Welcome to the School of Geosciences Fieldwork Safety Management System!

Please read this!

Thank you for accessing the new fieldwork safety management system in Geosciences. This roll-out is, in effect, an extended test-drive for colleagues to trial it and, when necessary, suggest improvements…

We all need to complete safety and risk assessments for all fieldwork BEFORE undertaking the activity. Working with IT, we have developed an app that will streamline not only the processes of completing these assessments but also for these to be approved via the School's safety team and, most importantly, to provide a record from which we can all share learnings and experiences. The information you provide is critical for facilitating two-way communication between the University and the field participants if needed.

The process works as follows.
Prior to undertaking any fieldwork, open:

The online app
This creates a unique document package for each field trip.
If you are a leader of a field class – you should complete this using the **teaching workflow**.
All other fieldwork is classed as "research" and you should use the **research workflow**.

The app collects essential information and needs to be completed separately for each fieldtrip. For recurrent trips with the same components, you can inherit content from past applications (and edit dates, participants etc as needed), create a template etc.
By having each trip named and dated, the app essentially provides a folder into which specific information can be collated – as laid out below.

So, you will need to upload, as requested, a completed *Field experience and training log* along with a *Fieldwork risk assessment*, as described below.

Field experience and training log
For field teachers and researchers – you should complete and maintain a personal log.
This is for recording the experience and expertise of individuals. The intention is that we all maintain this as a CV that can simply be updated and appended to each new trip. The only thing to add each time when uploading that would be the trip name and date.
It can include formal qualifications (e.g. first aid, mountain leadership, off-road driving, boat-handling), along with experience (e.g. operating in wilderness, managing groups on road sections, working in cuttings, completing risk assessments).

For specific trips, all individuals (for research or on the teaching team for teaching trips) should make their personal logs available to the field class leader. Collectively they record the pooled experience, expertise and qualifications for the team. The field class leader should compile these for the teaching team and upload the single combined doc when completing the forms on the app.

Fieldwork risk assessment (research)

This doc has the key info for each specific trip. Completed before departure, the purpose of course is to document a conversation, collating both potential hazards and their mitigations/responses.

There are two versions of this form – one for teaching, the other for research.

For roaming fieldwork – this is termed here "expedition" – so folk clearly state this on the risk form. The emphasis would be on the field team maintaining their own safety dynamically – without reference to the safety committee.

Note that for repeat visits to the same site, it would be routine to resubmit the form, little changed (rather than refill the app).

Fieldwork risk assessment (teaching)

As above, this doc has the key info for each specific trip. Completed before departure, the purpose of course is to document a conversation, collating both potential hazards and their mitigations/responses.

The assessment falls into two parts – a generic component that identifies hazards and their mitigations and an applied part, where these are related to specific, identified field locations. The locations should be gathered into daily itineraries.

FAQs

- Has this been trialled?
  Yes – the app and processes have been developed and trialled through subsets of our user-community in the School through 2023.

- Why is the process so granular?
  Once individuals have built up their personal fieldwork logs, they should be easy to maintain and this information can be simply added through attaching the file, rather than having to upload it piecemeal each time an application is being constructed. Likewise, if there are recurrent fieldwork activities – then the basic risk assessment form can simply be re-used. However, the basic support structures (e.g medical facilities, contact details) should be checked and confirmed in the app.

- Why do we use What3Words?
  Accurate location information is essential for completing and documenting risk assessments and for locating support facilities in or close to the field areas. The reason for using What3Words that it is very quick for safety assessors to use as across-check. Most critically, typos are very obvious – whereas a wrong digit in a grid reference or lat/long is easily missed (and can return plausible, but wrong locations). It also means individuals completing the forms will actually locate the facility <u>on imagery</u> (e.g. sat image/road map) in what3words. This introduces an important additional location check – rather than assuming published digital or descriptive addresses are correct. As the information is collated and returned pre-departure – What3Words can be accessed via normal internet browsers – there is no need to use the what3words app itself.

- How can I assess all the risks and hazards for a site before I go?

You can't! We always need to expect the unexpected and conduct dynamic risk assessments in the field. Your ability to make dynamic risk assessments should be recorded in your personal field experience and training log. Having this experience is especially important if proposing "expedition" fieldwork. You can document these unforeseen hazards and your mitigations in your field notebook/tablet/phone and, if this is a recurrent activity, update your forms for the next time.

- How can I complete the forms if I'm in a remote location?
  You can't – you need to complete the application BEFORE you depart on fieldwork – so you should have access to the app (and the associated documents) from your workplace (or home).

- Should I update the form once fieldwork is underway, e.g. if date of return delayed because of illness etc?
  No – the form is for assessment of activities BEFORE they occur. If your return is delayed by illness or accident, then you should contact the School Office (and if appropriate, the insurers) as soon as possible.

- Can I have flexibility on the sequence of days in a field class (e.g. due to weather) after completing the day schedule?
  Yes – simply add the comment that you may change running order during a trip… the important point is that identified hazards are paired with activities/locations for a specific day – not where that day fits in the calendar.

- Should we use these forms for student-led fieldwork?
  Yes. But individual exercises may have additional protocols for recording risk assessments.

- What do I do if I don't know my itinerary before I go?
  It is essential to record some broad itinerary information and assessment of likely risks/hazards that may be encountered. This might just be a broad (many square km) area within which you will navigate a route when you're there – which is fine, simply record this in the "additional information" box.

- Why do I need to consider the first-aid needs of a field activity, rather than simply require all of the teaching team to have a valid first aid qualification ?
  The first aid cover needed on trips will depend on how the activity is organised. If the student group remain together under supervision, then the number of qualified first aiders needed may be fewer (so some of the teaching team need not have a qualification) than if the group (and teaching team) is dispersed over countryside.

- What is the School Safety Card?
  This simple credit card doc has the key contact information to use if needed. It is being rolled out in the coming months.

Doc: February 2024