

School of Natural Sciences

https://naturalscience.tcd.ie/

**Fieldwork Safety Manual**



**September 2024**

**Introduction**

All staff members, researchers, postgraduate and undergraduate students must read this manual prior to undertaking fieldwork. Postgraduate and undergraduate students must firstly discuss any proposed fieldwork with their academic supervisor and have their consent prior to undertaking any fieldwork.

This manual provides information on all aspects of preparing for and conducting fieldwork with a focus on the health, safety, and welfare of field researchers and those they encounter. All Trinity College Dublin (TCD) staff and students have a responsibility to themselves and others to ensure that all legal requirements are met, that a risk assessment is carried out and carefully planned safe practices are in place before any course of fieldwork begins. These measures must be adhered to throughout the fieldwork.

If you have any questions regarding fieldwork health, safety, and welfare matters, that you feel are not covered in this manual, you should seek further advice from your Supervisor, Head of Discipline, or the Discipline Safety Officer.

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**1. Definition of Fieldwork**

Fieldwork is defined as any practical work carried out by Trinity College Dublin staff or students for the purpose of teaching and/or research in places which are not under University control, but where the University is responsible for the safety of its staff and students and those exposed to their activities.

The following activities could be considered as examples of fieldwork from the School of Natural Sciences, surveying or direct sampling on land, in water and in air, etc.

It should be noted that qualifications or professional training may be essential for some specialist activities e.g., drone operation, caving, diving, working on boats or working in extreme or overseas environments.

**2. Legal Background**

Universities must exercise a “duty of care” to employees and to those they supervise, and this is recognised in both criminal and civil law. It is the responsibility of the governing body of a university, through its officers, to ensure that statutory requirements are met and that appropriate standards are applied.

Risk Assessment, to identify hazards, their associated risks, and the implementation of control measures to ensure a safe working environment is not only essential to any safety, health, and welfare system, it is required by law.

Heads of Discipline have overall responsibility for Health, Safety and Welfare matters within their Discipline. To this end, they are required to ensure that an appropriate and sufficient assessment of any risk to the health, safety and welfare of staff and students or to the health, safety and welfare of persons who may encounter the activities of staff and students, is carried out.

All fieldwork must be risk assessed to ensure that a safe system of work has been established for participants and all who may come in to contact with fieldwork activities. A risk assessment must be completed in advance of any proposed fieldwork. The completed risk assessment must be approved by the Supervisor or Principal Investigator (PI), if the assessor is a student. In some circumstances approval from the Head of Discipline will be required.

The Head of Discipline will generally delegate the duty of risk assessment to the member of staff or the student organising or supervising the fieldwork. In such circumstances the Head of Discipline must be satisfied the person to whom they have delegated this responsibility understands the requirements of risk assessment, has the competence to lead and has sufficient awareness of their legal responsibilities to those under their supervision. The Head of Discipline must ensure that the fieldwork meets the health, safety and welfare standards as set out in the School Safety Statement.

It is the responsibility of the Fieldwork Leader to record details of any accidents or incidents that occur during risk assessed fieldwork activities and report this to the Head of Discipline, Safety Officer and/or iProtectU https://iprotectu.tcd.ie/ at their earliest convenience.

All fieldwork participants are legally expected to take reasonable care for their own safety and that of others with whom they come in to contact. They must also notify those in authority of any issue they do not clearly understand.

**3. Insurance**

**Trinity College Dublin Public and Employer Liability Cover**

This policy covers all authorised activities involving College staff and postgraduate students, including fieldwork, and in particular, any liability that College incurs as a result of negligence on the College’s part.  It is not a no-fault compensation fund, nor does it cover medical/repatriation as a result of illness or accident that is not the College’s fault.

Undergraduates are covered by College Liability Insurance if the activity is related to their degree course and permission for the activity has been approved by their Supervisor and/or the Head of Discipline. The Head of Discipline has a responsibility to ensure that all fieldworkers are adequately covered.

The cover is not restricted to T.C.D. campus only, subject otherwise to the usual terms, conditions and exceptions. This policy applies to laboratory work, fieldwork and placements with external bodies.

Those visiting commercial, industrial, or privately owned sites may be covered by the site owner’s insurance. However, the laws concerning liability are complex and beyond the scope of this manual. If any part of your fieldwork will be conducted on a commercial or industrial site or on privately owned land you should discuss insurance arrangements with the relevant persons in advance. It is the Fieldworker or Fieldwork Leaders’ responsibility to investigate this and ensure adequate cover is in place in such circumstances.

**Trinity College Travel Insurance Policy**

College staff and postgraduates undertaking fieldwork outside of Ireland are covered by the College Travel Insurance Policy. Before embarking on overseas fieldwork, the College travel insurance form must be completed online. Once approved you must take note of emergency contact details and claims procedures. You should also check with the Department of Foreign Affairs website before embarking on your journey. Links for both are given below.

College Travel Insurance form (local access only): <https://tcdud.sharepoint.com/sites/EstatesandFacilitiesInsurance/SitePages/TRAVEL-INSURANCE.aspx>

Department of Foreign Affairs: <https://www.ireland.ie/en/dfa/overseas-travel/advice/>

Undergraduates are not covered by this insurance policy for work outside Ireland. It is recommended that undergraduates obtain personal overseas travel insurance if they are undertaking fieldwork outside Ireland. It is advised that you discuss this in detail with your Supervisor, the Head of Discipline, or the DSO in advance of any overseas fieldwork.

**Exclusions**

Maximum duration of any one trip no longer than six months.

This policy does not cover certain areas of unrest.

**4. Fieldwork Risk Assessment**

It is a legal requirement that a Fieldwork Risk Assessment is carried out for any off-campus activities. The School of Natural Sciences has a responsibility to ensure that a comprehensive risk assessment is completed and that safe systems of work are devised before any fieldwork activity is undertaken. This should be based on the recommendations set out in this document and in the School Safety Statement.

The assessment should be carried out by the person leading the fieldwork. Undergraduate students are expected to carry out a risk assessment as part of their final year dissertation/capstone project. This should be done under the guidance of the relevant Supervisor. Advice on risk assessment is also available from the DSO.

The practicalities of the fieldwork should be discussed in advance of carrying out the risk assessment and should involve all persons responsible for organising the fieldwork activities.

Students should discuss any fieldwork proposal with their supervisor before commencing with the Fieldwork Risk Assessment. Any other relevant persons (e.g., landowners, outside agencies etc.) who may be involved should also be contacted in advance in order that all necessary arrangements can be made. On completion, the Fieldwork Risk Assessment must be signed by the assessor and approved and signed by their Supervisor (if the assessor is a student) and, in circumstances where the risk is assessed as medium to high, the Head of Discipline. Always ensure that the risk assessment is completed and approved well in advance (at least one week) of your fieldwork commencing. If the document is not approved and signed off the fieldwork will not be authorised to proceed.

The main considerations for any risk assessment are the hazards you may encounter and the level of risk that they pose to you or others. The hazards will be dependent on the nature of the work and may arise from, travel, environment, equipment, substances, methods, activities, climatic conditions etc. If you are unfamiliar with the environment or have not visited the site in advance of the fieldwork, it may be useful to do so. It is for the assessor to scrutinise all aspects of the fieldwork; identify the hazards and assess what level of risk this poses to those who may encounter the hazard.

All documents related to risk assessment are available on SharePoint. All forms have detailed instructions of how to complete the assessment. If you have any questions, contact your supervisor or the DSO or supervisor for advice.

**4.1. Reporting Safe Return**

It is essential that the Fieldwork Leader sets up a reporting system to confirm ‘safe return’ each day when carrying out fieldwork. This is an important safeguard for the welfare and safety of all participants. It is the responsibility of the Fieldwork Leader to make sure that this is arranged prior to each fieldwork session. For this system to function, you must identify a contact person who will be available to meet you or receive your call/text message at a pre-arranged time, on your safe return.

The contact person can be anyone who you trust will be available to meet with you or take your call/text message at the pre-arranged time. This could be a TCD student or staff member, a family member, a friend, or the staff at your accommodation. This person must agree that they will be available to meet with you or take your call/text message at a pre-arranged time or act to inform the emergency services in the event of no contact after the agreed time.

**Before you set out** on your fieldwork your contact person must be informed of:

* The fieldwork itinerary for the day including details of activities.
* Locations and the estimated time that will be spent at each location.
* Your planned time of return at the end of the day
* Your contact phone number

It may be useful for you to write these details down for your contact to avoid any misunderstanding.

During the fieldwork, you should inform your contact person if you make any significant changes in your plans, particularly if they may affect your planned time of return.

**At the pre-arranged time** the Fieldwork Leader should meet with, call or text message the contact person at or before the pre-arranged time, to either:

* confirm safe return
* inform of any delay

If there is a delay, the fieldwork leader must periodically keep the contact person informed of the situation until ‘safe return’ is reported.

**It is important that you remember to confirm your safe return or any delay at the pre-arranged time to avoid the emergency services being alerted unnecessarily. It may be useful to set an alarm on your phone to remind you of this.**

**Should reporting safe return fail**

If the fieldworker/ fieldwork leader does not make contact at the pre-arranged time of return, the contact person must initially attempt to contact the fieldworker/ fieldwork leader.

If no contact can be made:

* The Contact person is to alert the Emergency Services and inform them of the situation, giving the location details provided by the fieldworker/fieldwork leader. (In Ireland dial 999 or 112. If abroad, check the emergency services contact number on arrival and make sure your contact is aware of this number).
* The Contact Person should also inform a member of staff at Trinity College at the earliest opportunity. Where a supervisor/PI has given contact details they should be informed as soon as possible.

**Failure to set up a safe return system when out on fieldwork can literally be the difference between life and death so always make sure you have a system in place before each day’s fieldwork.**

***N.B.*** *In keeping with GDPR regulations in relation to privacy, any personal details (names, phone numbers, address etc.) shared between you and your contact person should be securely destroyed when the fieldwork has been completed.*

**5. Supervision**

Fieldwork and other outdoor activities cannot always be supervised in the same controlled manner as laboratory or classroom activities. The Head of Discipline is ultimately responsible for ensuring adequate supervision is in place. Fieldwork Leaders must observe the supervision guidelines set out in this document and in the School Safety Statement.

Where participants are inexperienced, have specific cultural, gender or age (e.g. under 18) requirements, the risk assessment must reflect all factors.

There must be a leader whose authority is clearly defined and understood by all and who is trained in the appropriate skills. A deputy must be appointed in case of injury to the leader. Care must be exercised in places where climate is likely to be extreme and where terrain is hazardous or social environments may be hostile to certain genders, race, cultures or creeds.

**5.1. Undergraduate students**

The supervision of undergraduate students undertaking activities in the field must be adequate. Where undergraduate students are involved, the minimum staff to student ratio of 1:10 is recommended. If, during the fieldwork, sub-groups are formed (groups of two or more), there should be a nominated leader/supervisor for each sub-group. Sub-group leaders should be suitably experienced (postgraduate students where possible) and will be charged with making practical decisions for the sub-group. At all times the sub-groups will remain under the general supervision of the Fieldwork Leader and sub-group leaders should refer to the Fieldwork Leader if any challenging situations arise.

Fully supervised courses for undergraduates should be designed to be ‘low risk’ for participants. Fieldwork Leaders should be familiar with the environment where the fieldwork will take place. Students must be closely supervised (with no student working alone), and all fieldwork activities must be well structured and planned. As many of the students participating in such courses may be inexperienced, safety instruction should be an integral part of the course. All participating students should have access to and be advised to read the relevant risk assessment and this manual before beginning the fieldwork and a safety talk by the fieldwork Leader should precede each fieldwork session.

**5.1.1. Undergraduate dissertation/capstone projects**

Undergraduates planning to carry out fieldwork should be aware that they must be accompanied by at least one other person for the duration of the fieldwork. Ideally, this should be a person who is covered by Trinity College Dublin, Public and Employer Liability Cover. If the accompanying person is not a member of staff or a student at TCD (e.g., a family member or friend), they must be advised that they will not be covered by the aforementioned insurance policy, and they should be advised to make their own arrangements with regards insurance cover for the duration of the fieldwork. The student should ensure that any accompanying persons are familiar with the health, safety, and welfare respects of the fieldwork activities by providing a copy of this manual and the relevant risk assessment to read in advance. Only ‘low risk’ activities should be carried out by undergraduates during their dissertation/capstone project field work.

**5.2. Postgraduate students**

Postgraduates carrying out independent research should be adequately trained and experienced in the activities they intend to carry out in the field. If this is not the case, training must be organised well in advance of the fieldwork taking place or a trained/qualified and experienced person must accompany them on their fieldwork to lead specific activities. Supervision levels should be based on the level of risk, the number of participants and the experience of the participants. There should always be an adequately experienced or trained Fieldwork Leader in charge where any hazardous activity is being carried out. While in the field, changes in weather, environment or other circumstances may determine that the supervision arrangements should be reviewed. Fieldwork Leaders should be of sufficient experience to recognise this and take appropriate measures to ensure supervision of all participants is adequate.

**5.3. Communication**

Where sub-groups have been formed, and particularly where a significant distance is involved between groups (i.e., out of line of vision), a reliable source of communication, e.g., two-way radio or mobile phone, between sub-group leaders and the Fieldwork Leader should be in place. In all circumstances sub-group leaders must adhere to any instructions given by the Fieldwork Leader in terms of their location and activities. It should be clearly understood by all fieldworkers that they are in a work situation and under supervision.

**5.4. Research expeditions**

Field research expeditions can be longer in duration. There must be a Fieldwork Leader whose authority is clearly defined and understood by all. They must be sufficiently experienced and trained in the skills required for planning, group management, supervision and all activities involved. A suitably experienced deputy leader must be appointed in case of injury to the group leader. All participants must have received appropriate training or instruction in all skills required and have experience of these skills in practice before the work begins. It is essential that at least one member of the group hold a current Remote Emergency Care (REC) certificate.

**5.5. Independent Activity (Lone Working)**

It may be necessary for some activities to be undertaken alone, although this practice should be discouraged. Lone working should only be undertaken when the option of having a permanent co-worker is not possible and may only take place if the procedures for lone working approval have been completed. Lone working is prohibited for undergraduate students unless there are exceptional circumstances, and the activity is considered very ‘low risk’.

The University has a strict lone work and assessment policy.

<https://tcd.ie/safetyoffice/safety-management/> Further information can be found in Section 18 below.

**6. Training and Skills**

All staff and students must be competent and capable of participating in planned activities and must be suitably qualified and experienced where required. The skills needed for fieldwork are varied and dependant on the activity involved. No one should be asked to carry out tasks beyond their competence, ability, or confidence. It is vital that Fieldwork Leaders have sufficient training and experience to lead activities and understand the limitations of all participants. Staff and students should receive relevant training or instruction before embarking on fieldwork. The College Safety Office requires that at least one member of any group should hold a current First Aid Responder certificate or preferably a certificate in Rescue and Emergency Care (REC), especially for remote areas or where environmental or weather conditions may be challenging.

Some examples of training that may be required for fieldwork in Geography are listed below:

* REC (Remote Emergency Care)
* **First Aid Responder**
* **TCD Chemical Safety Workshop**
* Handling hazardous substances
* Manual Handling
* Navigation and map reading
* Use of equipment
* Maintenance of equipment
* Boat handling/Sea craft
* Mountaineering/ Hill-walking
* Caving
* Diving
* Communications (radio)
* Drone operator
* Catering and hygiene
* Driving vehicles
* Sampling
* IT skills

This is not an exclusive list. When organising your fieldwork, you should consider what skills may be needed to effectively carry out your activities. Staff should always ensure they are appropriately trained. Postgraduate students should discuss and arrange any identified training needs with their supervisor well in advance of any work going ahead.

As a legal requirement all training or proof of same must be recorded.

**7. Working in and Around Water**

When working in or around water certain precautions must be taken. Casualties are often experienced field workers. The unpredictable nature of rivers, lakes and seas and the influence of other environmental factors can very quickly lead to hazardous situations. The Fieldwork Leader should determine if participants will require specific training in advance for any activities undertaken on or near water.

**General Safety Considerations for Working in and Around Water**

* Before any fieldwork on or near water you must carry out a detailed risk assessment to establish the associated risks.
* Make sure you are familiar with the area where you will be working or have someone who does with you at all times.
* Anyone working in water should be a competent swimmer.
* Be aware of the depth of the water you will be working in (check with a depth gauge or graduated pole) and check river/seabed stability and potential obstacles (shifting sediment, shelving, rocks, floating debris etc.) before entering any body of water.
* Check the weather and tidal forecasts the day before your fieldwork and again on the morning of the fieldwork. Keep a check on the weather regularly throughout the day. Be aware that adverse weather conditions can impede your ability to assess tidal conditions. Never begin work on an incoming tide.
* Wind can dramatically affect surface conditions, create spray and influence the buoyancy of floating items. Wind chill and spray can also contribute to hypothermia.
* Water clarity, flow rate, and currents should be assessed before you begin work.
* Choose a safe access point where there is no erosion or slip hazard. Avoid steep banking where possible.
* Wear appropriate high visibility protective clothing suitable for the weather and river/sea conditions. Always wear a life jacket when in or near water. Do not wear or carry anything that will impede your ability to carry out the planned work. Try to stay as warm and dry as possible. Always wear appropriate footwear and headgear.
* Never work alone in or near water and always remain in-sight of your co-worker(s).
* Be familiar with rescue techniques (training may be needed) and carry a First Aid Kit as well as an appropriate length of throw rope when working in or near water.
* Be aware of the dangers associated with sinkholes, slippery surfaces, silt and identify potentially hazardous areas to be avoided.
* Be aware of contaminants in water (often caused by floodwaters) which may carry pathogens and the risk of infection. Avoid such areas where possible or ensure adequate precautions are taken to minimize these risks, e.g., waterproof clothing, nitrile gloves. Wash down or dispose of any potentially contaminated clothing where necessary.
* If working near roads or on road bridges, always wear high visibility clothing, post signs at an appropriate distance to alert drivers and be aware of passing traffic and pedestrians.
* Avoid wearing chest-high or thigh-high waders in deep or fast flowing water as they are a potential drowning risk. Where possible, carry out all work in water no deeper than knee high and wear rubber boots or thigh high waders. If entering the water above this level, wet or dry suits with a life jacket should be worn
* Do not use a tether rope unless absolutely necessary. Environment and water conditions can produce circumstances that make the use of a tether hazardous. If a tether is to be used, ensure you have had appropriate training in their use beforehand.
* Be aware of any animals in or near the water that may cause a hazard.
* Be aware of the boundaries of private property on water courses and do not work on private land without first seeking permission.
* Ensure you have a means of communication (mobile phone, two-way radio, signals) with fellow workers onshore and for emergencies.
* Avoid working in deep or fast-moving water where possible and never work in deep or fast-moving water if you are unable to swim. An ability to swim at least 50m, fully clothed, when in or near water is advisable.
* If working on water regularly you should undertake safety training for working in or near water. The links below have useful information on courses in the Dublin area. There may also be other organisations offering similar training in other areas.

<https://www.seaandshore.ie/index.php/our-courses/53-water-safety>

<https://www.safety.ie/course/water-awareness-including-working-near-water-basic-level/>

**When working on or near water you should never:**

* Wade into fast moving water
* Work in areas where flooding has occurred
* Work close to weirs (high drowning risk due to hydraulic circulation)
* Work in caves with flowing water

Immediately before working in water, a survey of the depth, flow rate and underlying structure should be carried out and always take account of:

* Tides
* Weather
* Currents
* Temperature
* Underwater/unseen objects
* Depth of water
* Sudden shelving

These are all potential hazards that must be assessed in detail prior to any work being undertaken. All participants should have information regarding any of the above if it is considered a hazard and hazardous areas should be avoided when at all possible.

**7.1. Boats and Watercraft**

Anyone in charge of a boat or watercraft should have appropriate experience and training and be in possession of any licences required by law. If a significant part of your fieldwork involves being on water and the use of boats, an appropriate certificated Sea Survival Course should be taken before you begin.

Small Boat Safety Checklist and Float Plan must be lodged with a responsible person on shore before operating a small boat. **Boat checklist and Float Plan available in Appendix.**

**Please note:** In line with welfare policies toilet facilities or comfort breaks must be scheduled into all boat trips and communicated to fieldworkers.

**When using any small boat:**

* + Ensure the boat is in good condition, safety compliant and fit for the intended purpose.
* Lodge a ‘Float Plan’ with a responsible person on shore before embarkation. It should include planned departure and return times, site of operation, Leader on board, names of all on board and communication and safety equipment on board.
* Complete a ‘Small Boat Safety Checklist’ before embarkation.
  + Assess weather and sea conditions including tidal and sea floor/riverbed conditions before embarkation.
  + The following are essential for all trips; Anchor and sufficient chain, bailer, oars, neatly coiled rope, safety line, First Aid Kit, communication device, extra fuel, water, tool kit, sun protection, light, GPS, fire extinguisher and distress signal.
  + Everyone must wear a life jacket (See links at the end of this section for advice on the law concerning Personal Floatation Devices (PFD’s)/Lifejackets, suitability for your fieldwork and general water safety advice)
* Moor or anchor boats only in areas where it is safe and legal to do so.
* No alcohol or smoking is allowed on board the boat.
* Anyone in control of an outboard engine should have experience and knowledge of their operation.
* Carry any fuel in appropriate containers.
* No equipment needing a power supply or having internal voltage greater than 50 volts AC or DC should be used on small boats.
  + Inform passengers of emergency procedures and any additional hazards. Have them read your risk assessment.
  + Inform passengers of the location of emergency equipment.
  + The weight and distribution of persons and equipment on board must not jeopardize safety.
  + When operating Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIBs), occupants should wear a lifejacket in addition to their wet/dry suit.
  + The operator of the RIB must have an engine kill cord attached to their person at all times.
  + If the boat is to be used for diving special Code of Practice for scuba activities should be consulted and divers must be fully qualified.
  + **When using a hire boat, discuss the planned activities with the skipper before the hire is confirmed to ensure that.**
* The vessel is fit for the intended purpose.
  + The Skipper has formal qualifications.
  + The vessel is licensed to carry passengers.
  + There is Public Liability Insurance.
  + The vessel is well maintained and seaworthy including appropriate navigational lights and distress flares.
  + Life jackets are provided.
  + Radio and communications equipment are available on-board.
  + There are appropriate safety measures and fire extinguishers on-board.
  + Emergency procedures will be explained to all before embarkation.

The following links provide useful information on personal floatation devices, life-jackets, operation of watercraft and general water safety:

<http://www.iws.ie/boating/personal-flotation-devices.327.html>

<https://afloat.ie/safety/marine-warning/item/21568-wearing-a-lifejacket-rules-in-ireland>

<http://www.safetyonthewater.ie/sites/default/files/brochures/Legislation%20leaflet%20%288.11.06%29.pdf>

<https://www.garda.ie/en/Crime-Prevention/Community-engagement/Code-of-practice-Safe-Operation-of-Recreational-Craft-2017.pdf>

**8. Travel and transport** *(for boats see section 7.1.)*

Careful consideration should be given to how you intend to travel to and from your fieldwork and how you will travel between locations during your fieldwork. If you identify any potential hazards connected with your travel and transportation arrangements this should be detailed in your risk assessment.

**8.1. Walking and Hiking:**

Fieldwork sites can be situated some distance from roads or tracks and walking or hiking is often the only accessible option. Fieldwork Leaders should assess the ability of the participants of any group where walking or hiking over distance is required, particularly if this will involve difficult or challenging terrain. Participants should be confident that they have the skills and ability to cope with the terrain and cover the required distance before embarking on any journey, especially if the carriage of equipment is involved. The following general points should be considered when planning any walking or hiking trips.

* + Itineraries must be well planned, allowing for adequate time to accomplish objectives with particular reference to the return journey and daylight hours.
  + Accurate weather forecasts for the duration of the journey and fieldwork should be obtained in advance and the potential for changes in weather should be constantly monitored.
  + Walkers/hikers must be appropriately dressed. Specific attention should be given to choices of footwear and weather appropriate/resistant clothing. Weather conditions at your destination may well be different to that of your start point, particularly if ascent to height is involved. Additional, dry clothing should always be carried.
  + Essential safety and survival equipment must always be carried e.g., torches, first aid and care kits, emergency water and food supply (only for emergencies and in addition to regular meals/snacks), maps, compass, whistles, survival bags, etc. Fieldwork Leaders must ensure participants have the knowledge and ability to use all equipment.
  + Adequate supplies of food and drink must be taken, and regular breaks for food and rest should be planned.
  + The loads being carried must be suited to the physical ability of the participants. As a rule, a backpack should weigh no more that 20% of your body weight. If heavier loads or equipment is involved, this should be alternated between participants at regular intervals, or an appropriate means of transportation should be sought out in advance.
  + In larger group situations, one experienced person should take the lead and one should take the rear to ensure the group is not split and no one is left behind. Over challenging terrain or in difficult weather conditions, Fieldwork Leaders should ensure that the whole group is accounted for at all times. Take regular breaks if required. If conditions become hazardous, the Fieldwork Leader should abandon the walk and return to base or to the nearest shelter.

**(Walking and Hiking cont.)**

* Anyone walking along roads at night or in poor visibility should wear high visibility clothing and carry a rear light. Do not walk along roads alone where at all possible.
* Always walk on the side of the road with oncoming traffic (in Ireland; right hand side of road) unless it is less safe to do so. Stand off the road where possible in situations where it is safer to allow traffic to pass.
* Always be prepared for the conditions to change, especially at altitude where weather and temperature can change suddenly and dramatically.
* Avoid disorientation. Keep track of your location regularly, especially in poor visibility.
* Do not reply on mobile phones, a signal may not be available. Two-way radios should be used where it is considered necessary.
* Carry a handheld GPS and make sure you know how to use it.
* Carry a detailed map of the area (OSI or equivalent) and compass and make sure you know how to use them.

**8.2. Cycling**

If you intend to cycle during your fieldwork you should make sure that your bicycle is in good working order before you set out and be aware of the Rules of the Road for cyclists. When using public roads, always wear a helmet and high visibility clothing to be easily seen by other road users. Avoid cycling in the hours of darkness where possible. If you are cycling in hours of darkness fit front and rear lights and ensure reflectors are fitted and intact. Cycling regulations for Ireland and advice on safety and maintenance are available from the link below from the Road Safety Authority.

<http://www.rsa.ie/Documents/Campaigns/Wrecked/Downloads/Cycle%20safety%20booklet.pdf>

If you intend to cycle abroad, make sure you have accessed information on local rules and regulations before you set out.

**8.3. Motorised Vehicles**

Vehicles are often necessary for fieldwork, for transportation to and from and between sites. Road traffic accidents are the cause of a considerable number of injuries and fatalities to fieldworkers worldwide. Accident prevention measures and good maintenance are essential when vehicles are used. Here, by definition, a vehicle is any mode of motorised transport that is operated by a fieldwork participant, or a person hired to operate a vehicle for the purpose of the fieldwork and includes quad bikes, cherry pickers, forklift trucks and any other off-road vehicles you may use.

You should ensure that the vehicle you use is fit for purpose (size, capacity, 4WD etc.) and has been properly maintained and serviced before use.

**General points for all motorised vehicles**

* Drivers/operators should be sufficiently experienced and qualified. They should also be familiar with the route or terrain to be undertaken.
* Any vehicle must be suitable for its intended use, comprehensively insured and operated by qualified and experienced persons only.
* All national or local laws and regulations pertaining to vehicle use, e.g., seatbelts, speed limits, safety equipment, intoxication and impairment must be adhered to. This should be checked in advance, particularly when working abroad where different rules may apply.
* All safety regulations pertaining to vehicle use and any control measures from your risk assessment must be adhered to.
* Vehicles must be properly maintained throughout use. If considered unsafe for use, vehicles should not be used, and repair or replacement should be arranged immediately.
* Any load carried must be safe and secure, within weight limitations and properly packed.
* If dangerous substances are carried, they must be safely packed in line with safety data sheet recommendations and have the correct safety warning signs clearly displayed.
* Ensure that any hire vehicle is fully insured for your purposes before taking charge of it.

**8.4. Public Transport and Hired Vehicles**

**Public Transport** is defined as any form of transport (bus, train, aeroplane, boat etc.) which operates as a regular service and is available to all members of the public.

Where possible, all public transport journeys for the duration of the fieldwork should be booked in advance in order that details can be provided in your risk assessment or travel plan.

**Hired vehicles** refers to any vehicle that has been hired for the specific purpose of the fieldwork and will be driven by a qualified member or members of the fieldwork team or any vehicle that has been hired from a company that will also provide a driver with the vehicle.

When a hire vehicle is hired for fieldwork, it should be suitable for the purpose (e.g. capable of carrying the necessary equipment and number of passengers within legal and safe limits) and drivers should ensure that they are suitably licenced to drive the vehicle.

**General Points.**

**Public Transport**

* Appropriate conduct and respect for other passengers should be observed at all times.
* Regulations put in place by the transport provider must be adhered to.
* If equipment is to be carried on public transport it should be suitably packaged and stored safely and securely. This should be organised in advance if required.
* Hazardous or dangerous items should not be carried on public transport. Such items should be transported in advance, by courier if necessary.

**Hired Vehicles**

* Always hire vehicles from a reputable hire company.
* Make sure that any insurance taken out with the vehicle is adequate to cover the intended purpose of the fieldwork (e.g., off-road, paintwork damage from gravel roads, cross-border etc.). The maximum available insurance cover on offer from the hirer is recommended.
* Always abide by the terms and conditions of the hire agreement.

**9. Equipment**

* All equipment for fieldwork must be selected for its suitability to the required task and fit for purpose.
* All equipment must be safe to use and must adhere to appropriate EU standards (CE marking) and must be used in line with the manufacturer’s safety instructions.
* All equipment should be thoroughly checked and tested by a competent and knowledgeable person prior to use.
* Specialist testing or servicing should be arranged on a regular basis as required, e.g., life jackets, diving bottles etc.
* Essential items for First Aid and survival should always be carried on all fieldwork and should be readily accessible (sub-groups should carry a First Aid Kit and all vehicles should carry a larger/stock kit). Additional specialist items should be carried if the situation demands it.
* Equipment should be operated in a safe manner, by trained and experienced persons only, and safety advice and risk assessment control measures must be strictly adhered to.
* Equipment, which has become contaminated by any source, must be decontaminated after use and before storage or properly disposed of.
* Damaged equipment should not be used if it creates a potential hazard and must be repaired or replaced as soon as possible. Any damage to equipment or concerns about equipment safety or function should be reported to the Fieldtrip Leader.

**9.1. Electrical Equipment**

* All electrical equipment must have accessible and identifiable means of isolation.
* All electrical equipment must be mechanically sound and reliable.
* Live terminals must be insulated.
* All batteries must be insulated.
* Any damaged cables must be replaced, repaired immediately or use of the equipment withdrawn.
* Equipment should not be operated in damp or wet conditions, unless purposely designed for such use.
* Plugs, sockets, extension leads, etc. must comply with current EU standards.
* Mains equipment used out of doors should be ‘all insulated’ or ‘double Insulated’ to provide extra protection from electrocution. Use a plug-in Residual Current Device (RCD) if one is not available on the distribution board. Equipment designed to operate at 110 volts or less, through an appropriate transformer, will provide extra protection. For more information see the link below, particularly pages 3, 16 and 17.

<https://esbnetworks.ie/docs/default-source/publications/the-safe-use-of-electricity-in-the-home-booklet.pdf>

**10. Clothing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Always wear clothing suitable for the expected conditions. Always check the weather forecast in advance. Being adequately protected from the elements is essential in order that you can concentrate on the job in hand without distraction. PPE may also be recommended or required as a part of the control measures of a risk assessment. Essential PPE such as High Visibility vests, hard hats, first aid kits etc. are provided by the Discipline.

**10.1. Standard clothing**

You are responsible for providing your own standard clothing for fieldwork. The table below contains some suggestions of what to wear in certain conditions. These are only examples. If, during your fieldwork, you expect to encounter specific weather or conditions (snow, dust storms, extreme temperatures etc.) you should consult with your Fieldwork Leader to discuss any essential items you will need to bring with you.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Expected conditions** | **What to wear/carry** |
| Wet | Waterproof walking boots or good quality rubber boots with robust sole (avoid flimsy or novelty rubber boots). Good quality, (Gore-Tex or similar) waterproof jacket, trousers, hat, and gloves. Umbrella. Carry additional dry clothing, especially socks.  *Avoid wearing jeans – once wet, they stay wet!* |
| Cold or wind chill | Layers of clothing rather than thick or bulky clothing. Thermal socks, sock liners or rubber boot liners. Thermal underwear. Hat that covers the ears, gloves, scarf. Always carry extra layers with you in cold weather. |
| Hot/Sunny weather | Loose, cool, light coloured clothing with full sleeves to protect arms and long trousers to protect legs, shoes that completely cover the feet (no sandals), wide brimmed hat, sunblock, sunglasses, insect repellent, umbrella/parasol to provide shade. |

**Anyone inappropriately dressed for fieldwork may be excluded from taking part.**

**10.2. PPE**

Where required, adequate and appropriate PPE, that is in good condition and fit for purpose, must be worn on fieldwork, particularly if listed as a control measure in the risk assessment. After use, PPE should be cleaned, dried and repaired, if necessary, then appropriately stored. Any contaminated PPE or clothing (e.g., from sewage, chemicals, or contaminated land) should be decontaminated or disposed of appropriately. Never bring or wear contaminated items indoors until they have been completely decontaminated.

Fieldwork Leaders are responsible for ensuring that all participants are appropriately dressed for fieldwork and that the required PPE is available in the correct quantities.

Most PPE you will need is available to borrow, free of charge, and can be requested from the Discipline.

The table below lists some commonly used types of PPE and some examples of situations where you would be expected to use it.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type of PPE** | **Uses** |
| High visibility outer clothing  (commonly worn at all times during fieldwork) | In poor visibility or low light.  When working near roads or traffic.  When in contact with members of the public (to alert them that work is being carried out).  To identify your co-workers. |
| Hard hats | To protect against any hazard that may cause a head injury, e.g., working near cliffs, working with equipment/ machinery with moving parts, etc. |
| Safety glasses or goggles | To protect the eyes from; hazardous chemicals, loose chippings from rock excavations, dust, equipment /machinery with moving parts etc. |
| Life Jacket, Personal floatation device (PFD), wet or dry suit\* | When on board a boat or when working in or near water. |
| Ear protection (mufflers or ear plugs) | When working with equipment that may damage hearing e.g., drills, chainsaws etc. |
| Protective or specialised footwear (hard toed, ankle support) | When work involves heavy equipment or loads; walking on difficult terrain. |
| Face mask or respirator | When working with dust, gasses, or vapours from chemicals or from other sources. |
| Gloves | When handling hazardous materials or as protection against hand/finger injuries. |

*\* Chest high or thigh high waders should be avoided when working in fast moving water or in calm water at significant depth. If either type is breached by water, it can present a very serious risk to your safety. Wet or dry suits are recommended for any work in or near water. If chest or thigh waders are to be used, only work in calm water at depth no greater than knee high.*

For certain activities, (e.g., caving, diving, or mountaineering) specialist equipment may be required. Forward planning to ensure these items are available and to organise any training to be undertaken should be considered well in advance of the fieldwork commencement date.

**11. Site checks: before and on arrival**

Ideally, you will have visited your site or will have discussed your proposed fieldwork with someone who has prior knowledge of the site before the fieldwork begins. In this way, you will have been able to carry out a comprehensive risk assessment of the work and be prepared for any hazards you may encounter. However, before any activities commence, you should re-examine the site for any hazards or impediments you may have overlooked or that are present on the day due to weather or other changes at the site. Care should be taken where there are specific hazards present. These can be wide ranging, for example.

Avalanche; falling rocks, debris, or objects; caves; mines; derelict buildings; trenches; military ranges; overhead power cables; traffic; marshy or boggy ground; quicksand; tidal hazards; fire; flood; volcanic activity; potentially harmful animals or plants; extreme weather or climatic conditions; crime, civil unrest, military operations, etc.

This is not an exclusive list. Some activities, e.g., diving, rock climbing etc., may need to be carried out by a suitably qualified person or you may need to receive appropriate training in advance.

**The following points are worthy of note before beginning your work:**

* Ensure that you have all of the equipment you will need before setting out on your fieldwork. This should be prepared well in advance in the form of a checklist that can be referenced before departure. If you arrive on-site without essential equipment your journey may have been wasted.
* Mudflats, saltmarsh, estuaries and coastal areas in general can be hazardous for fieldworkers and local knowledge is essential. Currents, tides and stability of terrain must be assessed in advance and again on arrival.
* Communications systems should be tested in advance of the fieldwork and to ensure they are in proper working order and again on the day before you begin.
* Where necessary, e.g., on roads, with incoming tides, where animals are present, lookouts should be posted to convey any relevant safety advice.
* When working on public or private roads adequate warnings must be posted at an appropriate distance to alert traffic before you begin.
* Scaffolds and ladders must be of sound construction and checked prior to the fieldwork. They must be secured correctly before use by qualified persons.
* A suitably qualified person should be present to supervise the digging of excavations and trenches. These activities must be well planned. Ensure that excavations and trenches are protected against collapse and inspected regularly. Sites should be cordoned off and appropriate warning signs displayed before you begin.
* Great care should be taken when visiting derelict buildings and ruins. Prior knowledge of the site is essential, and the appropriate PPE must be worn.
* Quarries and mines present multiple hazards e.g., unstable rock faces, concealed shafts, or contaminants. An experienced and knowledgeable person should be present at all times and site rules and regulations must be strictly adhered to.
* Contact with potentially dangerous plants and animals should be avoided where possible. Be sure you are aware of any potential hazards from flora and fauna when you visit your site or obtain information on this beforehand. A check for the whereabouts of animals should be conducted before you begin, especially when on agricultural land.
* Always be alert to any sources of ignition during your fieldwork and ensure they are kept under control. Look for areas where this may present a fire risk. You should seek to eliminate any fire risk, particularly during dry or hot spells of weather.
* All fieldwork activities should be conducted in a manner that will cause the absolute minimum damage or disturbance to the environment. This should be considered in advance and appropriate measures put in place to rectify or remedy any damage or disturbance when the work is complete.
* It is the duty of the Fieldwork Leader to arrange access to commercial, industrial or privately owned sites by arrangement with the owner or manager of the site. This should be in place before the work begins and include agreement on the nature of the intended work, timescales, number of people involved, noise or disturbance and any remediation required after the work is complete.
* Health and Safety and any other specific regulations or instructions pertaining to commercial, industrial or privately owned sites must be strictly adhered to. Check if a site induction is required before the work begins.

**12. Security**

Crimes such as theft, vandalism and personal attack can occur while you are conducting fieldwork. Any hazards of this nature should be considered and included in your risk assessment. The local environment should be risk assessed for potential hazards of this nature and control measures put in place. Risk assessment of security is very much dependent on the environment. The hazards you may encounter when working in a rural environment will likely be different to those in an urban environment. You should make yourself familiar with the area you intend to work in regarding your security and safety.

**Some general points to consider:**

* Avoid situations and places where you consider your security might be at risk, particularly areas where personal attack, mugging, cultural sensitivities or civil unrest are possible.
* Be aware; avoid excess alcohol or mood-altering drugs of any kind.
* Avoid carrying large sums of money or personal belongings of value.
* Be aware of local customs and laws and be respectful of them. Training in interpersonal skill mays be required.
* Keep valuables, including fieldwork equipment locked away and out of sight when not in use.
* Make sure cars are parked in populated, well-lit areas where possible and always keep doors locked.
* Try to be in the company of someone you know at all times.
* If interviewing or meeting with people not well known to you, try to arrange this in a public place and where possible and have another person with you.
* If meeting people in their home or place of work, that is unfamiliar to you, always take a person known to you with you.
* Do not agree to put yourself into any situation which you consider may compromise your safety, regardless of the relevance to your fieldwork.

**13. Leisure Time**

During longer field trips, participants will have free time where they can plan their own leisure activities and it is important that participants have time to unwind and relax. It should be noted that while these periods are unsupervised, participants should be aware that they are still representing their Fieldwork Group, their School and the College and should conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. Any form of unacceptable behaviour will be recorded, and this may have implications for the continuance of a student’s studies. The Fieldwork Leader may ask any participant to leave the Field Trip, if it is considered that their conduct is not of the expected standard. For undergraduate groups on residential courses, a conduct form is advised which should be signed by all participants. Any infringements can be reported to the Junior Dean.

The potential for accidents or incidents to occur during leisure time can be significant. In unfamiliar surroundings there is the possibility that participants may become disorientated, become lost or find themselves in dangerous situations or places. When socialising, excess alcohol and the use of illegal, mood-altering substances should be avoided as this can result in illness, injury or arrest and can often put you in circumstances you may later regret. Participants should be aware of and abide by the rules and regulations of transport providers and of the accommodation where they are staying and be respectful to their hosts, locals and any others they come into contact with.

Confrontational situations of any kind should be avoided. Any threats or intimidation against you by other persons should be reported to the Fieldwork Leader or reported to local authorities immediately if you think you are in danger. Contact details for local police, medical facilities and emergency services should be sourced in advance and carried with you at all times, especially when abroad.

Care should be taken when participating in any activities such as swimming or sports. Do not go swimming alone, after dark or when you have consumed any amount of alcohol. If swimming in the sea or any other open water, check first that the conditions are safe to do so. Accidents sustained from sports activities could require hospital treatment, which in certain circumstances may have to be paid for up-front. It may also result in you being unable to complete your field work. Being fit to complete your fieldwork should be your main priority.

Any accidents, however minor, should be reported at once to the Fieldwork Leader. It is a legal requirement that all accidents and incidents are recorded as soon as possible after the event, in order that a record of what happened is available.

**14. Catering and Hygiene**

Where catering is provided for a group on a field course, the Fieldwork Leader or organiser must aim to provide participants with a wholesome, balanced diet. If requested, options for dietary preferences must be made available. If self-catering is required, food must be prepared in a hygienic manner. All areas, rooms, kitchens, bathrooms and common areas must be kept clean and tidy. If required, rotas for cleaning and food preparation duties should be drawn up in advance.

**Points worth noting regarding catering and hygiene on fieldwork:**

* Kitchens and food preparation areas should always be clean and tidy.
* All fruit and vegetables should be washed and/or peeled.
* Hands should be washed before handling or preparing food.
* Anyone who has a cold or infection should not be involved with food preparation.
* People preparing food should be clean as should their clothing.
* Dishes, pots, pans, and cutlery must be washed after every meal.
* Food should be served and stored safely (Cool: below 5˚C, Hot: 70˚C+).
* Never cook food for consumption on the following day unless properly stored.
* Food waste must be disposed of in line with local waste disposal guidelines.
* Other waste should be disposed of in line with local recycling guidelines.
* Cookers, fridges, microwaves etc. must be safe, well maintained, and clean.
* Extra care should be taken if gas cylinders are in use for cooking.
* Bathrooms must be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition after use.

**15. Health Matters**

During fieldwork, the health, safety, and welfare of all participants should be a priority for the Fieldwork Leader. Participants should be made aware of what is expected of them, physically and mentally. All Participants must have completed a School of Natural Sciences Health Questionnaire at least one week before the field trip is due to commence. This will advise if any adaptations to the fieldwork need to be put in place, in order that everyone can participate. Where possible, every effort will be made to accommodate the participation of all in attendance. If you have any health issues immediately before or during the fieldwork you should discuss this as soon as possible with the Fieldwork leader.

Participants are legally obliged to inform the Fieldwork Leader of any issues that may affect them and others around them.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Participants must be made aware of potential health hazards they may encounter during the course of the fieldwork, for example:**

* Environmental: hypothermia, frostbite, sunburn, exhaustion.
* Chemicals: naturally occurring, environmental or manufactured.
* Pathogens: From contaminated land or water, sewage, or animals.
* Animals and plants: Bites, stings, toxins.
* Food poisoning: Food hygiene, allergy.
* Personal hygiene: Rashes, infections, cross contamination.
* Care of feet: Blisters, athlete’s foot.
* For overseas fieldwork, the Fieldwork Leader must investigate if vaccination is necessary and ensure that all participants are protected prior to departure.
* Where there is a risk of tetanus due to fieldwork activities or environmental conditions participants should make sure they are currently vaccinated to protect against this. Fieldtrip leaders should advise accordingly if this is the case.
* If remote areas are being visited for longer periods, it is advisable to have a dental check prior to departure, especially if going abroad.
* In the event of injury or illness in the field, prompt First Aid assistance must be given. Any illness or injury treated with only First Aid should be monitored for some time afterwards. What may appear to be a routine injury or illness can become serious if not treated. If in doubt seek professional medical advice.
* Fieldwork Leaders and First Aid Responders should be alert to any signs or symptoms of illness in participants or difficulty in coping with the fieldwork activities.

**NB.** **In consideration of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic.**

In any situation of endemic or pandemic disease, fieldwork participants should strictly adhere to the advice of national and/or local health authorities.

**16. Emergencies**

Contingency plans for dealing with emergencies must be determined in advance.

An appropriate First Aid Kit should always be carried tailored to the number of participants.

Fieldwork Leaders must compile a list of contact details for local medical facilities and emergency services in the area they will be working and they should be available at all times.

The Fieldwork Leader has a duty to ensure any casualty is removed to a safe place and receives immediate emergency First Aid. Professional medical assistance should be sought immediately if required.

In line with the risk assessment, reasonably foreseeable emergency plans should be made.

When planning your fieldwork, you may wish to consider what emergency procedures should be in place. This may include.

* Communications to contact emergency services: radio, phone.
* Provision of First Aid by a certified person.
* Evacuation procedures if a casualty occurs in remote areas.
* Decontamination of casualty or equipment.
* Liaison with police and rescue team.
* Recording of accidents and incidents procedures.
* A safe return system in place on each day of fieldwork.

The level of emergency planning required will be dependent on the nature of the fieldwork and you should give serious consideration to this when planning your field trip.

Fieldwork Leaders must be aware of their duties and responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2005 and other relevant legislation.

**17. Hazardous Substances**

Hazardous substances should be avoided where possible but if they must be used during fieldwork, they should be handled with the same degree of care and safety as they would be in a laboratory. A Fieldwork Hazardous Substances Risk Assessment should be completed along with your Fieldwork Risk Assessment. Emergency procedures should be considered and amended to suit the fieldwork environment. The method of transportation should also be taken into consideration.

Methods which require the use of hazardous chemicals outdoors must be robustly tested in advance to ensure they comply with safe practice. If conditions (wind, rain etc.) affect the health, safety, or welfare of anyone coming into contact with the hazard, the work should be postponed or terminated until it is safe to continue.

**The following protocols must be followed if hazardous chemicals are to be used during fieldwork.**

* The use and transportation of hazardous chemicals in the field should be avoided where possible. If the work can be satisfactorily carried out in a laboratory on return from fieldwork this should be your preferred option.
* If chemicals are to be carried, they must be packed in line with safety data sheet (SDS) recommendations and have the correct safety warning signs clearly displayed.
* The fieldtrip leader should have a full inventory of all chemicals carried.
* Chemicals being transported should be kept out of sight e.g., in the boot of a car if safe to do so and vehicles should be kept locked at all times when unattended.
* Chemicals should not be left in vehicles overnight and suitable storage facilities in line with SDS recommendations should be identified in advance. Do not store hazardous chemicals in bedrooms, dormitories, kitchens, or bathrooms.
* Transport only what will be needed, i.e., the amount required.
* Use the bottles and outer packaging in which the chemicals were originally supplied or ensure any new bottles or packaging are secure and appropriately labelled in line with current legislation.
* Caps and stoppers on bottles should be securely fastened, and, if appropriate, sealed with ‘Parafilm’ or adhesive tape (consider if the chemical in question is suitable for a completely sealed container, e.g., gas expansion).
* Bottles should be supported with bubble-wrap or similar packing material in a robust secondary container with a secured lid. All containers should be labelled, specifying the contents and the relevant hazard warning pictograms.
* Pack all substances in a manner that will avoid spillage or breakage.
* Chemicals should be separated by hazard type. Incompatible chemicals e.g., acids and bases, oxidising and reducing agents, alkali metals and water/aqueous solutions and flammables should be in separate containers.
* Relevant safety signage should be used on vehicles transporting chemicals.
* The Fieldwork Leader or an appropriately trained person is responsible for overseeing that all of the above is adhered to and should not delegate these tasks to others who lack the necessary experience.

**18. Lone Working**

Lone Workers are defined as those who work will carry out fieldwork without close or direct supervision or without close or direct contact with a colleague.

Lone working is forbidden for undergraduate students in the School of Natural Sciences unless in exceptional circumstances and is generally discouragedfor staff and post graduate students**.** However, it is recognised that in certain situations this is not reasonably practicable. Lone working must be authorised by the Head of Discipline, and only when a comprehensive risk assessment has been carried out. The risk assessment should clearly demonstrate the level of risk associated with the work and show detailed control measures designed to minimise the risk to the lone worker to an acceptable level.

**The fieldworker must ensure that a safe system of work, as far as is reasonably practicable, is being employed in order to reduce the risks from any foreseeable hazards to an acceptable level.**

The lone worker must be aware that they are still under supervision while in the field and have a responsibility to their Supervisor and the Head of Discipline, who have a duty of care under the law with regards the health, safety and welfare of the lone worker, to comply with any control measures arising from the risk assessment.

The Lone worker and Supervisor should discuss and identify any specific training or instruction that will be required and ensure that this is carried out well in advance of the proposed dates of the fieldwork.

The lone worker must inform their Supervisor, or a person nominated by their Supervisor, each time they go into the field as to; the nature of their work, the hazards involved, and their estimated departure and return times. A system of communications must be put in place and rigidly adhered to in order that failure to return can be acted upon without delay. If direct communication of this nature is not possible with the Supervisor, the lone worker should make arrangements with a trusted person to confirm safe return at the end of each workday (see section 4.1 of this document).

Checks on lone workers must be made on a regular and planned basis. The frequency of contact should be related to the nature of the work and its likely hazards. Checks might take the form of periodic visits by the Supervisor or regular telephone communication.

Any system for lone working in the field should meet the following criteria.

This applies to post-graduate students and staff in a lone working situation

* All health and safety hazards should be identified, and the risk assessed.
* Control measures should be adequate to eliminate or minimise the risk.
* A School of Natural Sciences Health Questionnaire must be completed in advance to ensure the lone worker is physically and mentally fit to carry out the proposed work.
* Training, instruction, and information should be provided to ensure the lone worker fully understands the residual risks associated with the work, the precautions to be taken and how to respond to unplanned events.
* Monitoring systems should provide sufficient safety measures for the fieldworker throughout the work period.
* All accidents and incidents should be reported to the Supervisor and Discipline Safety Officer as soon as possible in order that any appropriate action can be taken.

Lone working control measures should be regularly audited to ensure their effectiveness. Accident data and incident reports provide a useful indicator of the adequacy of existing controls. Audits enable the review of existing control measures to identify where changes are needed to maintain a safe working system.

Risk assessments should be reviewed when there is a reason to believe they are no longer valid. It is prudent to plan reviews at regular intervals and at a maximum of one year from the original assessment date and annually thereafter if the risk assessment is still valid.

Approval forms and risk assessments for lone working and the University Lone Working Policy and Guidelines are available at <https://www.tcd.ie/safetyoffice/a-z/> search “lone” and from the School Sharepoint site.

**19. Reporting Incidents and Accidents**

The purpose of accident/incident reporting is two fold. It allows for a throough investigation and improvements to the risk assessment and records details before they’re forgotten or confused.

When in the field, all accidents or dangerous incidences must be immediately reported to the Fieldwork Leader. An incident/accident form completed as soon as possible, available at: tcd.ie/safetyoffice/assets/pdf/AccidentReportForm\_Apr\_2021.pdf

The details of which will be used to notify the College Safety Office via the IprotectU website. https://iprotectu.tcd.ie/dashboard

Witness’ particulars will be included in the report, therefore permission must be obtained in advance.

1. Safety, Health and Welfare Act 2005. Chapter 2, Section 13 (1)(a). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)