

FIELD WORK RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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1.0 Purpose

To support the University's endeavours to engage in scholarship and research activities outside of its geographical boundaries, while maintaining a safe work environment and managing risk related to such activities. This program is designed to define risk management responsibilities and requirements for conducting Field Work to enable those in authority to take every reasonable precaution to protect the health and safety of participating members.

All members participating in Field Work activities have some degree of responsibility for health and safety, including student participants. However, primary responsibility remains with supervisors in charge of Field Work activities.

2.0 Scope

This program applies to faculty, staff and students who participate in or conduct Field Work for the purposes of study, research or teaching.

This program is not intended for the following activities:

- Supervised study or work placements at external institutions, including co-operative education or unpaid work placements which are approved under a program of study by the University.
- General travel for or attendance at conferences, seminars, meetings, training or visits to other institutions. Assistance and risk management guidance related specifically to international travel is available through [Waterloo International](#).
- External activities (including consulting) undertaken by faculty, staff or students that are not part of the individual's employment responsibilities or academic program, including sabbatical non-work-related travel or exchange programs.
- Course or research activities conducted on University property. Mitigation of health and safety risks for these activities falls under the [University's Risk Assessment Program](#).

The University maintains an [International Travel Safety Abroad program](#) under which the travel portion of international Field Work is directed and monitored. Supervisors and participants are required to additionally adhere to the requirements of this associated program to obtain approval for their Field Work.

3.0 Definitions

Field Work

Consists of authorized work, study or teaching activities which are undertaken by faculty, staff or students at a location outside of the geographical boundaries of University property.

Field Work activities may include work in isolated or remote locations; extreme weather conditions; hazardous terrain; harmful wildlife, lack of access to emergency services or communications; cultural or political situations which may pose increased risk to health, safety or well-being.

For the purposes of risk management and this Program, Field Work will be further defined as being of either Low or Significant Risk.

Low Risk

Definition An activity is deemed to be of low risk if it presents hazards which are no greater than those encountered by participants in their everyday lives, and that can be minimized through planning, training and standard operating procedures. Examples of Low Risk Field Work activities:

- Supervised Field Work which includes low risk activities (e.g. walking, observation) and is located in an urban region.
- Travel to destinations identified by the [Government of Canada travel advice and advisories](#) as being Level 1 (Exercise normal security precautions) or Level 2 (Exercise a high degree of caution).

Significant Risk

An activity will be deemed of significant risk if it has the potential to expose participants to hazards that are greater than those likely to be encountered in their everyday lives.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Field Work at industrial sites - factories, mining operations and construction sites.
- Activities that require specialized safety training and/or certification.
- Travel to areas where significant health or safety precautions are required.
- Driving for extensive periods, use of heavy vehicles or trailers, or hazardous terrain.
- Field Work at sites with hazardous substances.
- Field Work which by nature entails risk (e.g., work over ice or water, rock climbing, high altitudes, diving, hazardous flora or fauna, equipment hazards, weather extremes).
- Any Field Work in remote regions where access to communications, emergency services or assistance may be limited.
- Any Field Work, where undergraduate students are not accompanied by a faculty/staff supervisor (e.g., student team competitions).
- Overnight trips with undergraduate students.
- All international travel involving Field Work, and/or [high-risk international travel](#) (note high risk travel requires approval from the Provost).

In some cases, despite risk assessment and mitigation, it may be the case that risks inherent in a proposed Field Work project are unmanageable and therefore the project will not be approved. Approval for Field Work activities does not imply approval for travel to high-risk international locations.

Changing Risk

If significant risk associated with planned Field Work changes or arises between approval and the proposed travel date (e.g., extreme weather, political unrest, etc.) these risks must be considered and mitigated prior to undertaking the work. Subsequent approval from Field Work Leader, Principal Investigator/Field Work Supervisor, and Department Head/Chair/Director must be obtained, with respects to both Field Work and travel. If the new risk is unmanageable, the Field Work may need to be postponed.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Senior Management (Deans, Provost)

- Have the final level of approval when presented with an activity of significant risk.
- Have authority to revoke authorization if a situation arises that heightens the risk level of a Field Work activity.

4.2 Department Heads/Chairs/Directors

- Ensure that detailed and project-specific safety procedures are in place for each Field Work project, including student field trips.
- Ensure that expectations around this program are adequately communicated to all those affected.
- Maintain a record of Field Work conducted by their faculty, staff and students. Field Work documentation is to be retained by the Department for 3 years after work is complete.
- Review and approve applications for Field Work and consult with the Dean and/or Provost where concerns around risk mitigation exist. Ensure a copy of approved Field Work Risk Management forms are provided to the Safety Office.

4.3 Field Work Supervisor/Principal Investigator/Instructor

- Responsible for the planning of all Field Work activities in accordance with this program, other University policies/procedures and any relevant industry or regulatory standards.
- Ensure the completion of the Field Work Risk Management Plan, and that potential risks have been identified, assessed and mitigated. Risk control selection must follow the hierarchy of controls described in the [Risk Assessment Program](#).

- Ensure that all safety and risk management concerns have been addressed, adequate supervision is provided, appropriate procedures documented and approved and required training provided to participants (students and employees), prior to the commencement of the Field Work.
- If required, ensure that a [Working Alone Plan](#) is in place and that measures are in place to support the plan (e.g., communication devices, check-in schedules).
- Submit an itinerary for all participants to the Department.
- Assign competent Field Work Leaders (if applicable) and provide necessary training, authority, tools and resources. If a Field Work Leader is not assigned, the Supervisor will fulfill these responsibilities.
- Notify the Department Head/Chair/Director immediately if there is an incident or a party fails to return from the field.

4.4 Field Work Leader

- Effectively manage the conduct of Field Work activity, including responsibility for site safety management.
- Ensure that participants follow established risk management and safety procedures and wear personal protective equipment as directed.
- Report and manage all incidents, hazards and injuries to the Field Work Supervisor.
- Communicate with the Field Work Supervisor on any significant incident or concern.

4.5 Field Work Participants

- Participate in the evaluation of risks and mitigation strategies, including completing required training prior to departure.
- Obtain supervisor, department, and senior management approval, as required for Field Work.
- Follow all established travel and Field Work risk management practices and procedures.
- Wear all prescribe safety equipment as designated by established procedures and practices
- Act in a safe and responsible manner and exercise good judgement at all times – participants are ambassadors of the University and are expected to conduct themselves in a manner conducive as such.
- Seek expertise of others to address risks associated with the activity that fall outside of their own areas of understanding.

- Complete all assigned training, risk management or travel risk forms. Participation may be refused for failure to complete required training or documentation.
- Monitor risks throughout the course of the work, for example weather, environmental, geo-political and travel risks, and re-evaluate and adjust risk mitigation measures as needed.
- Obtain appropriate immunization and medical advice as it pertains to location and activities of Field Work.
- Obtain adequate travel and supplemental health insurance as appropriate to the location and nature of the activity. For example, out of province coverage or emergency medical transport coverage for work in remote regions.
- Obtain appropriate travel documents.
- Immediately report any incident or hazard to a Field Work supervisor or leader. Incidents involving personal injury must be reported to the Safety Office via the Incident & Investigation Report within 24 hours.
- If traveling independently, submit an itinerary to the Department, and update the itinerary as necessary.

4.6 Safety Office

- Ensure that a Field Work Risk Management Program is maintained, along with guidelines and resources on Field Work-related topics.
- Provide guidance in risk assessment and management activities for specific Field Work projects.
- Periodically audit University of Waterloo practices to ensure Field Work risk management is in place and effective throughout the University.
- Retain copies of Field Work Risk Management Plans.

5.0 Procedures

5.1 Low Risk Field Work

- Ensure the activity has support of the Department Head/Chair/Director.
- Ensure that travel risk activities have been completed and that itineraries have been provided to the Department. If undertaking international travel, complete the required approval, register and [pre-departure/travel risk mitigation steps](#).
- International Field Work conducted as part of an academic course, and/or involving students requires completion of the International Mobility Program (Non co-op) Acknowledgement, Release, and Waiver Form for each student participant.

- The supervisor and participant(s) must monitor the risks associated with the activity prior to departure and during Field Work. If risks are elevated such that Significant Risk is involved, adjust accordingly.
- No further action is required.

5.2 Significant Risk Field Work

- Participant(s), if applicable, and supervisor must complete the Field Work Risk Management Plan and submit to the Department Head/Chair/Director for approval.
- If undertaking international travel, [complete the pre-departure/travel risk mitigation steps](#), get [approval](#) and register your travel.
- International Field Work conducted as part of an academic course, and/or involving students requires completion of the International Mobility Program (Non co-op) Acknowledgement, Release, and Waiver Form for each student participant.
- Department-approved Field Work Risk Management Plans are to be submitted to the Safety Office.

6.0 Training

Field Work supervisors must complete [Risk Assessment](#) and mandatory [Supervisor Orientation](#) training. An instructional module is available on the [Field Work page](#), which outlines key risk management principles and how to complete the Field Work Risk Management Plan.

7.0 Record Keeping

Copies of the following must be retained for a period of three (3) years in the department after conclusion of the activity, as stated on the Field Work Risk Management Form:

- Field Work Risk Management Plan
- International Mobility Program (Non co-op) Acknowledgement, Release, and Waiver Form

8.0 Record of Revisions

Date of Review	Author/Editor	Change	Version
January 2023	Kate Windsor	▪ Program release	Field Work Risk Management Program v.1.0 JAN2023