

8.8 UTS Fieldwork Guidelines

1. Introduction

The University recognises that in a number of academic disciplines, fieldwork is an essential part of the core teaching, learning and research functions. The University supports the incorporation of fieldwork activities in its teaching, learning and research programs, and requires that the conduct of fieldwork is undertaken in a safe and responsible manner.

These Guidelines have been prepared to ensure that all fieldwork activities are properly planned, managed and coordinated in such a way as to meet the best interests of the University while protecting the safety of staff members, students and the wider community. The Guidelines complement the [UTS Health and Safety Policy](#) and should be read in conjunction with the Policy.

The purpose of these Guidelines is:

- to provide a framework which encourages high quality teaching and research through the pursuit of field activities whilst ensuring the health, safety and welfare of staff members and students
- to provide a clear understanding of the accountabilities, rights and responsibilities of staff members and students and to protect the interests of the University and its members, and
- to document the procedures which should be followed in order to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff members and students and the protection of the environment.

2. Scope

These Guidelines apply to all staff members and students of UTS and, where the context permits, to all others engaged by UTS (whether as volunteers, consultants, contractors or otherwise) to provide services to UTS. See Definitions section for what classifies as fieldwork.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of these Guidelines, the following definitions apply:

Fieldwork means any work, study or research authorised by the University and carried out by staff members and/or students at sites (generally outdoors and including sites outside Australia) other than the regular precincts of the University. It does not include activities such as distance education, student exchange programs, offshore teaching, or conferences.

Staff member means an employee or an honorary appointee of the University, or staff of another university in the case of joint fieldwork.

Student means any person enrolled in any degree, diploma, course, subject or unit offered by the University whether on a full-time or part-time basis, or at an undergraduate and postgraduate level, or an award or non-award student.

University means the University of Technology Sydney.

4. Relevant legislation

Current legislation, Australian Standards and policies, and Rules of the University set out responsibilities of staff members and students participating in fieldwork activities. These include, but are not limited to:

- the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(NSW\)](#) and the [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 \(NSW\)](#)
- [UTS Health and Safety Policy](#), which commits the University to conformity with legislation about work health and safety
- [UTS Rules](#) which are concerned with student conduct, penalties for student misconduct and appeal procedures.

5. Responsibilities in fieldwork

The safety of the fieldwork party is the responsibility of all persons participating in fieldwork. A person who has been appointed Fieldwork Leader has a particular responsibility for ensuring that proper procedures are followed in the planning and execution of fieldwork, and for dealing with any incidents that affect the health, safety and welfare of all members of the fieldwork party in the field. For fieldwork activities without a staff member (for example, involving postgraduate or honours students), whilst a Fieldwork Leader may not have been formally appointed, it is incumbent upon all participants in the fieldwork to ensure that proper procedures are followed to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all members in the fieldwork party (see also Section 5.3 Academic supervisors).

5.1 Head of school/discipline group or director

The head of school/discipline group or director is ultimately responsible for the implementation and observance of these Guidelines as they apply to the School's fieldwork activities and must give the final approval for all fieldwork activities on the appropriate Fieldwork Form (Appendix 1).

The head of school/discipline group or director shall ensure that:

- a Fieldwork Leader is appointed for each fieldwork or activity which is a required component of an undergraduate subject
- a Fieldwork leader is appointed for each fieldwork or activity which is a required component of a research project
- all staff members involved in fieldwork are suitably qualified (for example, possess any necessary boat licence, first aid qualifications, etc.) and that any specialist training required (for example, diving certificates, off-road driving skills) has been undertaken before commencement of any fieldwork activities
- a Fieldwork Form (Appendix 1) or local equivalent is completed by the Fieldwork Leader for all fieldwork activities
- a Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form (Appendix 2) or local equivalent is completed by the Fieldwork Leader for all fieldwork activities

- the Fieldwork Leader has obtained a signed Medical Information Form (Appendix 3) from each participant in fieldwork involving overnight absences.
- for fieldwork activities not involving staff members (for example, postgraduate or honours students), Appendices 1 to 4 inclusive are completed and authorised by the student's supervisor.

Copies of all signed forms shall be retained in the relevant school/faculty office.

5.2 Fieldwork Leader

The Fieldwork Leader is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of all participating persons for the duration of the fieldwork activity and for ensuring that participants have received any necessary briefing, training or induction prior to the fieldwork. The Fieldwork Leader is responsible for ensuring that the following forms are completed for all fieldwork activities:

- a Fieldwork Form (Appendix 1) (approved by the head of school/departmental head/unit leader or director)
- a Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form (Appendix 2)
- a Medical Information Form (Appendix 3) (copies must also be taken to the fieldwork location for use in case of an emergency)
- a Deed of Release signed by a parent or caregiver for any student aged under 18 who is participating in the fieldwork activity
- a Student Code of Conduct for Fieldwork Form (Appendix 4) (completed by each student member participating in the fieldwork activity).

The Fieldwork Leader is also responsible for:

- notifying the appropriate emergency services in the event of an emergency situation during fieldwork activities. The Fieldwork Leader must notify the school, department or unit of the situation at the first practicable opportunity
- the care and correct use of all University assets and equipment taken on fieldwork.

To assist Fieldwork Leaders, a Fieldwork Procedures Checklist is provided in Appendix 5 that summarises the various steps to be completed before commencing fieldwork.

5.3 Academic supervisors

Academic supervisors are responsible for ensuring that postgraduate and honours students receive appropriate training and that they are not encouraged to undertake fieldwork in situations where they do not feel sufficiently confident of their safety. Supervisors are responsible for foreseeing and assessing potential risks and for ensuring that their students are adequately equipped and possess the necessary technical and practical skills.

5.4 Persons undertaking solo fieldwork activities

Persons undertaking solo fieldwork activities are also required to ensure that the trip has been properly planned and that the health and safety requirements have been properly addressed. Persons undertaking solo fieldwork must:

- complete all necessary documentation (i.e. Appendices 1 to 4)
- ensure that the fieldwork is approved by their supervisor and head of school/discipline group or director beforehand, and
- ensure that all requirements as listed in Fieldwork Procedures Checklist (Appendix 5) have been met.

5.5 All participants

All participants in fieldwork activities are under the obligation to work and behave appropriately in the field, and to take care to protect their own health, safety and welfare and that of fellow fieldwork participants. All participants are subject to the jurisdiction of the Fieldwork Leader and nominated deputy for the entire duration of the fieldwork activity and must follow all lawful instructions and advice of that leader. In particular they must strictly follow any instructions or directions that are necessary to ensure the safety, health and welfare of all or any members of the fieldwork party.

Students must read the Student Code of Conduct for Fieldwork Form (Appendix 4) and must sign the Acknowledgement and Declaration before participating in any fieldwork activity.

6. Insurance

6.1 UTS staff and students

Staff members and students are insured while they are participating in UTS approved activities such as fieldwork. Staff members and students are not covered by UTS insurance when they depart from UTS approved activities, for example if they break the law.

6.2 Non-UTS staff and students

Volunteers who participate in UTS fieldwork must seek the approval of the Fieldwork Leader in writing before the fieldwork commences. The written approval document should be retained at the faculty/school/unit for insurance purposes. Approved volunteers are covered by the UTS personal accident policy.

7. Risk Assessment

The field work leader must ensure that an appropriate assessment is made of all the potential hazards related to both the activities being undertaken in fieldwork, along with the hazards due to the location or environment where the fieldwork will occur. This risk assessment may be either paper based (e.g. using the fieldwork risk assessment form (Appendix 2) or electronic (e.g. using the [UTS Risk Register](#)). In either case, the risk assessment, including controls and precautions, must be made available and discussed with all participants prior to commencement of activities. It must also be updated as conditions change, or upon identifying any other hazards.

Specific information on common hazards found during fieldwork are available on the UTS Website under [Health and Safety](#).

8. Size and composition of a fieldwork party

The minimum size of a fieldwork party should be determined by risk assessment and under normal circumstances should be at least two. However, while it is preferable that staff members or students do not work alone in remote locations, this may be permitted by the head of school/discipline group or director if he or she judges that it is reasonable in all the circumstances. For staff members, research degree students, honours students and postgraduate students, the necessary documentation (i.e. Appendices 1 to 4) must be completed. The fieldwork must be discussed with and authorised by their supervisor and approved by the head of school/discipline group or director.

Fieldwork involving undergraduate students must have an acceptable student to staff member ratio depending on: the prior training and experience of the students; the nature of and risks involved in the fieldwork; and logistics (for example, transport). As a guide, a ratio of 15 students per staff member is suggested as a maximum.

9. Permits

All permits and/or licences that are necessary for particular activities (for example, entry to National Parks, aboriginal sites, fishing) must be obtained in advance of the fieldwork activity by the Fieldwork Leader.

10. Emergency Planning and First aid

The field work leader is required to identify how any emergencies that may arise will be managed. This includes identifying the first aid requirements for the fieldwork, communication protocols in the event of an emergency, identifying local support services (if appropriate) such as medicals centres or hospitals, and ensuring that all participants are enrolled in [International SOS](#) for overseas fieldwork.

A qualified first aid officer with current certification is recommended on fieldwork locations in which it is reasonable to expect that it would take more than half an hour to get medical aid to an injured or ill person. Any exception to this must be documented in the risk assessment.

First aid equipment and facilities must be readily available for use by personnel in the field. The qualifications of the first aid officer, the type of kits and quantity of kits should be based on a risk assessment. The Fieldwork Leader (or first aid officer where there is one) must ensure that First Aid Kits are restocked as soon as practicable and/or at the completion of each fieldwork trip.

11. Communication

For all fieldwork activities, agreed communication protocols based on risk assessment must be set in place before departure.

- All persons undertaking fieldwork activities must be instructed or trained in the use of the communication equipment and signalling devices to be used on the trip.
- Regular call-in schedules should be agreed on prior to departure.
- A mobile telephone or satellite phone should be taken and used in areas where this type of communication is suitable.
- Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) should be taken into remote and isolated trips.
- Vehicles used for remote fieldwork should be fitted with global positioning systems and a two-way radio, or the fieldwork party must be equipped with another suitable two-way communication system.

12. Accident/incident reporting

Incidents or accidents must be reported to the head of school/discipline group or director as soon as reasonably possible and not later than upon return to campus. Notification of incidents and accidents using the Hazard and Incident Reporting Online (HIRO) system must be completed by the Fieldwork Leader at this time.

13. Equipment

Equipment used for fieldwork must be carefully selected in relation to suitability for purpose. It must comply with all necessary legislative requirements and standards, and should be thoroughly checked and tested prior to use. Fieldwork participants using the equipment should have appropriate levels of training and competence in its use, and where necessary appropriate qualifications or certifications.

14. Post-Fieldwork Review

For those activities where the health and safety risk was identified as “moderate”, a review should be conducted at the conclusion of the fieldwork to identify any lessons learned from the work being carried out, whether controls in place were effective (or perhaps could be considered overkill)

The Fieldwork leader should also ensure that all equipment has been returned in a safe condition, first aid kits replenished and any incident reports have been appropriately actioned.

15. Related Policies/Guidelines

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Health and Safety Policy](#)

[Rules of the University relating to Student Conduct](#)

16. Related information

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(NSW\)](#)

[Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 \(NSW\)](#)

[Maritime Services Act 1998 \(NSW\)](#)

AS/NZS 2299.1:2015: Occupational diving operations - Standard operational practice

Appendixes

The following documents are available from the UTS Health and Safety webpage under the heading [Fieldwork](#)

Appendix 1: Fieldwork Form

Appendix 2: Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form

Appendix 3: Medical Information Form

Appendix 4: Student Code of Conduct for Fieldwork Form

Appendix 5: Fieldwork Procedures Checklist

Approvals

EFFECTIVE DATE	1 July 2020		
REVIEW DATE	2025		
ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER	Director, Human Resources Unit		
CURRENT INCUMBENT	Jennifer Lagoon		
IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER	Glenn Blackley		
CURRENT INCUMBENT	WH&S Coordinator (Systems)	CONTACT NO	Ext 1342
FILE NUMBER	UR12/1107		

Revision/Modification History

Date	Current title	Summary of changes	Approved/ rejected	Approval authority
03/02/05	UTS Fieldwork Guidelines		Approved	Vice-Chancellor

1/5/2012	UTS Fieldwork Guidelines	Updating of Work Health and Safety legislation	Approved	GSU (administrative change)
5/9/2012	UTS Fieldwork Guidelines	Authority to approve Guidelines delegated to Director HR. Administrative changes and clarification	Approved	Director, HR
1/5/2018	UTS Fieldwork Guidelines	Complete rewrite	Approved	Director HR
1/10/2019	UTS Fieldwork Guidelines	Fix broken links	Approved	Director HR
15/6/2020	UTS Fieldwork Guidelines	Fix broken links	Approved	Director HR