

Policy Hierarchy link	Work Health and Safety Act 2011 Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 Work Health and Safety Policy		
Responsible Officer	Director, UNSW Safety & Sustainability		
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Superseded Documents	This is a new procedure		
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Associated Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSW Travel Procedure • HS406 Fieldwork Guideline • HS009 Fieldwork Participant Form • HS010 Volunteer approval request form • HS018a Fieldwork Approval Form • HS018b Fieldwork Notification Form • HS019 Factors to consider in Fieldwork Risk Management • HS329 Risk Management Procedure • HS017 Risk Management Form 		
Version	Authorised by	Approval Date	Effective Date
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1. Purpose and Scope

This procedure describes the risk management and notification processes required when engaging in fieldwork. It does not apply to working from home, on campus activities, staff or student placements or exchange (see Definitions).

Please note that for Low Risk Fieldwork, as defined, some of the steps of this procedure are advisory and are not required (see Table 1).

This procedure must also be read in conjunction with the [UNSW Travel Procedure](#).

Some fieldwork activities have specific, additional requirements with regard to permits, regulation, standards, and codes of practice. The [HS406 Fieldwork Guideline](#) provides additional guidance and direction to further information. If you are unsure if additional requirements apply to your fieldwork, contact your local or Faculty Health and Safety Personnel.

Student exchange or overseas study programs are not within the scope of this procedure.

2. Definitions

Callback Person: Is a person who has specific roles and responsibilities related to the safety of the field team. Although not in the field, they maintain contact with the field team and can initiate an emergency response.

Fieldwork: Is any work, study or research authorised by UNSW and conducted by workers (such as staff or, post-graduate students) and others (such as under-graduate students and volunteers) at a location outside of a laboratory, library or workplace setting.

Fieldwork Leader: Is a person who has specific roles and responsibilities related to the safety of the field team. They must be present in the field and should have been assigned the role by virtue of their skills, knowledge and experience in the particular field operation. The Fieldwork Leader may be a member of staff, post graduate or research student.

Independent Fieldworker: An individual who is undertaking fieldwork on their own without direct supervision. An Independent Fieldworker is automatically considered the Fieldwork Leader.

Low Risk Fieldwork: Fieldwork where the hazards and risks are considered low in terms of both the activity and the environment (see Appendix 1 for examples). Low risk activities are those which can be undertaken without the need for specialist training or procedures to ensure safety. Low risk environments usually have ready access to communication, food, shelter and emergency services (about 15 minutes). Only some sections of this procedure apply to Low Risk Fieldwork (see Table 1). Determination of risk is detailed in the [HS329 Risk Management Procedure](#) and as such, low risk implies that exposure to a hazard is unlikely to cause an injury greater than that requiring first aid treatment.

On campus activities: Activities undertaken at the following locations (campuses) do not constitute fieldwork for the purposes of this procedure: Kensington, Randwick, Manly Vale, UNSW Canberra, Paddington or the Bankstown Flight Training Facility.

Participant: An individual who is undertaking fieldwork, at any level of responsibility including Volunteer, student or Fieldwork Leader. This does not refer to research subjects or interviewees for the purposes of this Procedure.

Placement: Student placement or industry training with other businesses, organisations or sole traders is not within the scope of this procedure.

Supervisor: Is the person who has the authority to influence or direct the actions of students or workers involved in the activity. For students this is generally the academic supervisor or lead investigator of the research project or the teaching staff member directing the fieldwork. The Supervisor need not be present on fieldtrips.

Volunteer: Is a person willing to participate in the fieldwork activities, who is offering their time and services for the benefit of someone else. A volunteer is under no obligation to attend the workplace or perform work and they do not expect to be paid. They are expected to comply as far as they are reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction issued by the Fieldwork Leader in the same way as employed or student participants.

3. Procedure

The following procedure sets out the steps required for fieldwork. For Low Risk Fieldwork, as defined, not all sections are required (see Table 1).

Risk Level	Relevant Section	Documentation
Low	Approval to Travel (3.1)	Travel Approval Form or email or Serko or other UNSW approved means.
	Risk Management (3.2)	SafeSys or HS017 Risk Management Form

	Notification of Fieldwork (3.7)	Verbal communication, Email or HS018b Fieldwork Notification Form.
Medium and High	Approval to Travel (3.1)	Travel Approval Form or email or Serko or other UNSW approved means.
	Risk Management (3.2)	SafeSys or HS017 Risk Management Form
	Fieldwork Leader (3.3)	Assigned role on Safesys Activity Form, HS018a Fieldwork Approval Form or email acknowledgement
	Participant Details (3.4)	HS009 Fieldwork Participant Form
	Emergency Plan (3.5)	No specified format. Content requirement. May be included in HS017 Risk Management Form.
	Approval for Fieldwork (3.6)	SafeSys activity or HS017 Risk Management Form or HS018a Fieldwork Approval Form.
	Notification of Fieldwork (3.7)	Verbal communication, Email or HS018b Fieldwork Notification Form.
	Notification of return from Fieldwork (3.8)	SMS, email, phone, verbal or none as agreed.

Table 1: Summary of Requirements and Acceptable Documentation

3.1 Approval to Travel

Obtain approval to travel following the [UNSW Travel Policy](#) and [UNSW Travel Procedure](#) requirements (i.e. approval only required for travel over 100 km from the usual workplace). Travel approvals may be handwritten, by email or other digital means, on-line via Serko or by completion of a [travel approval form](#). The approval is to be retained within the work unit (except for Serko on-line approvals).

3.2 Risk Management

The purpose of safety risk management is to identify foreseeable hazards so that control measures may be put in place. Other risk management such as financial, insurance and business risk should also be considered. Advice from suitable Divisions of UNSW should be sought as needed.

[HS019 Factors to Consider in Fieldwork Risk Management](#) may be of assistance in identifying some hazards and controls. Refer to the [HS406 Fieldwork Guideline](#) for common fieldwork hazards and controls. A business factor to consider is the risk of not undertaking the activity (does the benefit outweigh the cost?). Where the safety risk is high and poorly controlled then not undertaking the activity is considered a reasonably practicable control measure.

For some activities, approved safety risk management documents are already available. For example, the [Office Safety Toolkit](#) has approved documents for domestic travel, off site meetings, and conference visits. Check within your School or work group for any existing documentation.

Risk management documents, including many from the Office Safety Toolkit are available through [SafeSys](#). SafeSys can be used to complete your risk management form or safe work procedure or search for existing documents.

3.3 Fieldwork Leader

This section is not required for Low Risk Fieldwork.

The Fieldwork Leader must ensure that all necessary paperwork, permits, plans and risk management processes are in place.

A Fieldwork Leader must be assigned prior to the fieldwork and, unless they are an Independent Fieldworker, must acknowledge the role. In SafeSys, the Participant assigned the Fieldwork Leader is deemed to have accepted unless a request is made to assign another Participant. If SafeSys is not used then acknowledgement can be via email or their signature on HS018a Fieldwork Approval Form.

Independent Fieldworkers are automatically considered a Fieldwork Leader.

3.4 Participant Details

This section is not required for Low Risk Fieldwork.

Prior to a field trip or excursion, the Fieldwork Leader must ensure that each Participant has completed a HS009 Fieldwork Participant Form. This records Participant details such as emergency contacts, medical conditions which may affect participation and relevant qualifications.

Copies of the completed HS009 Fieldwork Participant Form must be forwarded to the Fieldwork Leader or delegate.

The Participant keeps the original HS009 Fieldwork Participant Form and is responsible for keeping the information in the form up to date.

3.4.1 Volunteers

Care must be taken to use Volunteers appropriately. Advice from Human Resources should be sought where Volunteers are to be used in a role that could be undertaken by paid workers. Where Volunteers are involved:

- Complete a HS010 Volunteer Approval Request Form and submit it for sign off by the Head of School.
- They must remain under supervision for the duration of the fieldwork.
- They must be included in any training, licencing, accreditation or competency assessment as required.
- They are under no obligation to attend the workplace or perform work.
- They do not expect to be paid.

3.5 Emergency Plan

Compliance with this section is not required for Low Risk Fieldwork, however, basic emergency management should normally be covered in any Risk Management Form for an activity.

How emergency situations will be managed must be considered in the fieldwork planning stage and documented. Emergency situations to consider include: an injury; a deleterious change in the weather; a natural disaster such as a bushfire; a missing person; personal or physical violence; accident during travel.

The Emergency Plan must include:

- An effective response to each potential emergency.
- Communication with emergency services.
- Provision of first aid.
- Evacuation procedures.
- Communication between the fieldworkers and the Callback Person.
- Clear procedures regarding Callback Person's actions should failure to callback occur between the fieldworkers and UNSW.

The Emergency Plan should include:

- Arrangements for training and instruction.

- Arrangements for testing of the Emergency Plan (phone or radio checks).
- Making the area safe.
- Preserving the scene.
- Notifying UNSW Health and Safety Personnel of notifiable incidents. (Refer to [Work Health & Safety Act 2011, Part 3, Incident Notification](#))

Emergency Plans for high profile work, overseas fieldwork or work on ships must be submitted to School Senior Management. The need to also provide this information to the Faculty General Manager, media office or other UNSW departments must also be considered.

3.6 Approval for Fieldwork

Compliance with this section is not required for Low Risk Fieldwork unless the local unit, School, a Supervisor or a manager deem it necessary. NOTE: Approval to Travel may still be required – see Section 3.1.

UNSW Canberra Undergraduate Field Schools must follow the local procedure for approvals.

Fieldwork must be approved by a person with appropriate delegated authority, such as a Supervisor. Many low risk situations have controls documented in preapproved Risk Management Forms ([Off site travel – Safesys](#); [Off site travel – Safety Website](#)). Where this is the case approval for the activity is deemed to exist.

The following information must be documented as part of the fieldwork approval process:

- A description of tasks being undertaken.
- Reference to approved health and safety form/s.
- Location or type of location e.g. shopping centre, lake; (be specific as possible, however, exact location is for Section 3.7).
- Proposed period of fieldwork (may be open ended if low risk).
- Communication arrangements.
- Emergency Plan.
- For international activities, the DFAT ([Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#)) and ISOS ([International SOS](#)) threat levels.

Approval through Safesys using the Activity function satisfies this section.

A risk management form with the dot point information covered may be used to satisfy approvals.

HS018a Fieldwork Approval Form is provided as an approval tool outside of Safesys. The form is not mandatory.

It must be understood that approval may be withdrawn by the University if the risk status increases.

NOTE: Other research approvals such as Human Research Ethics Committee may also be required. For further information seek advice from Research Ethics and Compliance Support ([RECS](#)).

3.7 Notification of Fieldwork

Compliance with this section is required for all Fieldwork including Low Risk Fieldwork.

Each occasion that fieldwork is to be undertaken requires notification to the University to a responsible or designated officer. Notification can be made via electronic means such as email or HS018b Fieldwork Notification Form or, for Low Risk Fieldwork, verbal communication.

Low Risk Fieldwork - minimum information to be given to a responsible or designated officer is:

- Where you are going.

- Who with.
- How long for.
- How you can be contacted.

Exceeding Low Risk Fieldwork - minimum information that must be given to a responsible or designated officer is:

- Specific locations and/or GPS (Global Positioning System) co-ordinates.
- Fieldwork Leader's and Participant's names.
- Communications details to contact field Participants.
- Itinerary including start and finish time/date at various locations.
- Callback Person at UNSW.
- Vehicle identification (include registration number), whether private, hired or University owned.
- Reference to relevant approved activities and risk management forms.

HS018b Fieldwork Notification Form is provided as a notification tool. The form is not mandatory.

A 'standing order' type notification may be allowed for routine fieldwork which is valid for a set period. These are allowed provided there are no deviations to the details outlined with regard to location, personnel involved and risk management. Where conditions change a new fieldtrip approval should be documented.

It is understood that exact details are sometimes finalised during the trip and only generalisations can be submitted before the commencement of the trip.

3.7.1 Variation During Fieldwork

While in the field, variation of locations or return dates/times must be communicated to the Supervisor and/or Callback Person as soon as practicable.

3.8 Notification of Return from Fieldwork

Compliance with this section is not required for Low Risk Fieldwork unless the local unit, School, a Supervisor or a manager deem it necessary.

Prior to engaging in fieldwork, arrangements must be clearly documented and communicated regarding how the University will be told that you are back. A Supervisor must agree in cases where no return notification is required.

Where necessary, the detailed response expected of a failure to notify of return from fieldwork must be documented in the Emergency Plan. The Callback Person must have access to this information so it is clear what they need to do.

The Fieldwork Leader will notify and update their Supervisor and Callback Person if they know that their expected return will be significantly delayed or that an unforeseen incident has occurred which might be of a newsworthy event e.g. inadvertently becoming part of a protest, or being involved (helping) in a rescue.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	
Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigns Fieldwork Leader and ensures they accept the role • Responsible to ensure resources are available to safely manage fieldwork.
Fieldwork Leader	<p>This person must be informed of their role and the fact documented prior to the fieldwork.</p> <p>The Fieldwork Leader:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the authority in the field to decide on whether activities are safe to proceed based on UNSW Risk Management processes and any previously determined parameters discussed with the Supervisor • Must be present in the field • Provides notification of safe return • Notifies UNSW of serious incidents

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk assesses and approves changes in the field • Initiates Emergency Plans in the field • Ensures Safe Work Procedures are followed and Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment is available and worn • Reviews risk management documentation prior to trip • Ensures all Participants have submitted their HS009 Fieldwork Participant Form • Ensures all permits are obtained and followed • Ensures Volunteer approval is in place.
Callback Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is available to be notified of safe return of fieldwork party • Has access to Emergency Plan for nominated trips • Initiates contact with fieldworkers where required • Initiates Emergency Plan where required • Contacts Key UNSW personnel, including Supervisors, Head of School, Faculty or Health and Safety Personnel as required and documented.
Participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must complete HS009 Fieldwork Participant Form • Complies with Risk Management Procedures and other duties pertinent to their role or employment • Provides adequate supplies of their own prescription medication and appropriate clothing for the conditions.
Volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows all safety related instructions given by Fieldwork Leader • May not work unsupervised • Under no obligation or performance requirement for the work other than to follow safety related instructions and procedures • Should complete HS009 Fieldwork Participant Form.

5. Review & History

This procedure will be reviewed three years from the effective date, or as required due to any changes in legislation, policies and other documents.

Version	Authorised by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections modified
1.0	Director, UNSW Safety & Sustainability	17 August 2015	17 August 2015	New Procedure

6. Acknowledgements

- Monash University – Off-Campus Activities Procedure 2013
- University of Queensland – Fieldwork and Off-Campus Safety Guidelines 2013
- Macquarie University – Biological Sciences Department
- University of Wollongong – Fieldwork Guidelines 2013
- Australian National University – Fieldwork health and off-campus work safety 2013
- Guidance on Health and Safety in Fieldwork – Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA) United Kingdom

7. Appendix 1

Low Risk Fieldwork examples include:

- Most domestic airline travel.
- Conferences, exhibitions, attending meetings.
- Visits to galleries, cinemas, public areas, courts and prisons.
- Interviews or visits with clients in their homes or in prison.
- Exploration of urban and natural environments to document and analyse them.
- Interactions with social environments to research cultural practices and mores.
- Non-obtrusive interactions within urban and natural environments to undertake research located in the public sphere.
- Working in or visiting local or overseas facilities or organisations with documented Health and Safety Management Systems which manage the risk to an acceptably low level.

NOTE: Depending on the context of any of the above examples the risk may increase and additional risk control and process may be required. Determination of risk levels and how they should be managed should be carefully considered.

Further advice can be sought from UNSW Health and Safety Personnel. See the Safety and Sustainability Website for [contact details](#).