procedure](#) for remote area and fieldwork first aid.

**Deep Vein Thrombosis**

59. Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) can develop in an individual during a long duration airline flight. A UK government committee report "Air Travel and Health" (Nov 2000) stated: "For healthy individuals, the risk of getting a clinically significant deep vein thrombosis solely because they are taking a flight seems to be exceedingly small. For those who are already at risk because they are subject to predisposing factors there may be an additional risk from flying, but it is not currently quantifiable." The report provides preventive advice for individuals in four risk groups described in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where a person ...</th>
<th>Then...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has no known predisposing factors for DVT,</td>
<td>Exercise around the cabin and in the seat (ankle rotations for some minutes every half hour).</td>
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<td>Fieldwork health and off-campus work safety</td>
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- Drink water, fruit juice and non-caffeinated soft drinks.
- Warning: Avoid excess alcohol and caffeine drinks before and during the flight.

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<tr>
<th>Is at minor risk, e.g. over 40 years, extensive varicose veins</th>
<th>As above, plus</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take only short periods of sleep.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consider wearing support stockings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Warning: Do not take sleeping pills.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Is at moderate risk, e.g. recent heart disease, pregnant, taking the contraceptive pill</th>
<th>As above, plus</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Low-dose, pre-flight aspirin under doctor's supervision.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Is at substantial risk, e.g. recent major surgery, or stroke, or previous or current DVT</th>
<th>Consider avoiding or postponing flight.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If travelling, low molecular weight heparin instead of aspirin under doctor's supervision.</td>
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**See:** [DVT and long-distance air travel for further information](#).

### Infectious Diseases

60. At least six months prior to departure, fieldworkers going overseas should consult a doctor with experience in travel medicine, and undertake an evaluation of the infectious diseases prevalent in the proposed work locations and the recommended protective measures against such infections, including:

- Preventative vaccinations;
- Safety of local water and food; and
- Availability of local medical and hospital services.

**See:** [Malaria and Dengue Fever](#) if travelling to an area endemic for malaria or dengue fever.

61. Special consideration needs to be given for:

- Pregnant women; and
• Those at increased personal risk (e.g. those who have had a splenectomy).

62. The following web sites provide additional information for prospective travellers:

• Quarantine and travel health;
• The Travel Doctor;
• The Travel Doctor fact sheets; and
• Smartraveller.

63. Travel Health (1300 139 281) and Travel Health Service (1300 361 046) provide a telephone consultation service.

Radiation workers

64. Staff undertaking work involving radiation should consult the University's Radiation Safety Procedure. The local Radiation Safety Officer should be aware of the radiation work to be undertaken. University radiation standards and requirements must be satisfied.

History

65. The Fieldwork and Work Off-Campus risk management procedure was reviewed by representatives of management and staff, reviewed and ratified by the Occupational Health and Safety Policy Committee.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the University's Occupational Health and Safety Policy and other relevant policies and procedures of the University.

Forms

67. Forms appropriate for this Procedure are available from local Budget Units.

Appendix 1

See: Elements for Consideration in Fieldwork and Off-Campus Work