

**FIELDWORK SAFETY CODE OF PRACTICE
FOR STUDENTS
The Department of Geography**

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NOTE

This safety guide provides important information for students undertaking fieldwork. The safety guide also contains Appendices of forms and procedural information referred to throughout this document.

Staff are expected to be familiar with student and staff sections of the safety documents.

Below is a list of important safety contacts. This information can also be found in Appendix 1.

College Safety Officer

Keith Ryan
Room 301, Malet Street
Telephone 020 7631 6218

Qualified First Aiders

Dr Sue Brooks
Room 204, 32 Tavistock Square
Telephone 020 3073 8445

PART 1: STUDENT FIELDWORK SAFETY GUIDE

1. FOLLOW SAFETY GUIDELINES

Health and Safety requirements apply both to work undertaken as part of a led field party and as part of a student's Independent Geographical Study or other self-guided study.

2. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

Fieldwork is an activity involving inherent risks and hazards - e.g. coastal exposure, quarries, river sections, power stations, farms, and some urban areas. Severe and potentially dangerous weather conditions may be encountered, and it is the responsibility of each student to be equipped with suitable clothing and to take appropriate action to reduce the risk of accidents (see Section 6. below). Students are asked to observe sensible standards of behaviour and to conduct themselves with good manners and consideration for others. For certain work, students may be required to identify themselves and their place of study. They should bring no disrepute to the College.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act, students are responsible for ensuring that they do not knowingly endanger themselves, their colleagues or members of the public. In your own interest, the Department should be informed of any existing medical condition or injury which might affect you on a field excursion (see Appendix 2, Health Questionnaire). Even modest hikes or climbs may be unsuitable if you suffer from certain heart conditions or asthma, high blood pressure, epilepsy, etc. If in doubt, consult your own Doctor.

3. STUDENTS MUST OBEY ALL INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN BY STAFF BOTH ORALLY AND IN WRITING AS PART OF PROJECT BRIEFS

Any student not conforming to the standards required may be dismissed from the field course. Such a student would be personally liable to meet any costs, and bear any academic penalties associated with non-completion of the field course.

4. TAKE CARE OF AND HAVE CONSIDERATION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

All students should make themselves familiar with the Country Code. They should protect the natural and human environment - e.g. by avoiding climbing over dry-stone walls and not smoking in areas of high fire risk such as forested areas. They should avoid leaving anything which could start a fire – cigarette ends or glass, for example.

5. OBTAIN PERMISSIONS FOR ACCESS TO STUDY AREAS

When planning self-guided study, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that access permission has been granted. Permission should be sought to carry out fieldwork on private land, including National Parks, A.O.N.B.s, Commons and S.S.S.I.s, etc. Students must agree to abide by the regulations imposed by the landowner. Students should check for such seasonal activities as grouse shooting, hunting, etc. If possible, students

should inform landowners, or their agents (e.g. wardens) of their presence. When working on the coast or in coastal tidal areas, students must inform the coastguard.

6. STUDENTS ON FIELDWORK MUST HAVE WITH THEM AND WEAR APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Appropriate clothing should be taken and worn on fieldtrips. This includes anoraks, waterproofs, warm clothing, headgear and sturdy footwear. Jeans are unsuitable for some kinds of fieldwork and are potentially dangerous in exposed situations where you are likely to get wet. Brightly coloured clothing is advised. In certain instances, most notably when on foreign fieldwork or conducting interviews, appropriateness in personal dress is required. It is the responsibility of the individual to provide appropriate sun protection cream (see Appendix 3, Health Hazards and Advice), sunglasses etc. which will be required in some field situations. Some activities call for special protective clothing. You must, by law, wear a safety helmet when visiting mines, building sites and quarries; the College requires that you wear a safety helmet when working near cliffs, steep screes or wherever there is the risk of falling debris. The College provides and requires that you wear safety goggles (this is also a legal requirement) if using a geological hammer. The use of protective gloves is required when handling unknown substances such as effluent, mineral wastes and slurry. Staff reserve the right to prevent students from undertaking fieldwork when they are not adequately equipped.

7. WHEN RIDING IN VEHICLES

Where provided in vehicles, by law, seatbelts must be worn at all times. When travelling in a minibus, the rear door should be unlocked and the central aisle left free of bags and equipment.

8. EXPECTATIONS FOR EXCURSIONS

Students should stay with the party, except by clear arrangement with the leaders. Students must report any personal injury or illness. They must be sure they can read a map and have full instructions for the day's activities, including the names and grid references of sites. They should note down instructions concerning places of assembly, carry a notebook and pencil, along with any medication they may require.

9. AVOID DANGER

Students should avoid, where possible, confrontations with dogs, livestock and wild animals, especially when on foreign fieldwork. Students must be especially careful when working near machinery, farm implements and in the vicinity of firing ranges. They should avoid touching metal objects discovered in the field. They should not consume water from dubious sources, and they should not walk barefoot where glass or other objects could inflict damage (e.g. in streams and on beaches).

10. ENSURE HEALTH AND IMMUNISATION

Students should maintain a current status of tetanus immunisation, and are responsible for ensuring that they have been immunised for other conditions where this might be necessary, such as on foreign fieldwork. Students should carry certification of immunisation when this is required. For students working in other EC countries, a European Health Insurance Card allowing reciprocal medical treatment is required. These forms are available online at <https://www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card#before-you-start>. HIV/AIDS presents particular dangers (see Appendix 3, Health Hazards and Advice).

11. MINIMISE RISKS

Whether working as part of a led group or on self-guided study, students must always work in pairs or larger groups. They must also always leave details of their route and schedule with a responsible person (see Appendix 4, Route Card Form). Remember that this route card is only useful if you do not digress from the route given. Every student engaged in fieldwork should carry emergency contact addresses and telephone numbers.

If the survey requires entering people's homes or visiting neighbourhoods where there could be an element of danger, a student should notify the local police station in advance and in writing, stating where and when the survey is taking place. It can be useful to tell respondents that the police know of your survey. Permission should be obtained from wardens, managers, or responsible persons before conducting interviews with individuals living or working in institutional or organisational settings. Students should conduct their survey in daylight hours only, only enter premises if they judge it safe to do so, and give unsupervised dogs a wide berth.

For further information <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/so/guidance/SOCIALRESEARCH> AND http://the-sra.org.uk/sra_resources/safety-code/

12. USE CARE WHEN WORKING IN MOUNTAINOUS AREAS

Mountainous areas can be subject to dramatic changes in weather conditions. Students should be equipped with safety rucksacks containing first aid kit (see Appendix 5, First Aid Kits and Applying First Aid), compass, whistle, torch, survival bags and extra food. Participants should move carefully over rough, rocky or vegetation-covered ground, avoiding loose boulders: they should never run down steep hills or scree. They should never attempt to cross a bog of any type unless it is unavoidable. All students must make every effort to find out what the weather conditions are likely to be. Students should note that carrying a map and compass is not in itself sufficient. They must also be able to use them.

13. TAKE CARE IN AND NEAR WATER

Safety lines must be used by students engaged in fieldwork activity in fast flowing water or in the surf zone when conditions demand. Fast flowing water is hazardous and students should minimise risks.

Weil's Disease constitutes a serious hazard (see Appendix 3, Health Hazards and Advice). When working in coastal areas, it is vital that tide tables are obtained and consulted, and work planned accordingly. Take special care in crossing drainage channels on salt marshes where deep mud may be encountered. Remember that drainage channels fill before the general marsh is covered.

14. PLAN QUESTIONNAIRES

When planning an interview, survey, or similar fieldwork, students should be guided by their tutor in the preparation of questionnaires and interview schedules to minimise potential disturbance to interviewees. All questionnaires employed by students, either during led fieldwork or in self-guided work, MUST be reviewed by their Tutor before surveying begins.

15. FOLLOW INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

In all types of social survey, students must carry a letter of introduction from the Department which will confirm that they are members of the College engaged on work for their degree. In making contact with potential respondents, it is important that they are informed of the student's name and their status as a student at Birkbeck College. Purposes of the study must be explained, avoiding extravagant claims of its value. It may be necessary to offer reassurance about the confidentiality of a respondent's answers - a pledge which must be honoured. If appointments for return visits are made, it is imperative that they are kept. When questionnaires are delivered by mail, or by hand to be collected later, they must be accompanied by a letter of introduction which states the aims of research, the student's status at the College, and an address and phone number at which the student can be contacted.

16. TAKE FIRST AID KITS

Students must consider whether a first aid kit (see Appendix 5, First Aid Kits and Applying First Aid) is to be taken on all fieldwork. All field classes organised by the Department of Geography, Environment & Development Studies are required to take a first aid kit with them. There will normally be a qualified first aider in your party (see Appendix 1 for a list of first aiders in the Department of Geography, Environment & Development Studies). Make sure you know who it is, and report any illness or injury occurring during the field trip. Accidents, however minor, should be reported as soon as possible to a member of staff.

17. IN CASE OF ACCIDENT

Don't panic. Assess the situation without endangering your own life or that of others. Don't move the victim. Identify the conditions which might cause immediate death (breathing stopped, heart stopped) or danger (severe internal bleeding, head injury, spinal injury, chest injury, severe shock, unconsciousness). If first aid qualified, give immediate appropriate and adequate treatment. Never leave victim unattended. If first aid is not available, use the international distress signal. Give six blasts of a whistle, six shouts, six flashes of a torch, six flashes of a mirror, or six waves of a brightly coloured cloth. Pause for one minute. Repeat. If you are in a party of 3 or more, send at least 2 members for help. You should have the following information when going for help (write it down):

- a) Location of accident, such as map reference, local landmarks, whether in open or on cliffs, gullies, etc
- b) Time of accident
- c) How many are injured
- d) Name(s) and sex of victim(s)
- e) Nature of injuries;
- f) Whether victims are conscious or unconscious
- g) Whether victim has specific problems (e.g. diabetes)
- h) First aid action taken

18. FOR ALL STUDENTS UNDERTAKING FIELDWORK ALONE

All of the provisions in this safety guide also apply to independent fieldwork. However, since the nature of the training involves an important element of self-reliance and the ability to cope alone, students in this category are necessarily responsible for their own safety in the field, and the following further advice is offered.

- (a) Discuss likely safety problems or risks and check equipment with your supervisor before departure or start of work.
- (b) Plan work carefully, bearing in mind experience and training, the nature of the terrain and the weather. Be careful not to overestimate what can be achieved. Make sure you are conversant with the particular safety and health requirements of the environment in which you are working.
- (c) Don't go into the field without leaving a route card (see Appendix 4, Route Card Form) and a map showing expected location and time of return. Remember that this route card is only useful if you do not digress from the route given. Never carelessly break arrangements to report your return to local people.
- (d) Check weather forecasts. Keep a constant lookout for weather changes. Do not hesitate to turn back if the weather deteriorates. Local weather forecasts are more useful than general forecasts.
- (e) Know what to do in an emergency. Carry a first aid kit (see Appendix 5, First Aid Kits and Applying First Aid) and some emergency food at all times. A survival bag, whistle, torch, map, compass and watch will be required in remote areas.

APPENDIX 1: SAFETY

COLLEGE SAFETY OFFICER, SCHOOL SAFETY CO-ORDINATOR, FIRST AIDERS

College Safety Officer

Keith Ryan
Room 301, Malet Street
Telephone 020 7631 6218

Qualified First Aiders

Dr Sue Brooks
Room 204, 32 Tavistock Square
Telephone 020 3073 8445

APPENDIX 2: HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____

College: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No.: _____

Please circle

Are you vegetarian? Y or N

Are you vegan? Y or N

Do you have any other special dietary needs Y or N

Give Details:

Do you have any medical problems? Y or N

Elaborate: Asthma - Epilepsy - Haemophilia - Diabetes – Others (give details below)

Do you have any significant allergies? Y or N (give details below)

Are you regularly taking medication? Y or N (give details below)

Next of kin / Person to contact in an emergency:

Address:

Telephone: _____

APPENDIX 3: HEALTH HAZARDS AND ADVICE

1. SUNLIGHT

Over-exposure to natural sunlight can cause skin cancer (melanoma). Skin types are divided into six categories according to how they react to sunlight:

- a) Never tans, always burns
- b) Tans with difficulty, burns easily
- c) Tans easily, burns rarely
- d) Always tans, never burns
- e) Genetically brown skin
- f) Genetically black skin

The risk of skin cancer varies with skin type, being greatest for type 1 and least for type 6. If a student has skin types 1 or 2, they must wear protective clothing or use sunscreen cream. Cloud cover does not much diminish, while blue sky and reflection from snow or water greatly increases, exposure to UV radiation. The risk of developing skin cancer is a long-delayed hazard of sunburn.

2. HIV/AIDS

(Human Immune Deficiency Virus: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)

HIV is not easily spread. People may become HIV positive in a number of ways, including:

- a) Penetrative sexual contact - through semen and vaginal fluids
- b) Intravenous drug use
- c) By receiving contaminated blood products (all UK blood donations are screened for the virus)
- d) Unprotected handling of blood spillage

Students should minimise risks to themselves by, for instance, not engaging in unprotected sexual activity.

3. WEIL'S DISEASE (LEPTOSPIROSIS)

This disease is usually contracted from water in canals, stagnant pools, landfill sites and bodies of slow-moving water which have been contaminated with urine from infected rats. Domestic animals, cattle and pigs can also pass on this disease. Treat any still or slow moving water as suspect, and ensure that all cuts and abrasions are adequately covered with waterproof dressings. Avoid contact with water known or suspected to be infested with rats.

APPENDIX 4: ROUTE CARD

Names and addresses of party Route (give grid reference and time)

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

Return base: _____

Total distance: _____

Total height: _____

Total time: _____

Time and date of departure: _____

Estimated time of return: _____

Place of departure: _____

Vehicle registration: _____

Bad weather alternative destination: _____

Equipment carried (please tick all that apply)

- Emergency food
- Waterproof clothing
- Winter clothing
- Torch
- Whistle
- Compass
- Map
- Polybag
- Rope
- Tide tables
- First aid kit

Please indicate whether any members of the party are qualified first aiders:

Mode of transport (please tick all that apply)

- Walking
- Cycling
- Private vehicle
- Public transport
- Other

School:

Course:

Leader:

APPENDIX 5: FIRST AID KITS AND APPLYING FIRST AID

1. FIRST AID KITS - CHECKLIST AND BRIEF FIRST AID INSTRUCTIONS

First aid boxes or bags should be made of suitable material and designed to protect the contents, as far as possible, from damp and dust. Boxes or containers should be clearly identified as first aid containers: the marking used should be a white cross on a green background. First aid boxes or bags will contain a card giving general first aid guidance and should contain only the following items and nothing else:

- (a) 6 x individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings
- (b) 1 x sterile eye pads, with attachment, No. 16
- (c) Triangular bandages:
 - (i) 2 x calico 90cm x 127cm
 - (ii) 1 x sterile non-woven suitable for covering serious wounds
- (d) Safety pins
- (e) A selection of sterile unmedicated wound dressings, which should include at least the following:
 - Medium sized sterile unmedicated dressings (approx. 10cm x 8cm)
 - Large sterile unmedicated dressings (approx. 13cm x 9cm)
 - Extra large sterile unmedicated dressings (approx. 28cm x 17.5cm)
- (f) Crepe bandages:
 - (i) 7.5cm x 4.5m
 - (ii) 10.0cm x 4.5m
- (g) 1 x pack sterile absorbent gauze
- (h) 1 x reel micro pore tape
- (i) 6 x individually wrapped moist cleansing wipes
- (j) 1 x pair round ended scissors
- (k) 2 pairs of latex gloves

For field trips where groups are taking part in separate activities, there must be one kit for each group.

2. APPLYING FIRST AID

Take care not to become a casualty yourself while administering first aid. Be sure to use protective clothing and equipment where necessary. If you are not a trained first aider, send immediately for the nearest qualified first aider or contact the emergency services via 999

Useful tips while waiting for medical assistance:

a. Bleeding

If bleeding is more than minimal, control it by direct pressure. Apply a pad of sterilised dressing or, if necessary, apply direct pressure with fingers or thumb on the bleeding point. Raising a limb, if the bleeding is sited there, will help reduce the flow of blood (unless the limb is fractured). Disposable gloves are available in the first aid kit.

b. Unconsciousness

Where the patient is unconscious, care must be taken to keep the airway open. This may be done by clearing the mouth and ensuring that the tongue does not block the back of the throat.

c. Broken bones

Unless the casualty is in a position, which exposes him or her to further danger, do not attempt to move a casualty with suspected broken bones.

d. Other injuries

(i.) Burns and scalds: small burns and scalds should be treated by flushing the affected area with plenty of clean cool water until the pain completely subsides.

(ii.) Chemical burns: remove any contaminated clothing which shows no sign of sticking to the skin and flush all affected parts of the body with plenty of clean cool water, ensuring that all the chemical is so diluted as to be rendered harmless.

(iii.) Foreign bodies in the eye: irrigate with clean cool water.

(iv.) Chemical in the eye: flush the open eye at once with clean cool water; continue for at least 5 to 10 minutes and, in any case of doubt, even longer.

(v.) Electric shock: ensure that the current is switched off. If this is impossible, free the person using something made of rubber, dry cloth or wood or a folded newspaper; use the casualty's own clothing if dry. Be careful not to touch the casualty's skin before the current is switched off.

(vi.) Gassing: move the casualty to fresh air but make sure that whoever does this is wearing suitable respiratory protection.

e. General points

(i.) Hygiene: when possible, wash your hands before treating wounds, burns or eye injuries. Take care, in any event, not to contaminate the surfaces of dressings.

(ii.) Minor injuries: casualties with minor injuries, of a sort they would attend to themselves if at home, may wash their hands and apply a small sterilised dressing from the first aid box.

(iii.) Record-keeping: each case of injury must be reported to the School Safety Coordinator, and an entry must be made in the accident book, kept by the College health and Safety Officer.

- (iv.) If possible, try and obtain a first aider's certificate. It may enable you to save one of your colleagues or yourself from permanent injury.
- (v.) Protective items (e.g. gloves, mouth shields) are available in the first aid kits and should be used to avoid contact with body fluids.
- (vi.) If any item is taken from the first aid kit, please inform the Safety Co-ordinator a first aider (see the Introduction to this document or Appendix 1 for a list of first aiders in the Department of Geography, Environment & Development Studies) so the kit can be replenished.

APPENDIX 6: FIELD SAFETY GUIDE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Name: _____

College: _____

Year of study: _____

Fieldwork location: _____

Fieldwork date: _____

I have read the Department of Geography, Environment & Development's Field Safety Guide and I agree to abide by its instructions and advice.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please Note: Only properly registered and fully paid students at the time of the Field Trip will be covered by the College's accident insurance policy.