

Key Risk Area (KRA)

KRA 1.3 Fieldwork

1. Purpose

This document provides guidance on how the University ensures that fieldwork undertaken by the University meets the duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of persons participating in, observing or otherwise affected by fieldwork.

2. Scope

This Guideline applies to all health, safety and wellbeing activities of staff, students, visitors (including volunteers and contractors), Council members, and other persons interacting with the University of Newcastle (workers); the operations of staff of University aligned Research Centres and controlled entities; and all activities conducted by or on behalf of the University of Newcastle on and outside of the University's campuses.

3. Guidelines

3.1. Fieldwork planning and risk assessment

A general risk assessment must be undertaken utilising the general Risk Assessment and Safety Review Form. The documents should include the following information:

- Sufficient information regarding the location;
- Timing and duration of the fieldwork;
- Activities that will be undertaken;
- Size and composition of the group (including ratio of fieldwork supervisors to participants);
- Arrangements for maintaining communication;
- Identification of any associated hazards and risks.

This information is required to enable the Leader / Supervisor to review the risk assessment documentation and determine whether the activity can be approved to proceed on their authority, or should be referred to the Health and Safety Team for further assessment.

Prior to completing the risk assessment and planning for fieldwork, the Fieldwork Health and Safety Risk Checklist (document in development) must be completed – checklist criteria is summarised as follows:

- Site access and activity approvals:
 - Approval from site owner or regulatory authorities to access specific site; and
 - Relevant licences and permits for the work.
- Transport arrangements to and from fieldwork sites including:
 - Condition and maintenance of vehicles, trailers;
 - Legal requirements for vehicles, trailers and towbars;
 - Motor vehicle spare parts;
 - Written itineraries and maps; and
 - Arrangements for fieldwork participants to separate from the group at the fieldwork site and continue with their own personal leisure activities, which would require prior approval (for example, permission to remain at a campsite area and continue camping following the completion of the fieldwork component).
- Consultation and Communication:
 - Briefing sessions in advance of the Fieldwork;
 - Arrangements in the field;
 - Communication systems (may require satellite phone in remote areas);
 - Relevant University Health and Safety Procedures;
 - Participant responsibilities; and
 - Personal needs list for participants.
- Health and Safety:
 - Health questionnaire;
 - Relevant vaccinations;
 - Working alone or in isolated environments – see [KRA 2.4 Working Alone and in Isolated Environments](#);
 - Hazardous substances – use, handling, storage e.g. petrol, LP Gas;
 - Personal Protective Equipment;
 - Review of manual handling activities and risk controls for the movement of equipment – see [KRA 2.1 Manual Handling and Ergonomics](#); and
 - Specific hazards and risk controls associated with the fieldwork activity e.g. bushwalking, climbing, other challenging terrain, boating or powered water craft, SCUBA diving, snorkelling, use of high voltage or other hazardous equipment, 4wd, tractor or heavy vehicle use, explosives handling, geological and mining activities.

- Logistics:
 - Accommodation;
 - Catering arrangements;
 - Clothing relevant to conditions;
 - Supply of appropriate equipment;
 - Protocols relating to alcohol and drugs; and
 - Weather forecasts and conditions.
- Emergency Management:
 - Emergency procedures e.g. medical, fire, evacuation;
 - Provision of first aid;
 - Fire-fighting equipment; and
 - Requirements for advising relevant authorities of the planned activities where required e.g. local Police, Park Ranger, Country Fire Service Regional Officer, Department of Primary Industries or Department of Planning and Environment's Environment and Heritage Group.

3.2. Fieldwork Medical Questionnaire and dealing with identified concerns

All intended participants will complete a [Fieldwork Medical Information Form](#) and provide this to the Fieldwork Supervisor identifying any medical condition that may impact on their ability to safely undertake fieldwork activities, and an emergency contact person. Any concerns regarding health will be discussed with the participant in the first instance, and a specific risk assessment undertaken with regards to participation. The risk assessment will consider factors such as:

- Severity of the condition, and risks associated with a medical event;
- Required response to medical event;
- Capacity of staff and resources available to respond to a medical event;
- Location remoteness and communication;
- Access to emergency services;
- Mobility restrictions; and
- Potential impact on others.

Advice may also be sought from the University's Health Safety and Wellbeing Team, and / or Student Support Services ([AccessAbility](#)), to confirm risk assessment considerations and discuss reasonable adjustments or alternative activities, when required. Forms for all participants will be retained by the Fieldwork Supervisor for the duration of the Fieldwork in case of a medical emergency, and then destroyed following the Fieldwork (unless there is a statutory responsibility to retain any medical records, such as in the case of certain diving

activities). Medical information will be treated as confidential and only provided to relevant persons (e.g. Head of School) on a 'need to know' basis.

Any member of the University community who has concerns about a breach of the KRA should contact the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team directly and lodge a report in the online Incident / Hazard Reporting System (AIMS).

3.3. Other fieldwork documentation

Other documentation may be required to be held by the Fieldwork Supervisor based on the risk assessment and nature of the fieldwork, and will include the following:

- An overview of the fieldwork and itinerary for activities;
- Relevant safety and emergency management information; and
- Documentation signed by the participants to indicate that they are aware of the activities associated with the fieldwork and conditions required for participating safely. The Fieldwork Management Plan template may be utilised for this purpose by the Fieldwork Supervisor.

3.4. Pre-activity briefing for fieldwork participants

All participants will attend a pre-activity briefing prior to the fieldwork commencing, which depending on the size and complexity of the fieldwork may be just prior to commencement for simple, low risk activities (such as a city based excursion to visit a number of museums and galleries while taking photographs) or one or more days prior if participants are required to make preparations for the fieldwork (such as selecting clothing and equipment / personal supplies for a three day camping activity). The pre-activity briefing should cover, as a minimum:

- Hazards and risks associated with the fieldwork, and relevant control measures;
- Discussion of health and safety equipment and other requirements;
- Participant preparation and necessary clothing and equipment;
- Emergency and first aid procedures, incident and hazard reporting;
- Standards of personal behaviour while on fieldwork; and
- Follow directives from the Fieldwork Supervisor at all times.

3.5. Conducting and managing fieldwork

Conducting and managing the fieldwork should occur as defined in the Fieldwork Management Plan and according to the pre-activity briefing. Reference can be made back to the relevant documentation if required during the fieldwork period.

Unplanned events should be responded to with an initial review of the risk assessment for the fieldwork to see whether response to the unplanned event had been considered and to determine if an additional risk assessment is required.

If the unplanned event is an emergency situation, the following actions will be considered:

- Medical events: After initial first aid treatment has been performed, a decision will be made regarding involvement of emergency services, depending on the severity of the injury or illness;
- Missing persons: After an initial attempt to re-contact the person has failed, a decision will be made promptly regarding enlisting the help of emergency services taking into consideration the terrain, time of day and weather; and
- Any emergency situation will be reported back as soon as possible to the Leader/Supervisor responsible for the fieldwork so that additional support and backup for the group can be mobilised from the University.

3.6. Post-activity briefing

A post-activity de-briefing should occur at the conclusion of the fieldwork activity with all participants present, prior to the group separating. The purpose of post-activity de-briefing is to:

- Provide an opportunity to thank all participants for contributing to a successful fieldwork experience;
- Provide an opportunity to review the planning and preparation that occurred and to consider learnings that can be incorporated into the planning process for future fieldwork activities;
- Review the response to any unplanned incidents, hazards, or near-misses that occurred to consolidate any learnings; and
- Ensure that any unplanned incidents that occurred are entered into the University's online Incident Management System, including the corrective actions that came from investigation of the situation (if any).

Following the post-activity de-brief, communication between the Fieldwork Supervisor and the Leader/Supervisor responsible for the design and approval of fieldwork activities will occur in order to confirm that the fieldwork was completed satisfactorily and according to plan, or discuss any variations and unplanned events, in order to modify the risk assessment and associated documentation in preparation for future fieldwork activities and their planning.

4. Definitions

In the context of the Health and Safety Management System Framework:

Employer	Means the University of Newcastle (the University).
Executive Committee	Consisting of the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Pro Vice-Chancellors, the Chief Operating Officer, Chief People and Culture Officer and the Chief Financial Officer, the University Secretary and the President of Academic Senate.
Fieldwork	Any work or study undertaken in relation to University activities which occurs at a physical location away from one of the University's campuses (i.e. 'in the field'), but not including 'visiting' activities such as conference attendance or networking meetings with partner institutions.
Fieldwork Supervisor	The University representative (generally a staff member) who is directly responsible for supervising the Fieldwork activity for its duration. The Fieldwork Supervisor may differ from the Leader/Supervisor.
Leader / Supervisor	Any member of the University who is responsible for supervising staff and/or undergraduate or postgraduate students and/or for leading research projects.
Remote Fieldwork	Fieldwork which is occurring more than 50 km away from a town or city if mobile phone or other communication is possible, or more than 5 km away from a facility with communication capacity if there is no mobile phone or other communication available while 'in the field'.
Worker	Includes an employee, conjoint, student on work experience, contractor, sub-contractor, and volunteer. A person is a worker if the person carries out work in any capacity for the University or another person conducting a business or undertaking, including work as: (a) an employee, or (b) a contractor or subcontractor, or (c) an employee of a contractor or subcontractor, or (d) an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the person's business or undertaking, or (e) an outworker, or (f) an apprentice or trainee, or (g) a student gaining work experience, or (h) a volunteer, or (i) a person of a prescribed class.

5. Responsibilities

A comprehensive list of health, safety and wellbeing responsibilities is provided in [HSG 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities Guideline](#).

Specific responsibilities under this Guideline include:

Supervisors and Leaders

- University workers (including students) under their supervision are aware of, and comply with, the requirements relating to planning for and conducting fieldwork activities;
- A risk assessment is undertaken for any fieldwork activities utilising the Health and Safety Risk Assessment template and Safety Review Form, and that related documentation and procedures for the fieldwork are prepared accordingly.

Fieldwork Supervisors

- Ensure that fieldwork participants are briefed prior to the fieldwork activity regarding any associated hazards and risks, and how these will be managed, and are made aware of any relevant procedures, protocols, and expected standards of behaviour relating to the fieldwork;
- Actively manage fieldwork activities during operation in accordance with the Fieldwork Management Plan and associated documentation;
- Ensure that before there is any change to pre-arranged plans while undertaking the fieldwork, another risk assessment is conducted to identify additional hazards and, if necessary, additional risk controls; and
- Ensure that all procedural aspects relating to KRA 1.3 – Fieldwork are followed.

Workers

- Comply with the requirements of the fieldwork activity as directed by the Fieldwork Supervisor, and any health and safety related processes;
- Take accountability for their own health and safety while participating in fieldwork, and not take any actions which may adversely impact on the health and safety of themselves or others; and
- Report any health and safety or compliance issues to the Fieldwork Supervisor in addition to lodging a report in the online Incident / Hazard Reporting System (AIMS).

6. References & Related Documents

The following documentation is referenced in, or applicable to this Guideline:

[HSG 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[HSG 3.1 Health and Safety Risk Management](#)

[KRA 2.1 Manual Handling and Ergonomics](#)

[KRA 2.4 Working Alone or in Isolated Situations](#)

7. Amendment History

Version	Date of Issue	Approval	Section(s) Modified	Details of Amendment
1	June 2015	Director, People and Workforce Strategy	-	Original version.
2	October 2023	CPCO	All	1. All sections reviewed for legal compliance 2. Updated content in all sections 3. Added new/renamed Related Documents 4. Added Amendment History 5. Amended document control header and footer

8. Appendices

Nil