POLICY ON SAFETY AND BEHAVIOUR IN THE FIELD

Fieldwork is potentially hazardous; the quarries, excavations and cliffs that so often provide the best exposures for study are also inherently dangerous places. Your life, or that of a colleague, could depend on knowledge of basic safety procedures.

Being safe in the field is mainly a matter of common sense. Instruction will be given on assessing hazards and it is important that you should then develop your own ability to assess the hazards involved with on-going fieldwork. Do not be tempted to exceed the limits of your stamina and abilities in the field.

BEHAVIOUR IN THE FIELD

We want you to enjoy your field trip experience, however you must observe all instructions issued by staff. Drunken or disorderly behaviour, use or distribution of drugs, and actions deemed discriminatory or unacceptable in any way, will not be tolerated from any student. Students who are identified as partaking in any of these activities will be required to meet with the Field Trip Leader.

You must be aware that the Field Trip Leader reserves the right to send students home from a field trip whose behaviour has been unacceptable or has brought the University of Bristol into disrepute. Any expenses incurred as a result of bad behaviour will be the responsibility of the student concerned. Transport home will be at the expense of the student.

It is important to note that your assessment will include a mark for professionalism, which includes attitude, behaviour, attendance and participation. Gross misconduct could include penalties of up to 100% of the total unit mark, thus resulting in a fail.

Please also note that misconduct may be referred to the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Regulations.

SAFETY IN THE FIELD

Potential hazards can arise from lack of proper equipment and clothing. You must wear or carry clothing suitable for the terrain in which you are working. In rugged upland areas the following are essential:

- Compass, map and map case
- Loud whistle (see international distress signal on next page)
- Small personal first aid kit
- Stout boots with soles that give good grip
- Survival bag (8' by 4' plastic bags can be bought in outdoor shops)
- Torch (ideally one that can be worn leaving hands free)
- Warm hat, gloves and thermal underwear for cold weather, sun hat for hot weather
- Waterproof jacket (with hood) and trousers
- Note that denim jeans or cotton outer garments are not suitable in wet weather.

Slips and Trips

The majority of accidents and incidents are on field trips are slips and trips, resulting mainly in sprained ankles. Please always pay special attention to the ground underfoot and the surrounding terrain.

Isolation

Stay with the party or your assigned group, unless you have permission from the leader.

Hammering

Hammering of rocks can generate flying splinters of rock and possibly steel, and present potential hazard to yourself and others. Check that you are not hammering in a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Do not hammer unnecessarily, and use safety goggles when hammering.

Animals, insects and vegetation. These hazards are often more serious outside the UK. In particular, they include diseases carried by animals, eg rats, sheep/deer ticks, snake bites, severe allergy to insect stings and bites, poisonous berries and fungi.

- Tetanus There is a risk of tetanus to field workers coming into contact with soil or sediments.
- Lyme disease On moorland and heath areas there is a real risk of contracting Lyme disease transmitted by ticks. Minimise the risk by wearing trousers and long-sleeved tops.
- Weil's disease: This can be contracted from slow moving or stagnant water contaminated by the urine of infected rats or other mammals. Minimise the risk by wearing protective gloves. Protect open wounds with a waterproof dressing and keep a high standard of personal hygiene.

- Cyanobacteria: Blooms of cyanobacteria form in slow moving fresh water and can produce large quantities of toxins. Precautions are similar to those for Weil's disease. If you experience any symptoms that may be related to your fieldwork whilst still on the field trip inform the Fieldwork Leader, or if on your return see your GP and inform them of your recent activities.

Weather: Weather conditions can change abruptly, particularly in mountainous areas. It is good practice to obtain a daily weather report, but always carry clothing for inclement weather each day. Remember that weather conditions will be more extreme with increasing altitude.

Coastal areas: In such areas there are additional potential hazards in respect of cliffs and tides. You must always be aware of the state of the tide and consult tide timetables. Incoming tides can rise very rapidly and trap the unwary. Freak waves present a very real danger, especially in rough seas. Walking over the foreshore can be very slippery.

Rivers, bogs and forests: Do not cross rivers unless it is absolutely essential. If alone, use a stick for support; groups should link arms. Always cross facing upstream. Remember that rivers fed by glaciers or storm run-off can rapidly increase in flow strength during the day. Even good swimmers have difficulty swimming in waterlogged clothing and heavy boots. Do not cross bogs alone. It is very easy to get lost in forests use your compass to find your way out.

Cliffs, caves and mines: Do not climb cliffs or steep slopes. You must not enter mine workings or caves unless it has been approved by the class leader as an essential part of the work; only do so by arrangement, and with proper headgear and/or lighting. Use binoculars to study rocks when they are too dangerously situated to be approached safely.

Active quarries: Do not enter working quarries without permission. Comply with safety rules, blast warnings and any instruction from officials. Watch out for moving vehicles. Do not work on unstable slopes or tips. A helmet must always be worn. Be aware of others working directly above or below another person.

International distress signal: Six signals (whistle blasts, torch flashes, shouts, waves of a cloth) followed by a minute's pause, followed by six more signals. The reply is three signals repeated at minute intervals.

First aid: Taught field classes will carry sufficient first aid kits for the number of students. The majority of Leaders and demonstrators will have first aid training.

Personal insurance: Whilst you are covered for personal and accident insurance by the University when on an official field class in the UK, this does not include loss or damage to your personal belongings. Neither does it cover you for periods outside of specified field class dates. However, if your field trip is abroad you will be covered by the University of Bristol Travel Insurance.

Details can be found at: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/insurance/travel-insurance/

Procedure following a serious accident or incident:

Attend to anyone injured and withdraw remaining members of your group to a safe location. Send for help (preferably at least two persons), or use a mobile phone to summon emergency services giving information on the exact position of the party and the nature of the injuries. Take steps to warn other persons of any dangers that may remain, until local authorities etc take over.

In the case of a serious accident or incident, notify University of Bristol Security on 44(0)117 928 7848 (out of office hours). If a message has to be passed on indirectly, make sure that it includes a telephone number at which you may be reached.

A spokesman for the party, usually the Leader, must draw up a factual report for the Head of School as soon as practicable after the incident.

PLEASE REPORT ALL ACCIDENTS AND NEAR MISSES USING THE SAFETY AND HEALTH SERVICES REPORTING TOOL: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/