

UNIVERSITY FIELDWORK SAFETY

We would be more than happy to talk through any questions you may have surrounding Fieldwork Safety. We hope the below Q & A table will help reassure as well as pick up on any aspects of Fieldwork Safety which might need attention. If you'd like to get in touch you can do so via email admin@fieldskills.com or telephone **0845 293 7296**.

What kinds of fieldwork is your University involved with? How many fieldworkers? Who is in charge of planning the trips?	It sounds obvious but one of the key elements of fieldwork safety is a clear idea of who is in charge and what the aim of each trip is - BS8848 emphasises the importance of identifying the venture provider who has overall responsibility for the trip.
Who identifies the group, who goes on the trips?	It is key to have clear details of who is on the trips - Name, date of birth, gender, nationality, capability to partake in activities. Other useful information would include previous venture experience, disabilities, behavioural or other special needs etc.
Who leads the groups? How does the University decide on leader competencies?	BS8848 sets down various guidelines on appropriate leaders for fieldwork - including National Governing Body Awards, experience, in house training and personal skills
Do you have a system for identifying and checking in-country agents?	Good contacts in-country are vital in dealing with day to day issues as well as major emergencies. If you can identify a good one it eliminates many of the problems - a bad one can cause them!
Who is the first port of call at the University should something go wrong in the field?	A clear, tested and workable system is vital to provide support to any field emergency as well as to handle issues with the media, informing family members etc. There are specialist companies available who can provide a 24 hour on call system to help provide this support where University staff may not be available or trained to deal with this.
Do you use third party providers such as travel agents, tour companies etc - if so what is the procedure for checking them out?	Much of the work of planning a trip can be passed on to a third party provider - however the venture provider still has responsibility for checking and managing these providers.
Who risk assesses the trips - what is the review procedure for this - would the safety office review all or some of the risk assessments?	Clearly risk assessment is a vital part of trip planning - it is important that those involved in writing and reviewing those understand both the risk assessment process and also the specifics of fieldwork and working in remote areas.
Is there a standard system for risk and threat analysis - does any of this affect any insurance policies they may be covered under.	The FCO is our major source of information here - many insurance companies use the FCO guidelines as a benchmark - if there is an FCO flag for an area cover can even be immediately void - however many universities have researchers who need to access FCO flagged areas so it is important to look at the details of the insurance policy and other ways of assessing the safety of FCO flagged areas.
Do you have contracts for the participants - detailing costs, purpose of trip as well as details of the risks involved and realities of evacuations etc.	All trips rely on informed consent from all staff and participants on trips and they are only in a position to give this if they understand the realities of the trips they are signed up to. This can also contain details of what is expected of them in terms of behaviour, involvement etc.
What are the insurance arrangements for your trips - is it one standard policy or do people use their own private policies? What is and isn't covered?	The sorts of things to think about are: any specific activities which may or may not be covered including for personal activities or down time. Specifically checking appropriate medical and evacuation cover and what the 24 emergency lines can actually offer at the time of an emergency.

What training do the leaders and participants get for their fieldwork.	Clearly many university fieldworkers are highly experienced. However we have found many people who feel they do not have the experience to know how to manage these kinds of trip. Even those who are experienced can find it useful to discuss risk management, emergency planning and specific safety skills before the trip to ensure they have the best systems in place. BS8848 makes reference to both pre and on trip training as a vital part of safety management.
What checks are made on transport used during the fieldwork, both prior to the trip and at the time?	Sadly many of the major incidents we see in the field revolve around vehicles. Therefore it is vital that vehicles are pre-checked - to identify the best available vehicles and also that there are the systems and skills in place to adapt these assessments during the trip.
What checks are made on the accommodation?	As with vehicles, a robust system to check accommodation both before and during the trip is very important. We need to know that accommodation conforms to national standards but perhaps more importantly be able to make on-site checks for locked fire exits or broken and dangerous wiring.
What access do fieldworkers have to medical support?	Things to think about range from first aid provision within the team (both training and appropriate kits), to details about the closest hospital facilities and telemedicine services. Telemedicine can be bought in from providers or is sometimes included in the insurance package. It is also worth considering the medical screening that can be done in advance to identify potential problems before they happen.
What facilities and systems are there for communications in the field.	BS8848 emphasised the importance of both routine and emergency communications from the field. There are a huge range of options from mobiles and radios to sat phones and personal locator beacons. Finding appropriate communications options which work reliably in the field is vital for safe fieldwork.
What is the procedure for incident and emergency planning on the trips?	It is vital to have a clear written plan of what you will do if things go wrong - this needs to be tied in with a clear system with respect to the Universities own systems for media management and emergency response as well as in-country agents and available emergency services.
What specialist equipment is used on the fieldwork trips?	Are there any standard systems for planning, procuring, testing and repairing fieldwork safety equipment or contingency plans for returning or reject it - if so how might these effect the other emergency response plans?
What happens at the end of trips?	Closing the loop with a trip review -looking at incidents, near misses and risk assessment reviews - is too often forgotten by all of us eager to get on to the next thing but they are a key element of all fieldwork safety management systems.

We hope this has been useful for your fieldwork safety planning – please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspect of Fieldwork Safety or training opportunities further.

