

## What do our clients say?



**David Blakeley MPhil**  
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**Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of Leeds**



Here within the Faculty of Biological Sciences at the University of Leeds it was felt that all staff involved with undergraduate and postgraduate field courses should undertake a two day Emergency First Aid and Field safety course to provide them with relevant training.

This course was run for the staff for the first time in 2007, with the overall package in large part tailored to our requirements. All staff involved were so impressed that they felt this would also be an ideal course for Masters students as part of the preparation for their projects.

We have subsequently run this course during the project preparation process for the past three years with great success. The feedback and comments from the students is very positive and they are always appreciative of the opportunity to gain experience and accredited qualifications, especially in an area they rarely touch on otherwise.

Once they have undertaken the course the students are much more understanding and appreciative of the problems surrounding field work and the consequences of insufficient planning. Since the inception of the course it is noticeable that the preparation of risk assessments by masters students has improved greatly, with more consideration being given to the risks associated with working in field conditions alongside the impact of risks associated directly with the project itself.

In addition to the importance of this course as preparation for the students' projects, another plus for them is the opportunity to gain an accredited first aid qualification that lasts for three years, something they can present to future employers as training and experience they gained whilst at university. For those students wishing to enter the workplace immediately after completing their degree such a qualification provides an advantage for both them and of course, for any potential employers.

### ***And what did the students think...***

*It is surprising how much more confident I feel now approaching a crisis situation... I feel much more aware of safety issues and more confident in problematic situations... The course is useful to get you thinking about things you may already know but don't always consider - looking at fieldwork in a different light*

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**Julie Black**  
**University Safety Officer**  
**University of Oxford Safety Office**



I first became aware of Fieldskills early in 2007 when I saw flyers advertising a number of 'open' fieldwork safety training courses in Oxfordshire. Having recently assumed the role of Training Coordinator in the University Safety Office I was keen to include fieldwork safety in any centrally provided safety training syllabus. I arranged to meet with Dominic Hall, the UK Director, to discuss the company's profile and see if there was scope to use their services. It seemed clear that the company had very experienced personnel and, importantly, Dominic indicated a willingness to be flexible and to work with the Safety Office in tailoring any training according to our specific needs.

It was agreed that we would run two 'taster' courses in the first instance; one dealing with fieldwork safety in the UK and the second course concentrating on safety in overseas fieldwork. These courses were offered to staff and postgraduate students in late 2007.

The core elements of the courses covered fundamental tenets of risk assessment, expedition / fieldwork planning and preparation, communication, incident spirals and dynamic risk assessment, contingency and emergency planning. The sessions were purely classroom based, but running scenarios and practical exercises helped to consolidate the theory. In the majority of cases the trainees, even those who considered themselves to be 'experienced' fieldworkers, came away from the courses having learned something new that they could apply in their own fieldwork.

In 2008 and early 2009 Fieldskills provided further training on behalf of the Safety Office. These included, 'Safety in Overseas Fieldwork', 'Emergency First Aid for Fieldworkers' and 'Planning and Supervising Fieldwork'. The trainee feedback from these courses has also been positive. The usefulness of the courses also spread by word of mouth within certain departments, and I understand that independent enquiries were later made for additional courses to be run for certain groups. This included further first aid training for fieldworkers.

The range of fieldwork activities in the University is extremely diverse and centrally provided courses are designed to cover principles and stimulate thinking. However, as a result of the pilot courses, and the discussions that ensue, more knowledge has emerged of 'non-traditional' fieldwork in more urban settings that needs additional emphasis on personal security, for example in regions where there may be political and civil unrest. Fieldskills have been prepared to work with the Safety Office on such topics and will bring in relevant partners to assist with specialist training. In 2009 fieldwork training is being further expanded and dates have already been set for four courses to run in Michaelmas Term. It is likely that more will follow in 2010.

I've found Fieldskills to be very professional. In my experience individual course tutors are personable, approachable, enthusiastic and apparently well received. They emphasise that many of the lessons and principles being taught have evolved through their personal experiences, good and bad, giving them great credibility with trainees.

I hope to continue expanding the fieldwork training syllabus, and look forward to working with Dominic and his team in the future. I would certainly recommend Fieldskills to other organisations.

***And what did the students think...***

*The course reinforces the need to make contingency plans... the interactive group sessions were a very good idea... makes people really think*

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