

POLICY ON SAFETY AND BEHAVIOUR IN THE FIELD

Fieldwork is potentially dangerous: the quarries, mountains, excavations, cliffs and even towns and cities that so often provide the best exposures for study can be hazardous 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 fieldwork experience, however you must observe all instructions issued by staff.

Expectations of the standard of student behaviour on fieldwork is the same as for Bristol-based work. See <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/student-rules-regs/>

Drunken or disorderly behaviour, the possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs, and actions deemed discriminatory or unacceptable in any way, will not be tolerated from any student. Students identified as behaving unacceptably will be required to meet with the field course leader in the first instance.

Students are not permitted to consume alcohol, smoke cannabis or take narcotic drugs during a working field day (when in the field or during lab time).

You must be aware that the fieldwork leader reserves the right to send students home from a field course 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 may 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.pdf \(bristol.ac.uk\)](#).

Academic staff and demonstrators must adhere to the same high standards of behaviour and safety. If you feel that they are not, you should discuss this with other staff members on the trip if you feel comfortable too, or contact the Earth Sciences School Safety Advisor, Stuart Bellamy (stuart.bellamy@bristol.ac.uk) or the Geographical Sciences School Safety Advisor, Tony Healey (tony.healey@bristol.ac.uk) while you are away for further advice and guidance. You are also encouraged to raise these issues on your return with the School Education Director, the Head of School and SSLC.

SAFETY IN THE FIELD

Disabled Students

The term disability is very wide, the University of Bristol strongly encourages any student who may need reasonable adjustments to their fieldtrip to get in contact with their Personal Tutor and the fieldtrip leader/unit director *well before departure* so that we can work with you to make adjustments where possible to our teaching in order to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

Student's Medication

Students are advised to bring any medication they might require during a given fieldtrip, whether on-going (e.g. course of tablets) or for emergencies (e.g. antihistamines, epi-pen). Also note that staff and demonstrators (not being trained medics) are not permitted to administer any medication.

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 exposed areas the following are essential:

- Compass, map and map case
- Loud whistle (see international distress signal below)
- Small first aid kit and necessary personal supplies including prescription medicine*, refillable water bottle, sanitary supplies, hand sanitiser, toilet paper/wipes/water and disposal bags
- Sturdy 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 block and 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.

* When travelling abroad you are advised to look at up to date info for prescription medication that you will carry with you to check that you can with travel it. GPs can advise on this.

Slips and Trips. Most accidents and incidents on fieldwork 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 always use safety goggles when hammering.

Animals, insects and vegetation. These hazards are often more serious outside the UK. They include diseases carried by animals, e.g. 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 encountering soil or sediments, however PPE will be provided on field trips that will minimise this risk. You may wish to check your vaccination status - depending on which country you were raised in, you may have had a tetanus vaccination as a child (for example, the NHS provide this in the UK). If the need does arise, Student Health Services can coordinate a tetanus vaccination.
- **Lyme disease.** On moorland and heath areas there is a real risk of contracting Lyme disease transmitted by ticks. Symptoms include a flat, circular rash that looks like a red oval or bull's-eye anywhere on your body and those associated with a fever. Minimise the risk by wearing trousers and long-sleeved tops. If a tick is found, then it should be removed with a clean tick removal tool (supplied in field First Aid kits). If you feel unwell after fieldwork (even if you think you haven't been bitten by a tick), you must visit your GP and seek a blood test.
- **Weil's disease (Leptospirosis).** This can be contracted from slow moving or stagnant water contaminated by the urine of infected rats or other mammals and cause fever-like symptoms. Minimise the risk by wearing protective gloves. Protect open wounds with a waterproof dressing and keep a high standard of personal hygiene i.e. use antibacterial hand gel before eating. If you feel unwell after water-based fieldwork, you should visit your GP and ask for a Leptospirosis blood test.
- **Cyanobacteria.** Blooms of cyanobacteria form in slow moving fresh water and can produce large quantities of toxins. Precautions are like those for Weil's disease. If you experience any symptoms that may be related to your fieldwork whilst still in the field inform the Fieldwork Leader, or if on your return then see your GP and inform them of your recent activities.
- **Insect bites and stings.** Usually cause a red, swollen lump to develop on the skin, which may be painful and itchy. Symptoms normally improve within a few hours/days, but can take longer if there is a mild allergic reaction. Occasionally, a severe allergic reaction can occur, causing breathing difficulties, dizziness and a swollen face or mouth, which require immediate medical treatment. Minimise the risk of insect bites & stings by wearing long sleeve tops and trousers; in more extreme cases a face net may be needed (e.g. for the midge in West Scotland). Insect repellent can be purchased from any reputable pharmacist.
- **Plants.** Some plants are hazardous. Contact with some species can cause skin irritation. This may be short-lived and improve within a few minutes or hours. Some plants can cause significant irritation and/or blistering, which requires medical treatment. Very occasionally, a severe allergic reaction can occur, causing symptoms such as breathing difficulties, dizziness and a swollen face or mouth, which requires immediate medical treatment. Do not touch or eat any plants that you are not familiar with.

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.

Alpine regions and mountainous areas can have a number of specific hazards associated with mountainous areas covered in snow and ice. In these areas, students need to pay attention when staff identify the location of avalanche chutes and avoid working beneath them. Further, with terrain covered by snow and ice there is increased risk of slipping or falling into holes that are masked by the snow. Students should be aware of these risks and use poles to check depths in front of them when walking through the snow. In rocky areas, students should be aware of ice-covered terrain and avoid ice-covered paths. Students should take note of all local hazard signs, associated with rock falls and avalanche risk areas and take notice of advice from staff and accompanying professionals.

Rivers, bogs and forests. Do not cross rivers unless it is 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 hardhat 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 enough first aid kits for the number of students. Most field course staff and demonstrators will have first aid training.

Personal insurance. Whilst you are covered for personal and accident insurance by the University when on a non-residential 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 fieldwork is abroad or includes overnight accommodation in the UK, you will be covered by the University of Bristol Travel Insurance. GHIC/ EHIC: Anybody who is eligible to apply for a GHIC card is strongly advised to get one. Details can be found at: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/directory/finance/insurance/>. If driving your own car for fieldwork, then you need to inform your insurer of the nature of the activity you are driving for to check your insurance policy covers this. This may mean you need to add 'business use' to your policy. You will also need to fill out a student driving declaration form.

Procedure following a serious accident or incident:

- Attend to anyone injured and withdraw remaining members of your group to a safe location.
- Use a mobile phone, call 999 (or 112) and ask for an ambulance or the police, then mountain rescue if needed. 112 calls emergency services anywhere in Europe. Even if your mobile phone has no signal, make the call to the emergency services as other networks may transmit the call.
- Give the emergency services information on the exact position of the incident and the nature of the injuries.
- If there is no mobile signal, send for help (preferably at least two persons). In the case where there are only two people, one must leave the casualty to summon help.
- Take steps to warn other persons of any dangers that may remain, until the local authorities take over.

In the case of a serious accident or incident, ask a member of staff to notify University of Bristol Security Services on +44(0)117 3311223 (emergency contact). Make sure that the message includes a telephone number at which you may be reached. A spokesperson for the party, usually the field course leader, must draw up a factual report for the School Safety team as soon as practicable after the incident.

PLEASE REPORT ALL ACCIDENTS AND NEAR MISSES USING THE SAFETY & HEALTH SERVICES REPORTING TOOL, ASK A MEMBER OF STAFF TO COMPLETE IF YOU CANNOT ACCESS THE FORM:
<https://iis-safety.cse.bris.ac.uk/eforms/incident/>