

Field Safety Policy Arrangements

HSA-10136

Contents

Document Control.....	3
Amendment Record.....	3
1. Scope	4
2. Introduction	4
3. Definition.....	4
4. Roles and Responsibilities.....	5
4.1 University	5
4.2 Heads School/ PSU	5
4.3 Head of Department/ Programme Lead	5
4.4 Fieldwork Leaders (Fieldwork Risk Assessor)	6
4.5 Individual Participants	6
4.6 Independent Fieldworkers or those travelling on University Business	7
5. Supervision	7
6. Field Work Approval.....	7
7. Risk Assessment	8
7.1 Fieldwork risk assessment	8
7.2 Dynamic risk assessment	8
8. Fieldwork Planning.....	8
8.1 Operational planning	8
8.2 Contingency planning	9
8.3 Emergency planning	9
9. Personal Identification.....	9
10. Lone Working.....	10
11. International travel	10
12. First Aid.....	10
13. Reconnaissance Visits.....	11
14. Essential Information and Communication Pathways	11
14.1 Communication Pathways	12
15. Emergency Management.....	12
16. Insurance	13
17. Training and Competence.....	13
18. Equipment and Clothing.....	14

19. Accommodation	14
20. Downtime.....	14
21. Registration and Monitoring of Field Sites.....	15
22. Decommissioning of Fieldwork	15
23. Monitoring and Review	15
24. Further Information	15

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Written By	Gemma McLean
Amended by	Gemma McLean
Reviewed by	Louise Nowell
Contact Email	healthandsafety@swansea.ac.uk

Amendment Record

Revision	Date	Amendment(s)
0		Draft
1	Nov 2018	New document
2	March 2023	Review, update following new guidance and risk assessment documents created to support the policy.
2.1	March 2025	Review following changes to associated documents and guidance
3		
4		

1. Scope

These policy arrangements define fieldwork roles and responsibilities and describe the practical steps that must be taken to minimise any risks and to comply with legislation.

This document compliments the revised guidance issued by the [USHA - Higher Education Sector Guidance on Health and Safety in Fieldwork and Travel Including all offsite visits and travel in the UK and overseas](#). *It supersedes and draws upon previous USHA/ UCEA guidance on Safety in Fieldwork (USHA 2011). It includes material from Health and Safety when Working Overseas (USHA 1998). The revised guidance aligns good practice in the Higher Education sector with the British Standard, BS8848: Specification for the provision of visits, fieldwork, expeditions, and adventurous activities outside the United Kingdom ('BS 8848:2007+A1:2009') and PAS 3001:2016 Travelling for Work – Responsibilities of an organization for health and safety and security – Code of practice.* This document provides guidance that will enable Faculties and Professional Service Units (PSUs) to develop suitable rules based on the principles of measured risk management. This guidance is not intended to prohibit field working.

2. Introduction

The principal aim of these arrangements is to ensure any fieldwork carried out for the purpose of university business is undertaken in a controlled and co-ordinated manner therefore minimising the health and safety risks to members of staff, students, and members of the public. It outlines the procedures and arrangements that need to be in place within Faculties and PSUs to enable staff and student participants to undertake fieldwork safely. These arrangements will support Faculties/ PSUs in adopting a risk-based approach to the management of health and safety risks arising out of fieldwork and sets out reasonable actions to:

- Ensure the University fulfils its statutory and common law duties of care towards its staff and students.
- Assist in making fieldwork organisers and participants sufficiently informed to enable them to plan and participate in the fieldwork activities safely.
- Ensure that the benefits of fieldwork outweigh the risk.

3. Definition

Fieldwork is defined as: any practical work carried out by staff or students at Swansea University for the purpose of teaching and/or research in places that are not under the control of the University, but where the University is responsible for the safety of its staff and/or students and others exposed to their activities.

This definition will therefore include activities as diverse as attendance at conferences and recruitment fairs, undertaking social science interviews, as well as activities more traditionally associated with the term “fieldwork” such as survey/ collection work carried out by geographers, geologists, or biologists.

The term fieldwork **does not** include work experience or work placements (guidance can be found on the Swansea University H&S webpage).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 University

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Swansea University as an employer has a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare at work of all its employees. There is also a general duty to protect students and members of the public. These requirements are applicable to all work situations, including where staff (and others) are working alone, both on or off campus or outside normal working hours. Responsibilities of the University are discharged as laid out in the *Health, Safety, Resilience and Sustainability Policy - Part 2: Organisation Document - Roles and Responsibilities* and this document as follows.

4.2 Heads School/ PSU

- Ensure there are adequate safety management arrangements are in place for the health and safety of all field workers for all red level fieldwork.
- Ensure the department leads/ programme directors have sufficient knowledge and training to be able to deem competence amongst their staff.
- Ensure Fieldwork leaders are authorised, adequately trained and competent to carry out their role and are capable of leading, possibly in adverse, unforeseeable, or emergency conditions.
- Access to training is provided as required.
- Ensure the degree of planning and organisation required is consistent with the degree of risk, so that any associated risks are reduced to as low as reasonably practicable.
- Ensure safe systems of work are in place for hazardous work.
- There is a procedure in place to review the safety of fieldwork activities.
- The consequences of failure by participants to comply with the instructions of fieldwork leaders are clearly defined within the faculty's policies and procedures, and that this is made known to participants.

4.3 Head of Department/ Programme Lead

- Ensure there are adequate safety management arrangements are in place for the health and safety of all field workers for all fieldwork.
- Ensure Fieldwork leaders are authorised, adequately trained and competent to carry out their role and are capable of leading, possibly in adverse, unforeseeable, or emergency conditions.

- Ensure the degree of planning and organisation required is consistent with the degree of risk, so that any associated risks are reduced to as low as reasonably practicable.
- Ensure safe systems of work are in place for hazardous work.
- Ensure there is a procedure in place to review the safety of fieldwork activities.
- The consequences of failure by participants to comply with the instructions of fieldwork leaders are understood by the fieldwork leader.
- Ensure adequate time is available to debrief and review the documents post fieldwork.

4.4 Fieldwork Leaders (Fieldwork Risk Assessor)

- Ensure they undertake suitable and sufficient fieldwork risk assessments and develop any additional method statements or safe systems of work required to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all the fieldwork participants. In addition to the fieldwork risk assessment(s) the leader must also ensure that dynamic risk assessments are undertaken when necessary.
- Ensure they complete the correct fieldwork risk assessment (red/ green form).
- Ensure the fieldwork is within scope of the University insurance policy.
- Ensure that all safety precautions and control measures identified as required by the risk assessment are implemented and observed for the duration of the fieldwork.
- Ensure that allocation of specific supervisory duties as appropriate to members of the leadership team is undertaken.
- Ensure that participants are made aware of the safety measures and that these are fully understood.
- Ensure that health declarations are organised when appropriate.
- Ensure that all participants have access to essential emergency information, for example emergency contact information for the fieldwork participants, details of local hospitals, etc.
- Ensure they stop the activity (which may include leaving a location) if they judge that the situation is unsafe.
- Ensure after the event they undertake a review of the fieldwork, seek feedback from participants and feed lessons learnt back into the risk assessment process, safe systems of work and/or field methodology.

4.5 Individual Participants

All participants (staff, students, and any guests e.g., from another institution) must comply with the safety precautions and instructions put in place by the fieldwork leader, and with the general good practice guidance provided. This may include:

- Providing essential personal and contact information e.g., mobile phone number, emergency contact details.

- Understanding and complying with any instructions or safety protocols given to them by the leader or member of the fieldwork team.
- Complying with any medical or health requirements e.g., health declarations/ vaccinations.
- Conducting their activities in a safe manner so as not to harm themselves or other participants.
- Keeping in contact with the University to confirm that they are safe and well.
- Bringing any problems to the attention of the fieldwork leader or their academic supervisor and disclose any health conditions that may have a bearing on their own safety or that of others.

4.6 Independent Fieldworkers or those travelling on University Business

In practice, they will assume most of the duties of the Fieldwork Leader(4.4) and must ensure that their work has been agreed with their line manager/ supervisor and relevant Head of Department/ Faculty as appropriate to the risk, and the work is safe to carry out based on the risk assessment.

5. Supervision

Supervision requirements will vary depending on the nature of the fieldwork and the experience of the participants. The UCEA guidance no longer recommends ratios. Many factors need to be considered when assessing the level of supervision required for any particular fieldwork. Supervision requirements will vary tremendously, for example an inexperienced group of first year students will require a higher level of supervision than would be necessary for postgraduate student level.

Supervision can be **direct** (i.e., the supervisor is always present and in charge), or indirect (i.e., a member of staff manages the fieldwork but would be unable to intervene in person immediately). Direct supervision is appropriate for high-risk activities or for less experienced participants.

Indirect supervision may include individual research placements, lone working, or postgraduate research project fieldwork. In these circumstances, the fieldworker(s) must have previously demonstrated their competence in all procedures to be used. A safe system of work must be in place, including means of maintaining contact, emergency procedures including plans in case of failure to make contact on a routine basis etc.

6. Field Work Approval

Authorisation for fieldwork depends on the risk level of the fieldwork (see Off Campus Activities and Fieldwork Matrix). Authorisation should not be given until a full risk assessment has been undertaken and submitted for approval at the appropriate level.

Most fieldwork/ activities of a moderate risk will be subject to approval by the Head of Department or Programme Director.

Any high-risk fieldwork may need approval Head of School/ Director PSU with confirmation of cover from insurance.

If unsure, please email healthandsafety@swansea.ac.uk with a brief overview of the fieldwork to be undertaken.

7. Risk Assessment

7.1 Fieldwork risk assessment

The Fieldwork Leader must complete the fieldwork risk assessment. This person must have received appropriate training and/or have significant experience and a proven track record in organising successful fieldwork. It must not be delegated to administrative staff. The final risk assessment document should identify and record foreseeable hazards and significant risks associated with the planned activities.

For the risk assessment to be 'suitable and sufficient', the written assessment should clearly identify what precautions need to be put in place to ensure the risks once controlled are acceptable, how and by whom any actions required will be taken, and it should detail the timescale for outstanding actions to be completed.

Any significant residual risks apparent at the end of this process should be clearly identified in the paperwork so that the acceptability of an intrinsic or residual risk can be judged by the person who will authorise the fieldwork. The authoriser must take into account the benefits of the fieldwork balanced against the risks.

7.2 Dynamic risk assessment

Dynamic risk assessments (i.e., ongoing situation awareness and assessment) may be required during some fieldwork to allow flexibility. However, this should not replace adequate contingency planning, and it should not introduce completely new activities which have not been given prior approval without consultation with the person who gave the original approval. Where possible additional identified risks should be included in an updated risk assessment following a review of fieldwork to ensure that they are accounted for if the trip is repeated.

8. Fieldwork Planning

8.1 Operational planning

Operational 'normal' planning should include consideration of:

- The participants, including students, staff, and supervision.
- Identification of young persons and vulnerable adults
- Personal safety
- Acceptable and unacceptable conduct
- Fieldwork risk assessment
- International travel assessment
- Accommodation
- First aid
- Health and food allergies/intolerance
- Insurance
- Communications
- Legal requirements/ permits/ permissions, etc.
- Health declarations

8.2 Contingency planning

Where appropriate, the contingency plan should include responses to:

- Travel and security issues
- Illness (both staff and students)
- Domestic/ personal emergency requiring immediate return of fieldwork participant or member of staff.
- Changes to leadership ratios
- Changes in activity
- Theft/ loss of essential equipment
- Communications with the University
- Unacceptable conduct

8.3 Emergency planning

Where appropriate, the emergency plan should cover:

- Travel and security issues
- Means of summoning help and assistance
- Missing persons procedure
- Evacuation procedures
- Availability of emergency medical support
- Liaison with police and emergency services
- Financial plan for emergencies
- Communications with the University

9. Personal Identification

Faculties/ PSUs must have a system for knowing the identities and contact information for fieldwork participants. In some case, especially where a trip is outside normal working hours and/or overseas, this may also need to include information about emergency contact information (e.g., next of kin). This is achieved by completing the HSA-10153-07 Participants declarations and information form.

10. Lone Working

Whenever possible, work should be organised to avoid lone working. However, it is recognised that lone working is unavoidable in some situations and is therefore permitted where the risks are low, and the person involved:

- Has received appropriate information, and instruction and training.
- Is competent and experienced in any work tasks involved and follows an agreed safe system of work.
- Is adequately equipped.
- Is adequately supervised (albeit from a distance).
- Is not conducting high risk activities.
- Has access to an effective means of normal and emergency communications (e.g., mobile phone, satellite phone, two-way radio, etc.) and maintains communication as agreed.
- Has informed their supervisor or another responsible person of their departure and thereafter safe return.
- The risk assessment and controls adequately identify and control the risks to the lone worker.
- There is a contingency plan if the lone worker fails to return or make contact.

It should also be noted that working alone is illegal in certain specified situations (e.g., work in confined spaces, fumigation, diving operations, etc.). For further information on lone working, please see: **HSA-10119 Lone Working Policy Arrangements**.

11. International travel

There are likely to be additional considerations for international travel. See *Swansea University's Health and Safety - International Travel* section for information.

Where fieldwork involves international travel, a request to travel and international risk assessment needs to be completed in conjunction with the fieldwork risk assessment.

12. First Aid

To provide adequate first aid during field working consideration should be given to the following:

- Appropriate first aid kit - A basic first aid kit should contain equipment (e.g., bandages, dressings, plasters, sterile wipes, safety pins, etc.) in sufficient quantities appropriate to the number of participants, the duration of fieldwork and the planned activities.
- Means of correct treatment of casualties i.e., first aider(s) trained to the appropriate level this may be emergency first aid up to outdoor/wilderness first aid and beyond.
- Specialist equipment - When visiting some areas of the world additional consideration of emergency provision for injury or ill-health should be made.

- All participants should be informed of the arrangements for first aid, the location of facilities when on fieldwork, who the First Aider(s) are and the reporting mechanism following an accident.

13. Reconnaissance Visits

Pre-trip site reconnaissance visits are advisable for both safety and academic reasons. Ideally, one member of the field party should have first-hand knowledge of the area. If this is not available, seek advice from a person who is familiar with the area.

14. Essential Information and Communication Pathways

Faculties and PSUs should ensure that there is a system for holding all final plans for fieldwork in a secure, but readily accessible place in the in case of emergency.

There must be a system by which a responsible person is aware of the planned fieldwork, departure and return times, and is able to make further enquiries or raise the alarm if the fieldworker(s) fails to make agreed contact or fails to return at the planned time.

The Faculty/ PSU must ensure that a responsible person(s) is nominated for fieldworkers to contact in the event of a problem or emergency. This contact may need to be available 24 hours a day i.e., a departmental office number that is only manned during Monday-Friday office hours may not be sufficient. If this is not practicable, a reporting-in system may be required. The frequency will depend on the level of risk.

The Fieldwork Leader must ensure that:

- Details of the fieldwork are lodged with the Faculty/ PSU.
- All those involved in fieldwork are informed about who will take charge in an emergency, back-up arrangements e.g., insurance details, and contact details.
- They, and a deputy if appointed, have a means of communication, in routine and emergency situations, with:
 - a nominated responsible person in their School/ Department.
 - all participants in a fieldwork group.
 - the University Security Control, if overseas, the University's travel insurers and emergency assistance providers.

The fieldwork leader should have access to emergency contact information for all participants. Emergency contact information will only be used in an emergency, and only with the prior consent of the fieldwork participant. Each fieldwork participant should provide their emergency contact information and any other relevant information (allergies, medical conditions, etc.) to the Fieldwork Leader via the participant form.

It cannot be guaranteed that the emergency services, either in the United Kingdom or internationally will contact relatives/ partners/ next of kin. The fieldwork leader/ staff member should try to consult University management first, Human Resources for

incidents involving staff; Student Services for students, or a member of the Major Incident Team before contacting next of kin to report an accident or fatality where it is not likely to prevent treatment of a casualty. If it is essential that emergency contacts are informed as soon the fieldwork leader is authorised to do so. They must then inform the University as soon as possible.

14.1 Communication Pathways

Communication pathways are a key feature in safe fieldwork. This is particularly so in research and on expeditions, where workers may be working individually or in small groups. The poorer the communications, the more competent and experienced the team needs to be. The communications infrastructure detailed in the risk assessment should aim to incorporate as many options as possible. In general, mobile phones may be used for communications but should be supplemented with back-up alternative methods of seeking assistance in an emergency e.g., land line phones; satellite phones; two-way radios; satellite distress beacon. The University strongly encourages the use of Safe Zone by both staff and students.

It is also important to remember that the emergency may be at home which might require the University to assist with contacting the fieldworker.

For day-to-day group activities in a foreign country, a local or suitable base should be aware of the location of fieldworkers and the activities they are undertaking. This may mean leaving written details of the activity/ plan/ route and communication methods with a nominee at base. There must be an agreed means of communication between the fieldworker and the base and a plan of action if the fieldworker(s) fails to report at the agreed time.

15. Emergency Management

Faculties/ PSUs must ensure there are effective emergency arrangements in place for all fieldwork. For low-risk work, it may be sufficient to rely on university systems and support e.g., insurance. For higher risk fieldwork, additional measures may be required.

- Fieldwork leaders must have an emergency plan, appropriate to the risks likely to be encountered.
- Fieldwork leaders (or individual staff members working on their own) are empowered to stop an activity or leave a location if they deem it unsafe. The University will support the decision of the fieldwork leader of authorised fieldwork trips.
- All fieldwork leaders must be made aware of the University's procedures to be followed in the event of a death (regardless of cause) or other serious incident to a member of staff or a participant.

- In the event of possible media/ press interest, the Communications Office must be contacted. School/ Department staff should not make any statements and must refer all enquiries to the Communications Office.

16. Insurance

The University requires that adequate and appropriate insurance is in place for all participants in fieldwork and to cover University-owned equipment.

It is important to liaise with the Insurance team to ensure that the level of cover is adequate for activities.

If dangerous or excluded activities are to be undertaken:

- The Insurance Office must be notified to confirm that cover is in place or that specific terms/ conditions apply (insurance@swansea.ac.uk).
- Members of fieldwork groups should be informed of their insurance cover through the University, including any exclusions, and should be advised to take out additional personal insurance if necessary.
- Fieldwork leaders and any other persons/ services who may have a role in management of an emergency should ensure that they have up-to-date details for access to the travel insurance services if working overseas e.g., policy number, emergency contact details.

Even if the fieldwork takes place at a recognised field centre, the organiser must clarify the insurance liabilities and contact University insurance office to ensure there is adequate cover.

If participants are likely to undertake hazardous activities during personal down time, or make their own travel arrangements e.g., by extending a fieldwork overseas to take a holiday, this will not be covered by the University travel insurance, and participants may need to take out their own personal travel/ accident insurance. This should be checked with the Insurance Office: insurance@swansea.ac.uk.

17. Training and Competence

Fieldwork leaders and independent fieldworkers should be trained in the content and application of this guidance, in how to undertake risk assessments and undertake emergency planning. The use of family members or friends (whom are not staff) in the fieldwork team should be avoided.

In addition, for each field course the risk assessment process should be used to identify the training and induction requirements for both staff and students. This should be provided prior to departure or during the fieldwork if more appropriate.

Where applicable a robust system must be in place to assess and train participants before allowing any indirectly supervised fieldwork. This training should assess

participants understanding and an ability to operate incident and emergency protocols put in place. The Faculty/ PSU should hold a record of this training.

Competence is gained through ongoing staff development. The Head of School/ PSU must be satisfied that the fieldwork leader has the personal capability and competence to lead, especially under possible adverse conditions, and has sufficient awareness of the legal obligations to those under their supervision. Competence in this context is defined as being not only the combination of knowledge, experience, and qualifications, but also being able to acknowledge one's own limitations.

18. Equipment and Clothing

Participants should be advised of the type of clothing and footwear needed for the fieldwork. If specific equipment is required for fieldwork activity the organiser must ensure that this is provided by the University or a suitable third part provider and must be fit for purpose including appropriate maintenance and servicing, with records available. Training requirements for the safe use of equipment should be identified in the initial planning phase and noted in the risk assessment.

19. Accommodation

All members of staff in a supervisory role should be competent to carry out basic checks on accommodation. The level of checking should be risk based and be dependent upon the type of accommodation (see guidance for details).

The fieldworker leader should be given delegated authority to find alternative accommodation in circumstances where no prior checks have been practicable, and the accommodation is found to present unacceptable risks (e.g., poor fire or electrical safety or hygiene).

The fieldwork leader must ensure that the accommodation meets the needs of all members of the group, paying particular attention to participants with disabilities, young persons (under 18) and vulnerable adults. Provide training to participants on the safe use of any temporary accommodation such as tents. Personal security and privacy should be considered when booking accommodation. All fieldworkers should to be asked to make themselves familiar with the fire procedures in their accommodation (alarm signal, evacuation routes, extinguishers, assembly point).

20. Downtime

The fieldwork leader must identify the extent of personal and down time within the proposed itinerary/ fieldwork and define what is and is not acceptable during these periods. This must be communicated far enough in advance to participants, a face-to-face briefing, supported by written information, is advisable.

Personal time is defined as: time when programmed fieldwork activities are not taking place but participants remain under the general jurisdiction of the University. It is unlikely that participants will be directly supervised during these periods. Common examples of personal time activities include organised sightseeing, social activities, and outings.

Down time can be defined as: a period of time, occurring within the overall duration of the fieldwork, but outside the jurisdiction of the University e.g., a personal trip to visit friends or relatives or site of interest to the individual not relevant to the fieldtrip.

See guidance for more information.

21. Registration and Monitoring of Field Sites

Each Faculty/ PSU should have an accessible list of all ongoing field project locations. The Supervisor/ line manager should periodically visit the site, where appropriate, to ensure that the site is safe for both the fieldwork(s) and any other users of the site.

22. Decommissioning of Fieldwork

Following the completion of a fieldwork project all trace of Swansea University should be removed from the site and any equipment returned to the University (all projects should consider the impact on the site both short and long term). It is the responsibility of the line manager/ supervisors to ensure if research is finished/ abandoned for any reason the site is decommissioned if safe to do so.

23. Monitoring and Review

An appropriate level of monitoring of health and safety arrangements must be an ongoing process during fieldwork. Procedures must be adapted and documents, instructions etc. updated, as necessary.

A review must be undertaken after a field course/ expedition to consider:

- Staff feedback about course value and viability.
- Student feedback on quality of learning experience.
- Conduct of students.
- Health and safety incidents (these must be recorded on the University's adverse events system).
- Suitability of any accommodation and transport arrangements.

24. Further Information

- H&S webpage (Swansea University): www.swansea.ac.uk/healthsafety/

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- Security Webpage (Swansea University): www.swansea.ac.uk/estates-and-facilitiesmanagement/ourservices/security/securityemergencyinformation/
 - UCEA guidance: https://www.usha.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/MASTERUSHA_Safety-in-Fieldwork-Guide.pdf