

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

FIELDWORK SAFETY PROCEDURES

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that all field activities and excursions are properly planned and co-ordinated and that documented procedures are followed.

2. DEFINITIONS

Fieldwork

Fieldwork is any University related activity, such as research or practical work which involves travel to and from a destination off-campus. Fieldwork is commonly undertaken outside urban centres and may range from a one-day excursion to spending several days working from a remote field camp. Fieldwork does not normally include work performed at facilities owned or operated by another organisation although some of the principles in these Procedures may still apply.

Field Trip Co-ordinator

The field trip Co-ordinator is the person in charge of the teaching program, research program or working arrangements in which field trips are a requirement and of the supervision of persons whilst on the field trip. If the Field Trip Co-ordinator does not participate in the field trip, the responsibilities for the conduct and supervision of participants may be delegated to a responsible person.

3. PROCEDURES

3.1 **Responsibility for Authorising Field Trips**

The Head of School (or Department) is responsible for ensuring that all field trips conducted by the School are properly planned, authorised and conducted in a safe manner. Responsibility for the planning and co-ordination of field trips may be delegated to lecturers or persons in charge of a teaching or research program when multiple or regular field trips are conducted as part of the program. For Schools conducting regular or multiple field trips, safe operating procedures and information kits should be developed to simplify the task of organising field trips.

3.2 **Field Trip Co-ordinator**

The Field Trip Co-ordinator shall:

1. Assess the health and safety requirements of the proposed field trip and to ensure that University policies and procedures are adhered to throughout the field trip.
2. Ensure that participants are provided with details of the field trip arrangements and requirements for participation. A sample Fieldwork Information Notice is shown in Appendix A.
3. Ensure that a responsible person or organisation is informed prior to the fieldwork of the details so that a search can be initiated if the group fails to make contact by a pre-arranged time. The Sample Fieldwork Information Notice can be used for this purpose.

4. Maintain (or have ready access to) a register of participants, emergency contact details and relevant medical information throughout the field trip.
5. Ensure that the field trip is properly conducted and participants are appropriately supervised.

3.3 Persons Undergoing solo field trips

Persons undergoing solo field trips are also required to ensure that the trip has been properly planned and that the health and safety requirements are addressed. Persons undergoing solo field trips must:

1. Assess the health and safety requirements of the proposed field trip and to ensure that University policies and procedures are adhered to throughout the Field trip.
2. Ensure that the field trip is approved by their supervisor beforehand.
3. Ensure that a responsible person or organisation is informed prior to the fieldwork of the details so that a search can be initiated if the group fails to make contact by a pre-arranged time. The Sample Fieldwork Information Notice can be used for this purpose.

3.4 Field Trip Participants

Field trip participants are responsible for observing such rules and procedures as determined by the Field Trip Co-ordinator, which may affect their health and well being.

Participants are also responsible for disclosing a medical condition or disability which may affect their health and safety or the health and safety of other people to the Field Trip Co-ordinator. In such cases the Field Trip Co-ordinator must ensure that confidentiality of such disclosures as well as any information of a personal nature is maintained at all times. If participants are unsure whether a condition or disability will affect their participation they should discuss the matter in confidence with the Head of School.

3.5 Establishing Appropriate Arrangements for Field Trips

In determining what are appropriate arrangements for each field trip, the Field Trip Co-ordinator shall assess the risks likely to be encountered and to plan for those risks. The risk assessment should have regard to the following issues along with any other issues specific to the field trip.

3.5.1 Supervision

Supervision must be provided at all times and participants must observe appropriate standards of behaviour. The level of supervision should be commensurate with the tasks being performed, any hazards associated with the work and the level of training and experience of the person carrying out the work.

All persons designated as having supervisory responsibilities must be aware of their health and safety obligations and their level of authority should be made known to the participants.

3.5.2 Communication and Emergency Response

Lines of communication must be established prior to field work to ensure that communication within the group, to the home base and to external emergency services is maintained at all times. Good communication enables participants to be forewarned of dangers as well as summoning help in an emergency. The communication arrangements should include:

- Frequency of contact (minimum daily is recommended)

- Roll calls where there are more than four participants
- The lodgement of emergency contact details with a responsible person or organisation prior to the field trip commencing. The responsible person or organisation is a person who can be relied upon to follow up non-reporting or an organisation such as the local police station. A sample notification form is provided in Appendix A.

It is recommended that participants work in a minimum of pairs where practicable. Persons undertaking field trips alone (such as day trips to the countryside) should be aware of the extra need to ensure good lines of communication are maintained.

If fieldwork involves travel to a destination overseas then the planning should include arrangements to repatriate participants to Australia if necessary.

3.5.3 Transport and Navigation

Vehicles used for transport must be appropriate for the conditions and must be in good condition. The vehicles must carry sufficient fuel and appropriate tools and spare parts to carry out roadside repairs. University vehicles (or vehicles hired for the purpose) should be used in preference to private vehicles and only persons holding a current driving licence be authorised to drive the vehicles.

Transport of participants to and from the field trip site must be planned to ensure that the safest and most direct route is followed and that sufficient rest breaks are taken en route. Modern navigation aids such as global positioning device are available and should be carried during work in remote locations.

3.5.4 Weather and Clothing

Planning field trips must take into account likely weather patterns (and even unexpected weather patterns) as exposure to extremes of heat or cold can be hazardous. Clothing should be suited the climate and should provide protection against all likely weather conditions (particularly where the weather may change rapidly).

3.5.5 Provisions

Suitable provisions should be provided and stored against spoilage or damage. The stock should be sufficient to allow for unplanned events such as an extended stay (due to inclement weather) or for loss or damage. It is recommended a checklist of provisions be written before the field trip to help in identifying provisions and items to include.

3.5.6 Environment and Waste Management

Permits may be required to set up camp in some parks and areas and for collecting flora or fauna in some situations. The Field Trip Co-ordinator should check with the statutory body responsible for the park or area concerned.

The impact on the environment must be minimised as far as is practicable and all waste and rubbish be removed from the site unless there are waste facilities available. Any releases or spillage of chemicals or hazardous materials must be quickly contained and removed or neutralised. Planned releases into the environment must be approved beforehand by the relevant University ethics or safety committee and must only be in accordance with the approved protocols.

3.5.7 High Risk Activities

If the field work includes high risk activities such as underground work, abseiling or working with animals, it is essential that expert advice is obtained to minimise the risk and that all safety equipment is maintained in accordance with manufacturers instructions. Participants should only be allowed to undertake such activities if they have demonstrated they are trained and competent to do so. If relevant, certificates of competency may be a requirement of performing some activities (for example, scuba diving).

3.5.8 First Aid

The first aid requirements for each field trip should be assessed to ensure there is a sufficient number of trained first aiders and first aid kits available. The actual number of first aiders, first aid kits and arrangements will depend on the nature of activities being performed, the distance an injured or ill person has to be transported to first aid and the ease at which transportation can occur.

Where timely access to appropriate medical services or an ambulance service is restricted due to distance or location, there should be at least one first aider and first aid kit. For more than ten persons, a second first aider should be available and ideally be trained to level 2. The base camp and each vehicle should be equipped with first aid kits.

The Occupational Health and Safety Section can provide more information and advice on first aid requirements on request.

3.5.9 Disability and Medical Restrictions

The Field Trip Co-ordinator must be made aware of any pre-existing medical condition or disability which may affect a persons participation in a field trip or which may require active management during the field trip (including the administration of medications). Any information of a medical or personal nature will be treated in a confidential manner and only first aiders and relevant medical and paramedical personnel will be informed.

The University will endeavour to accommodate any restrictions or limitations imposed on individuals, however in some cases persons may be advised not to participate where there is a significant risk to themselves or others. Any persons unsure about whether a medical condition or disability places them at greater risk are encouraged to discuss the matter in confidence with the University Medical Centre or the Field Trip Co-ordinator.

The University may recommend that persons undergo immunisation prior to performing some types of activities, travel to certain areas or working with animals, depending on the relative risk of acquiring infection. Persons travelling overseas should consult their treating doctor or the University Medical Centre to determine whether vaccinations or specific health precautions are warranted. For more information on immunisations, refer to the University's Occupational Health and Safety Policies and Procedures Manual.

3.5.10 Food Safety

All food preparation and storage as part of a field trip must be in accordance with established food safety guidelines and in some cases legislative requirements may also apply. All food that requires preparation prior to being cooked and distributed must be prepared under hygienic conditions and all ingredients must be of a sound quality and produced in accordance with the Food Standards Code (Victoria).

Alcohol can affect the health and safety of persons performing field activities and consequently should be discouraged.

3.5.11 Firearms and Explosives

The use of firearms and explosives should be discouraged as far as practicable given the intrinsic hazards and community expectations. Where they have been identified as essential to the work being performed, they must be transported, stored and used in compliance with regulations. Only persons holding an appropriate firearms licence and who have been authorised by the Field Trip Co-ordinator shall be permitted to operate a firearm or explosives.

4. REFERENCES

Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

5. CROSS REFERENCES

Procedure on Working in Outdoor Seasonal (Transient) Heat
Procedure on Prevention of Occupational Exposure to Solar UV Radiation
Procedure on the Provision of First Aid

6. DOCUMENTATION

Fieldwork Information Notice
Participant Emergency Contact Register

The Executive Occupational Health and Safety Committee approved these procedures at its meeting in December 1999.

Editorial Changes: July 2005

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE FIELDWORK INFORMATION NOTICE

INFORMATION TO BE CONTAINED IN THE NOTICE:

1. Name of person in charge of field trip
2. Title of field trip
3. Location (map and grid reference if available)
4. Start time and date of field trip
5. Departure location
6. Expected time and date of return
7. Accommodation address
8. Nearest emergency services:
 - Hospital** (Address and telephone number)
 - Police** (Address and telephone number)
9. First aid person(s) on field trip
10. Other relevant information, rules or safety precautions (including information on travel, items to bring, equipment and costs)

AUTHORITY:

To be approved and signed by the Field Trip Co-ordinator

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE EMERGENCY CONTACT REGISTER

Name	Emergency contact address and telephone	Any known medical conditions