Guidance Notes to Fieldwork Assessment Form FA1:

These notes provide guidance for those completing fieldwork assessment form FA1 and should be read in conjunction with Part Eight of the University Health and Safety Policy - Fieldwork and Outdoor Activities, which can be found at http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/Safety/Policy/Part8.pdf. Other useful publications are the CVCP 'Code of Practice for Safety in Fieldwork', the Institute of Biology 'Safety in Biological Fieldwork' and the Natural Environment Research Council 'Guidance Note Safety in Fieldwork', copies of which may be borrowed from the Health and Safety Department.

Those supervising fieldwork exercises should also refer to codes of practice or guidance material produced by organisations relevant to the discipline in question.

Local visits of a routine nature that are well supervised may be assessed on a generic basis and regularly reviewed. This may for example, include visits which are repeated each year as part of a taught academic course.

Activity Details:

It is important to specify the location of the fieldwork exercise, the date and time of departure and the expected time of return. In higher risk situations, additional details including map grid references may be necessary.

Risk Assessment:

All fieldworkers, in prior consultation with their Group Leaders, must identify the likely health and safety problems and assess the risks that may arise during the field exercise.

The essential steps to be taken in order to assess the risks are:

- Identify the hazards to health or safety arising from the fieldwork activity or location.
- Decide who might be harmed and how
- Evaluate the risks and decide what control measures need to be put in place.
- Record your findings
- Review your assessment and revise it if necessary

Hazard and Risk:

Hazard: A hazard is something with the potential to do harm.

Risk: The risk is the likelihood that actual harm will occur.

Hazard Identification:

Identify all the hazards relevant to the fieldwork activity.

Some hazards to consider include:

- Physical hazards - difficulties/ peculiarities with the location e.g., cliffs, caves, mines, forests, roadside, extreme weather conditions, tides and currents,
- Biological hazards – venomous, lively or aggressive animals, plants, pathogenic micro-organisms,
- Chemical hazards – pesticides, dusts, chemicals brought onto site i.e., sample reagents, contaminated land,
- Man made hazards – vehicles, electrical or mechanical equipment, diesel generators, power lines and service pipelines, insecure buildings, slurry and silage pits, military activity, civil disorder,
- Hazards to environment – waste minimisation, disturbance of eco-systems, pollution,
- Training – navigation e.g., map and compass work, survival/rescue, first aid, specialist training if appropriate (conduct on boats, diving, tree climbing, vehicles),
- Personal safety – lone-working, procedures for summoning assistance, etc., risk of attack, routine communication, emergency communication.

Who May Be Affected:

Consider students, members of the public and those who may not be directly involved with the activity but who may still be affected. Will the fieldwork activities impose on, or in any way adversely affect, members of the local community? Also consider the effect on wildlife and vegetation in the area.

Risk Evaluation:

Evaluate the risks (low / medium / high) to which individuals may be exposed. This will be a subjective evaluation but should be used to give an indication of the priority with which the risk needs to be addressed. Where risks are already controlled, monitor the effectiveness of the control to decide whether they are sufficient, especially considering the anticipated field conditions. Where the risk to individuals is thought to be medium or high, additional control measures must be considered.

Risk Control:

Decide what controls are necessary to reduce the risk to individuals and to comply with any relevant statutory requirements (compliance with statutory requirements is a minimum level of control). Also consider any codes of practice or guidance issued by relevant organisations. The steps to controlling the risks are as follows.

- Avoid the hazard
- Substitute or replace the hazard
- Procedural controls
- Engineering / mechanical controls
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Establish emergency procedures
- Health surveillance (where appropriate)

Monitor the controls you have instigated to ensure that they are effective and implemented correctly.

Additional Considerations:

Detail arrangements specific to the fieldwork in question that are not covered above. This may include special training requirements, specialist equipment or clothing, or inoculations.

Organisation:

Include emergency contact details of both the on-site contacts and the University designated contact. In the event of an incident or accident, the University designated contact will require next of kin details of all those taking part in the fieldwork activity.

Record Your Findings:

Record the significant hazards and conclusions.

Authorisation:

All fieldwork activities must be authorised by the Head of school or other relevant senior school employee, e.g., Fieldwork Supervisor.

Assessment Review:

The assessment must be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains relevant and effective.