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Fieldwork Policy

Policy Document Control:

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1. Introduction

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 are relevant to all activities carried out on and off University campus. The legislation sets minimum standards for the protection of individuals from risks related to work activities and requires suitable and robust risk controls to be implemented, particularly where there are high-risk areas or activities such as fieldwork.

This Fieldwork Policy applies to any off-campus practical work carried out by research staff and students as part of their work, or as part of their academic studies. This could be in the UK or overseas and includes activities such as: work in a natural environment, practical data gathering in a community, interviewing participants for research purposes, visits to research camps, museums, galleries, observatories or similar, visits to industrial or commercial sites, domiciliary visits. This policy does not cover planned placement learning; this is covered by the University's Placement process.

This Policy is supported by arrangements (including the University's travel, financial regulations and procedures and ethics processes), instructions and guidance (Fieldwork and Overseas Travel) at the University of Warwick which are available on the University's Health and Safety web pages and via the University's Travel Hub.

Under the provisions of Regulation 26, Safety Regulations and associated University Health and Safety Policy document, it is the duty of all staff, students and others working in the University to comply with this Policy, together with any other instructions, rules and guidance that may apply.

2. Core Principles

- Schools/Departments must have arrangements in place for complying with their health and safety obligations in relation to fieldwork.
- Schools/Departments must, where ethical and biological safety approval is required, follow related University Policy and procedures.
- Schools/Departments must ensure other factors are considered and addressed which are outlined in other University policies and procedures e.g., financial regulations and procedures, insurance, safeguarding.
- Schools/Departments must, where practicable, ensure fieldwork is inclusive considering the needs and capabilities of potential participants in line with the Equality Act, 2010.

- Schools/Departments must ensure all equipment and materials used during fieldwork is suitable and safe, and maintained in accordance with University Policy.
- Where third-party providers are used, Schools/Departments must ensure that they are competent and have followed the University's Contractor Management procedures, where applicable.

3. Responsibilities

Heads of Schools/Departments are responsible for the implementation of this Policy with regard to: -

- Mechanisms being in place to ensure that staff and others who plan and supervise fieldwork are suitably experienced and competent to do so
- Ensuring the Fieldwork Leader makes a suitable and sufficient assessment of (a) the risks to the health and safety of employees, and (b) the risks to the health and safety of persons not in their employment e.g., students, arising out of or in connection with, the conduct they are undertaking.
- Ensuring a fieldwork approval mechanism is in place based on risk and considering other University procedures e.g., insurance, travel, finance, ethics, safeguarding.
- The overall accountability for health and safety in their School/Department. Therefore, they have the authority, in conjunction with the necessary stakeholders, to exclude staff/students from fieldwork if fieldworkers/Fieldwork Leaders fail to follow measures implemented to protect their health and safety.
- Ensuring there are mechanisms in place for a 'Home Contact' where the level of risk determines one should be in place.
- Ensuring there is a fieldwork incident escalation process, where the level of risk determines one should be in place.
- Ensuring any major incidents are escalated to the University Major Incident Team and University Insurance when required.
- Complying with this Policy and the associated arrangements, instructions and guidance.

Fieldwork Leaders/Independent Fieldworkers are responsible for the implementation of this Policy with regard to: -

- Overall supervision of the fieldwork they have planned.
- The implementation of a fieldwork risk assessment which details knowledge and understanding of the necessary safety measures required based on risk.
- Ensuring sufficient emergency/contingency plans are in place and these are communicated to the fieldwork team, where applicable.
- Ensuring that there are clear communication lines between themselves, other fieldworkers and where determined by risk assessment, their Home Contact, as applicable.
- Ensuring that all control measures identified in the risk assessment are followed during the fieldwork.
- Ensuring the level of supervision is adequate to the nature of the fieldwork being conducted and based on risk. Where the Fieldwork Leader has delegated supervisory responsibility to others, the Fieldwork Leader must have a clear communication command structure in place.
- Ensuring there is a mechanism for feedback and to implement post-fieldwork lessons learned.
- Complying with this Policy and the associated arrangements, instructions and guidance.

Fieldworkers/Supervised Fieldworkers are responsible for the implementation of this Policy with regard to: -

- Understanding, observing and following any instructions given to them by the Fieldwork Leader, including any which have been put in place for their health and safety.
- Understanding they are responsible for their own health and safety and that of others as detailed in the University's 'The Statement of Health and Safety Policy'.
- Complying with this Policy and the associated arrangements, instructions and guidance.

Home Contacts are responsible for the implementation of this Policy with regard to: -

- Providing support and/or escalation to the Head of School/Department as a point of contact for an independent fieldworker, to offer general support or as an emergency contact who can escalate to designated individuals outlined in the School/Department emergency escalation process.

The Director of Health and Safety is responsible for: -

- Advising on the standards and regulations that must be achieved in order to meet legal requirements.
- Keeping the University's Health and Safety website up to date with the related policy guidance documents.

4. Review

This policy will be reviewed when any legal requirements change or at least once every three years.