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## UCEA / USHA Fieldwork Safety Guidelines – Our Top Ten Guide to the Guidelines!

UCEA (Universities & Colleges Employers Association) and USHA (University Safety and Health Association) have recently published new guidelines on fieldwork safety for the Higher Education Sector. It breaks down core actions and good practice guidelines for Institutions, Fieldwork Management and Fieldwork Implementation. As such it is the essential guide for anyone involved in fieldwork. The full document is available [here](#) to work through in detail but here are our top ten points on what the new guidance may mean for you:

**1 – Make sure you are clear on roles and responsibilities** - The responsibility for management systems lie with the institution and ultimately the Head of Institution. Then the Head of School, or equivalent, is responsible for planning fieldwork at broad levels. Finally the fieldwork leader or independent fieldworker is responsible for planning the fieldwork at detailed levels.

**2 –To Fail to Plan is to Plan to Fail** – the guidance emphasises the importance of pre-planning through clear fieldwork policies and fostering “a culture that expects fieldwork to be planned in advance”.

**3 – Assess Risk!** Risk Assessment is crucial and if done properly can also be a useful and rewarding process - it must be proportionate to the risk levels involved and should always take into account an assessment of the benefits of the fieldwork.

**4 – Prepare for the worst before it happens** – with an overall emergency plan and checks in place such as emergency communications and obtaining information about local medical facilities.

**5 – Insurance** – must be in place, adequate for the kinds of fieldwork covered and everyone must be aware of any exclusions or restrictions.

**6 – Information is power** - Clear exchange of information is strongly emphasised, for example codes of conduct, information on risks, equipment requirements and scope of fieldwork. With information

is communication - including systems for contacting the institution in an emergency, having clear lines of communication before the trip and establishment of good local contacts.

**7 – Competence of fieldworkers and fieldwork leaders.** The guidance suggests training in the institution's operating procedures, implementing emergency plans and risk assessment. It recommends developing in-house or outsourced bespoke training courses and budgeting this into funding requirements.

**8 – Supervision** – think about appropriate levels of supervision for different groups and the importance of distinguishing between direct and indirect supervision, and downtime and personal time.

**9 – Ensure everyone has access to information** regarding specific fieldwork medical or health hazards – for example food, drink and hygiene, environmental and climatic illnesses.

**10** – It also gives guidance on appropriate checks to be made on **third party providers**, such as tour operators as well as on checking accommodation, food and transport provision.

That's a whirlwind tour but if you'd like to discuss fieldwork safety in more detail just get in touch or have a look at the training we provide for Universities in **fieldwork planning, safety and risk management**.

*Fieldskills' staff have many years' experience in planning, running and leading expeditions in remote locations around the world. We are primarily outdoors people, and we bring our enthusiasm, experience and professionalism to all our courses.*

*We work with a large number of universities across the UK to provide in-house courses that are tailored for specific groups, and we consistently receive extremely positive feedback on our training. We also provide specialist consultancy support for fieldwork and expedition leaders on expedition planning and safety, and our open courses run on a rolling basis around the UK.*

*If you'd like to know more or have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch.*

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