



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

**UOW SAFE@WORK**

# FIELDWORK AND OFF- CAMPUS ACTIVITIES SAFETY MANUAL AND GUIDELINES



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# 1 Introduction

The University has a duty of care under the NSW Work Health Safety Act 2011 to ensure the health, safety and welfare of workers and other parties (including students, collaborators and volunteers) and this duty extends to work undertaken during fieldwork or whilst undertaking off-campus activities. This manual and guidelines set out the minimum safety requirements for fieldwork and off-campus activities.

Fieldwork and off-campus activities can be diverse in nature, may take place in unfamiliar surroundings and in environments, which could be potentially hazardous. In addition, some tasks/activities can involve a potentially high level of risk to the health and safety of the participants. Furthermore, some tasks/activities are often undertaken at locations that isolate participants from ready access to emergency services.

It is the responsibility of all workers and students undertaking fieldwork or activities off-campus to adhere to the policies, codes and rules set out by the University. Staff, students or volunteers found in breach of these requirements will be disciplined according to the appropriate UOW policy.

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that when fieldwork or off-campus activities are undertaken:

- potential and existing hazards are identified and documented; and
- identified risks are controlled, as far as is reasonably practicable

## 2 Scope

This document outlines the requirements for the undertaking of work or activities at locations other than University controlled work environments. Fieldwork varies in nature and duration and refers to trips, excursions, tours, camps or similar university-organised activities including:

- Bushwalks;
- Visits to public places, galleries, exhibitions;
- Visits to rural and remote areas;
- Water, agricultural, surveying or construction activities;
- Research activities (including conducting interviews, geological, environmental or biological sampling and any of the above activities undertaken overseas);

Fieldwork does not apply to the following activities:

- Attending conferences, seminars or training courses;
- Student work placement activities or work experience programs as part of study carried out at non-university facilities. For these activities, refer to the [UOW Student Professional Experience Code of Practice](#) and the [WHS Procedures for Work Integrated Learning \(Professional Experience\)](#);
- Off-shore teaching located at other institutions;
- Working from home – refer to the [Agile Workplace Safety Guidelines](#).

## 3 Definitions

The following definitions apply to this document:

Collaborator	A Collaborator is a researcher who works jointly on a similar project/activity from a different academic Institution. The Collaborator is expected to have their own processes and procedures in place for the field trip and will be covered under insurance from their own Institution. If the Collaborator does not have these processes and procedures in place they may attend the field trip under UOW procedures as a Volunteer.
Dynamic risk assessment	In a rapidly changing environment, the continuous process of identifying hazards, assessing risk, taking action to eliminate/reduce risk, monitoring and reviewing.

FEAP	High Risk <a href="#">Fieldwork Emergency Action Plan</a> which must be completed for marine, remote and other high risk activities. It may also be used for lower risk activities where appropriate, such as when working alone.
FESS	Is the <a href="#">Field Equipment and Safety System</a> online program used in SMAH for all planning and approvals for fieldwork and for the reservation/hiring of equipment.
Fieldwork	Work undertaken off campus to gain data/information, but does not include conferences, meetings, development leave, visits to other institutions or training courses.
Fieldwork leader	An individual who has been assigned by the supervisor as the person in charge in the field. They should have been assigned the role by virtue of their skills, knowledge and experience in the particular field operation. The Fieldwork Leader may be a member of staff, post graduate, research student, volunteer, honorary fellow or collaborator.
Fieldwork participant	An individual who is undertaking fieldwork, at any level of responsibility including volunteer, student, staff, collaborator or Fieldwork Leader. This does not refer to interviewees for the purposes of these guidelines.
Low risk activities	<p>Activities undertaken at locations such as other research institutes, public places, galleries or industry locations where the purpose of the visit is to view a collection or demonstration, or take a guided tour and NOT actively participate in experiments, studio work or clinical work.</p> <p>The risk assessment for these activities may identify that emergency equipment and first aid trained staff may not be required.</p>
Medium risk activities	<p>Activities that expose individuals to risk levels in between low and high, e.g. setting up a display/exhibition for others to attend and view and transporting equipment/samples for this purpose. Another example includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ working with selected instruments in the field;</li><li>▪ setting up field sites and camps; or</li><li>▪ preparing food in camp situations.</li></ul> <p>A SafetyNet risk assessment is required to be completed for these activities.</p> <p>A risk assessment may be completed by an external organisation if activities including participating in experiments, studio work or clinical work, are being performed at other locations. In this case, a SafetyNet risk assessment is required to be completed to cover the University of Wollongong risks and the external risk assessment attached as a reference document.</p>
High risk activities	<p>Activities which have an inherent high risk include those which require participants to have specific skills or qualifications, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ boating</li><li>▪ kayaking</li><li>▪ diving and snorkeling</li><li>▪ working near cliffs or on rock platforms</li><li>▪ working with high voltage equipment</li><li>▪ handling hazardous substances</li><li>▪ working in extreme climates</li><li>▪ working at heights</li><li>▪ face to face interviews</li><li>▪ operating heavy machinery or equipment</li><li>▪ potential contact with venomous or poisonous organisms</li><li>▪ remote fieldwork</li><li>▪ off-road driving</li></ul>

A SafetyNet risk assessment is to be completed with the aim of implementing controls that minimise the residual risk to a level of medium or below.

All high-risk activities performed in a remote environment require the [FEAP](#) in FESS to be completed in addition to a SafetyNet risk assessment.

Independent fieldworker

An individual who is undertaking fieldwork on their own. An Independent Fieldworker has the same responsibilities as a Fieldwork Leader. A Supervisor must only approve appropriately skilled and experienced staff and students to carry out independent fieldwork activities. In these situations, a more detailed fieldwork communication and emergency response plan may be required, along with an FEAP. High-risk fieldwork must never be carried out independently.

Other activities

All other activities where active research is being undertaken or where other activities are being undertaken such as art projects, collecting samples or participating in sporting activities must complete a risk assessment taking into account all foreseeable hazards.

Remote fieldwork

Remote fieldwork is defined as being work carried out in locations where it is difficult to summon help and/or where emergency assistance is expected to be more than 1 hour away. Examples may include:

- working more than 5km from a town, farmhouse or other facility with fixed telephone or radio communications (even if personal communications equipment, e.g. mobile phone, is carried);
- working in off-road areas where very little traffic is likely or where hills, dense timber or other topographic features would make it difficult to summon help;
- marine work carried out in open water.

All remote activities require the [FEAP](#) to be completed.

Safety contact

A person who has specific roles and responsibilities related to the safety of the field team. They maintain contact with the field team and can initiate an emergency response in case of no contact or missed contact

Supervisor

A staff member who is responsible for the overall safety of all participants in the field and who has the authority to direct and influence actions of all participants in the field. For students this is generally the academic supervisor or the teaching staff member directing the fieldwork. The Supervisor need not be present on fieldtrips.

Volunteer

Is a person willing to participate in the fieldwork activities, who is offering their time and services for the benefit of someone else. A volunteer is under no obligation to attend the workplace or perform work and they do not expect to be paid. They are expected to comply as far as they are reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction issued by the Fieldwork Leader in the same way as a worker or student.

## 4 Responsibilities

### 4.1 Head of School/Unit

The Head of School/Unit must:

- Ensure that adequate resources have been allocated for carrying out the fieldwork in accordance with the fieldwork risk assessment;
- Ensure that supervisors, staff and students are aware of their health and safety responsibilities for the fieldwork;

- Ensure that appropriate records relating to fieldwork are kept according to legislative requirements. This includes completion and records management for the documents including fieldwork risk assessment, training qualifications etc.;
- Approve any high risk fieldwork activities;
- Any fieldwork activities undertaken by the Head of School/Unit must be approved by their immediate supervisor.
- Ensure that academics are adhering to these Fieldwork and Off-Campus Activities Safety Manual and Guidelines.

## 4.2 Supervisor

The supervisor must:

- Supervise the development of, review and approve, fieldwork risk assessments and any other fieldwork documentation carried out by staff, students, collaborators and volunteers under their supervision;
- Provide appropriate supervision to ensure that all participants comply with the fieldwork risk assessment including staff, students, collaborators and volunteers;
- Appoint a second in charge for when the supervisor is unavailable;
- Ensure induction and training for fieldwork participants, is provided where necessary;
- Ensure permission to work in restricted areas which include national parks and catchment areas has been obtained;
- Advise participants of their obligation to take appropriate medical advice and disclose any limitations imposed by their health, which may affect their ability to safely participate in the fieldwork;
- Ensure that appropriate safety and first aid equipment and personnel is available;
- Ensure the provision, maintenance and proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) associated with the fieldwork;
- Ensure that corrective actions are implemented for all incidents involving fieldwork;
- Ensure visitors are made aware of, and abide by WHS requirements;
- Ensure all relevant processes are followed and adhered to in the field

## 4.3 Fieldwork Leader

Fieldwork Leader(s) must:

- Conduct a risk assessment on the fieldwork to be undertaken, ensure that any actions required prior to commencement of the fieldwork have been completed and obtain approval from the Supervisor (and Head of School/Unit - if applicable);
- Provide active and visible safety leadership during the fieldwork activities;
- Provide direct supervision to ensure that all participants comply with the risk controls identified in the fieldwork risk assessment and limit fieldwork to activities to those in the approved fieldwork risk assessment;
- Establish and make understood a clear chain of command;
- Manage and monitor all fieldwork communication devices;
- Ensure that regular check-ins with the nominated Safety Contact are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the [FEAP](#) and ensure the process to be followed by the Safety Contact is clearly understood;
- Carry copies of all fieldwork documentation (copy of FEAP, risk assessment, fieldwork participant acknowledgement) for the duration of the fieldwork activity including any permits or license's required;
- SEALS Staff to complete a FESS trip report;
- Ensure that fieldwork activities do not put other members of the wider community at risk of injury or illness and inform the public when fieldwork is likely to affect public areas;
- Ensure only trained participants use specialised equipment or carry out specialised tasks;

- Account for all fieldwork party members at every stage of the fieldwork;
- Ensure all members of the fieldwork adhere to local, state, federal and international laws at all times;
- Comply with relevant UOW policy, procedures and guidelines including [WHS Risk Management Guidelines](#), [Working Alone and After Hours Work Guidelines](#);
- Report incidents, accidents and near misses ASAP to the supervisor and any injuries must also be reported to the WHS unit ASAP.

#### 4.4 Fieldwork participants

Each participant in a fieldtrip is responsible for ensuring they:

- follow all policies and procedures;
- follow instructions given by the fieldwork leader;
- notify the fieldwork leader of any medical conditions;
- complete the participant or unpaid work engagement form and disclose any medical conditions to the supervisor;
- carry any required medications for personal use;
- attend safety briefings or are given information about hazards that might be encountered in the field;
- wear any personal protective equipment and clothing required;
- complete any required training;
- report any hazards or incident to the fieldwork leader;
- act in a way that does not put others at risk.

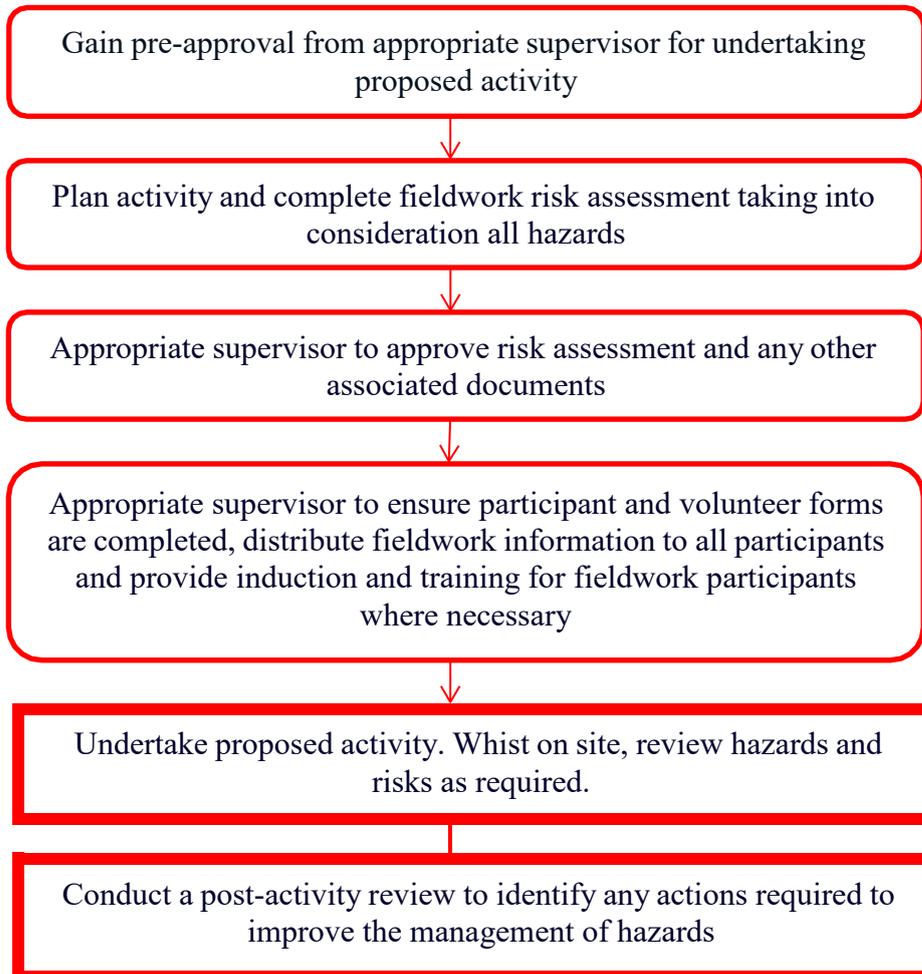
#### 4.5 Safety contact

The nominated safety contact is responsible for:

- understanding the process to follow in case of a missed contact or missed check in and where necessary initiating the emergency response process;
- initiating an emergency response process in case of a missed contact/or missed check in.

## 5 Risk Assessment and Planning Process

This flowchart should be followed by Fieldwork Leaders when planning a trip:



### 5.1 Risk Assessment

It is a requirement for Fieldwork Leaders to conduct a risk assessment for all fieldwork and off-campus activities including medium-high risk activities. HoS should also be listed as Additional Supervisors

All risk assessments are to be completed in [SafetyNet](#).

#### 5.1.1 Dynamic risk assessment

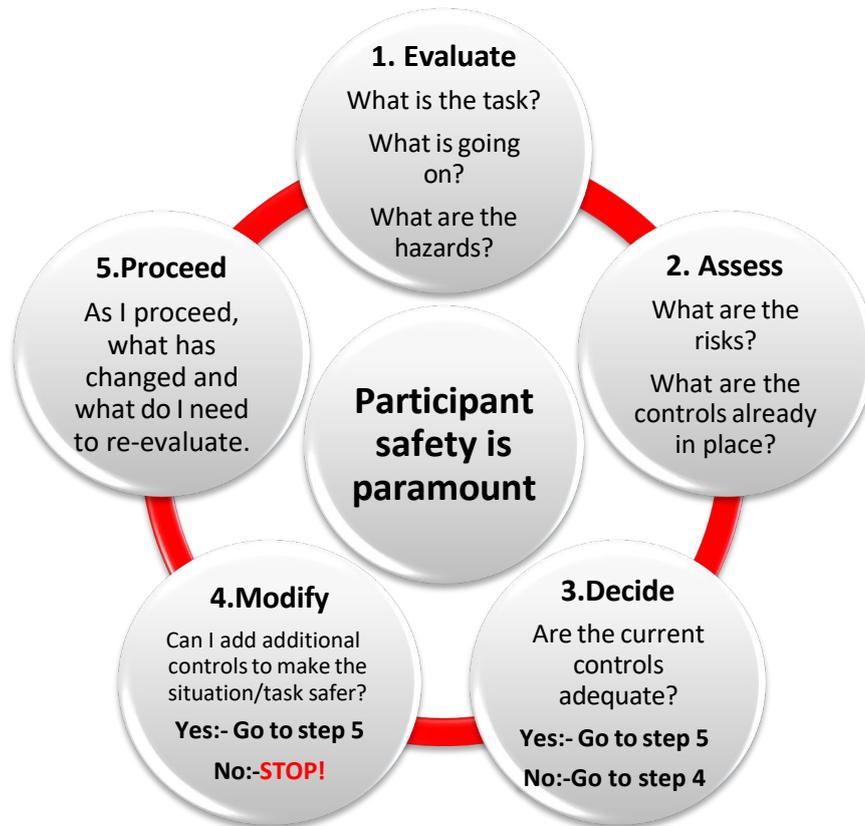
Due to the unpredictable nature of the hazards involved in fieldwork and off-campus activities, it is important that the risk assessment be reviewed as necessary whilst in the field to ensure the safety of all participants. These types of assessments do not need to be documented but should be taken into account when conducting post-activity de-briefs to identify any ways in which the management of fieldwork hazards can be improved.

Some conditions requiring a review would include:

- changes in the environmental conditions such as a rapidly approaching weather system, flash flooding, bush fire or any conditions that fieldwork participants may have not been aware of at the time of the initial risk assessment such as fallen trees across a walking track (see section Heightened Bush Fire Risk);
- injury/illness to a participant which may affect their ability to continue performing the required tasks such as a sprain or strain;
- personal threat to an individual / or the group; or

- equipment /vehicle breakdown or failure.

The dynamic risk assessment process is outlined below.



Fieldwork participants should be informed of the extent of insurance provisions prior to commencing the fieldwork.

## 5.2 Planning Considerations

Proper planning is probably the most important part of undertaking activities off-campus. Most problems will be avoided by taking proper precautions before going off-campus. This means equipping participants with the proper skills, equipment required for the type of work or activity they may be undertaking and any other requirements such as relevant vaccinations.

Where appropriate, the supervisor should contact the WHS Unit and/or seek appropriate advice for issues that are not specifically addressed in these sections.

Because of the broad nature of activities that may take place during fieldwork there are many UOW policies, procedures and guidelines that may apply, and it is the responsibility of the supervisor, workers and students to review any which may apply. There may also be local school/unit procedures and policies in place that must be adhered to whilst undertaking certain activities.

The following are some UOW policies and guidelines, which apply to fieldwork activities (see [Safety Topics internet page](#) for more):

- [First Aid Guidelines](#)
- [Incident Management and Reporting Guidelines](#)
- [Working with Hazardous Chemicals and Dangerous Goods](#)
- [Biological Safety Manual and Guidelines](#)
- [Immunisation Guidelines](#)
- [Personal Protective Equipment Guidelines](#)

- [Safe use of Mobile Phone Guidelines](#)
- [Safe use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Guidelines](#)
- [Working with Sharps Guidelines](#)
- [Alcohol and Drugs in Employment - Guide for Supervisors](#)
- [Working Alone and After Hours Guidelines](#)
- [Thermal Comfort Guidelines](#)
- [High Risk Fieldwork Emergency Action Plan \(FEAP\)](#)
- [SEALS EPIRB AND PLB Procedure](#)
- [SCUBA Diving Operations Manual](#)
- [SEALS Vehicle Policy \(See SEALS Staff for access\)](#)
- [Kayak Guidelines \(See SEALS Staff for access\)](#)

### 5.2.1 Documentation

The fieldwork risk assessment must be completed on SafetyNet taking into account all hazards that may be encountered (see below for planning considerations) and approved by the appropriate supervisor. Travel plans/itinerary are to be attached to the risk assessment (select “Confidential” if you are unhappy displaying personal travel details to anyone outside of the Approver and Developer of the Risk Assessment) or uploaded to the FESS trip (SEALS only) including maps/ GPS coordinates of locations where possible.

All participants are to complete the [Fieldwork Participant Acknowledgement Form](#), including the fieldwork leader. In addition, all volunteers are to complete [Unpaid Work Engagement Form](#).

Staff and students are to complete a Travel Hub request (unless it is not overnight travel, i.e. single day travel) in line with the University’s [Travel and Entertainment Policy](#).

### 5.2.2 Licences and Permits

Licences which are required to operate vehicles, boats, and specialised equipment must be carried by appropriate fieldwork participants at all times.

*NOTE: The University expects that a licence is held to operate all boats, regardless of the speed at which the boat is travelling.*

Permits may be required to access areas on private land or in national parks.

Passports and visas may be required for international travel. Biosecurity permits should be considered if samples will be transported into or out of Australia.

Before using any of the University of Wollongong’s vehicles or boats you must contact the relevant person in the Faculty or School who manages that asset and request an Induction. In most cases, you cannot use any of the above assets until you have been inducted and presented your relevant licence.

### 5.2.3 Safety Briefings

All participants and volunteers must have received a safety briefing or information about hazards before undertaking the activity. Briefing sessions must be conducted prior to commencing the fieldwork to ensure participants have time for preparation such as acclimatising, medical counselling or acquiring clothing or other relevant equipment. All participants must be familiar with the requirements of the fieldwork risk assessment.

On arrival at a site a brief orientation for participants should occur to familiarise with the area.

**It is also recommended that post-activity debriefs occur to identify ways to improve the risk management of any fieldwork activities taking into account any incidents/hazards reported during the activities.**

## 5.2.4 Logistics

Consider accommodation needs, catering arrangements, clothing and protective equipment. General and specific checklists can be developed to ensure nothing is omitted in the packing process.

If location is remote, enough food and water must be carried in case of emergency. Consideration should be given to the number of people and expected weather conditions (i.e. more water required for hot weather). Non-perishable goods are recommended for long periods away from fresh food sources. See [Safe Food Handling Guidelines](#) for more information.

## 5.2.5 Transport/Vehicle

Consider the types and numbers of vehicles needed (for example 4WD vehicles for off-road driving and hiring buses for large groups).

In station wagons and open cabin vehicles, safety screens or nets should be installed to prevent equipment entering the passenger section during sudden braking. Storage containers such as roof racks and trailers must not be overloaded to ensure safe driving.

Off-road driver training (or demonstrated experience, as approved by Head of School/Unit) and recovery equipment for vehicles (such as snatch straps/winches) may be required.

UOW vehicles have NRMA roadside assistance with varied coverage based on vehicle type. Depending on location, roadside assistance may not be fast to arrive in the event of a breakdown. Spare fan-belts for power steering, tyres, air-conditioner and alternator should be carried as well as spare fuel tanks or extra jerry cans on racks on the vehicle.

A second battery with isolating diodes is recommended to be fitted to the vehicle to provide reserve power for radio communication, refrigeration etc.

At least (2) two drivers are recommended for all remote/off-road field trips.

## Safe Driving

On completion of each period of 2 hours driving, a person who has driven continuously should take a rest period of at least 20 minutes away from the vehicle. Some form of light exercise is required, e.g. walking. Where staff and students are sharing the driving, it is recommended a change of driver takes place every 2 hours. The distance that can be reasonably covered during a day will be governed by the vehicle, terrain, number of drivers and speed limits. Factors such as general safety, road and weather conditions should be taken into account as well as driver fatigue when planning the trip. After a person has been the sole driver of a vehicle for three consecutive days and driven for 6-8 hours each day, the fourth day should be a non-driving day.

Driving should take up no more than 8 hours in a 24 hour period. The total time spent travelling, including breaks, should not exceed 12 hours, even when two or more staff or students share the driving.

Special care should be exercised when driving long distances in the early afternoon or at night. Rest periods or driver relief should occur more frequently at these times. In unfenced areas, speed should be reduced when driving dusk-to-dawn due to the risk of hitting wildlife.

Similarly, speed should be reduced when driving in dangerous weather conditions such as storms, fog, and heavy rain. **Never attempt to drive through flood waters.**

## Travel Health

Whilst travelling on a long journey, particularly on a long-haul plane trip, it is important to take preventative measures to prevent deep vein thrombosis (DVT):

- Exercise your calf and foot muscles regularly.
- Every half hour or so, bend and straighten your legs, feet and toes when you are seated.
- Take all opportunities to get up to stretch your legs, Take a walk up and down the aisle every hour or so, when the seatbelt signs are switched off.
- Make sure you have as much space as possible in front of you for your legs to move. Avoid having bags under the seat in front of you and recline your seat where possible.
- 
- Drink normal amounts of fluid to avoid dehydration.
- Do not drink too much alcohol.

### **Hazardous Chemicals & Dangerous Goods (including Gas Cylinders)**

Minor transport of hazardous chemicals and dangerous goods for purposes such as fieldwork must comply with the relevant guidelines and SDS including:

- not being transported within the cabin of the vehicle
- all containers must be labelled appropriately, and signage attached to vehicles as required
- segregation from food stuffs

Dangerous goods during transport are subject to the ADG Code, and when transported by air must be packaged by a licenced dangerous goods handler.

SCUBA tanks and oxy-viva cannot be stored inside the vehicle. They must be stored separately (inside the canopy or trailer).

All gas cylinders (including LPG cylinders) are to be transported as per the [Storage and Handling of Gas Cylinder Guidelines](#). No gas cylinders should be transported inside a vehicle or in the boot of a car or in the back of a station wagon

Consider manual handling aids for larger cylinders and if possible have cylinders delivered to site by the provider.

### **5.2.6 Location Specific**

Consider the nature of the work and the area where it is to be done, including its remoteness, terrain, likely weather conditions including possible weather extremes (for working in hot/cold environments refer to [Thermal Comfort Guidelines](#)), hygiene at the site (facilities to wash hands etc.), possibility of encountering dangerous animals, plants or people. A map of where activities are taking place and/or itinerary must be attached to the risk assessment to assist in case of emergencies.

Overseas fieldwork should be planned and conducted in accordance with the requirements for all fieldwork, but variations in climate, infrastructure, culture and politics can impact on the safety and health of people engaged in fieldwork overseas. These aspects should be assessed as far as possible prior to departure on the field trip. The [International Risk Management Plan](#) must be completed where required.

## 5.2.7 International Fieldwork

As an international fieldworker, you must ensure you understand the requirements for international fieldwork provided in these guidelines.

### Fieldwork Leader Responsibilities

As fieldwork leader you must also ensure all safety/emergency plans, communication channels and safety equipment are prepared and in place to ensure that, in the event of an emergency, the best possible outcome will be achieved. You are NOT to rely on the University to find you in the event of a local or global emergency.

*NOTE: Some remote communication devices (e.g satellite phones, EPIRBs, etc) and first aid items (e.g defibrillators, trauma scissors) may not be able to be brought into your destination or transported by aeroplane. This must be confirmed during the planning of the fieldtrip.*

### Travel Hub

It is important you also understand the support that Travel Hub provides when you are working overseas. When accommodation and/or flights are booked through Travel Hub your itinerary will be provided to travel safety company World Travel Protection (WTP). In the event of an emergency in the country, you are working in (or a worldwide emergency), WTP will provide a report with all listed travellers and you will be contacted accordingly.

If you have not booked accommodation or flights through Travel Hub, WTP will not receive your itinerary and therefore will not know where you are to contact you and provide advice.

### Communication Plan

PRIOR TO DEPARTURE, you must develop a robust safety communication plan. This includes:

- nominate a competent safety contact either within UOW or externally (choose someone with adequate experience in the type of work you are doing, and is familiar with the risks);
- brief the safety contact on the safety communication plan and the processes to follow in the event of a “failure to contact” or an emergency (suggestions below);
- ensure the safety contact is aware of their responsibilities (ensure they have read and understand this document);
- if the safety contact is external, provide them with contact details of a suitable person at UOW that can provide UOW-specific information regarding any incidents e.g. your Supervisor (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic – a UOW representative could provide information on UOW’s response).

*NOTE: Prior to the trip, ensure there is an agreed time limit for contacting emergency services. This time limit will depend on the remoteness of the location, e.g.:*

- *if the party is boating, fast contact with emergency services is required.*
- *if the party is working in a very remote area, a longer wait time may be needed as the party could just be having trouble getting a signal (e.g. 30 minutes of failed attempts to contact the Researcher(s)).*

## IN THE FIELD

- For international fieldwork - monitor the <https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/> website for any updates on international travel in general, or the country in which fieldwork is being conducted.
- If there are concerns and advice is needed while in the field, contact the relevant people/information sources if able, otherwise instruct the safety contact to contact UOW for information/advice.
- Make the call to end fieldwork early if available information/advice suggests there may be problems with continuing (e.g. cyclone/tornado, civil unrest threatens your safety).

## UPON RETURN

- Once you have completed your fieldwork and have returned to your accommodation, 'log-out' with your safety contact via phone/sat or text message so they know you have completed your day in the field safely.

## **Example Communication Plan**

1. Contact your Safety Contact to inform them of your intentions for the day and your estimated completion time.
2. If your time of completion has been extended, (i.e. you will not be finished until 5pm rather than the 3pm predicted completion) you **MUST** communicate this change to your Safety Contact.
3. Once you have completed your activities for the day 'log-out' with your safety contact so they know you are finished for the day.

*NOTE: If you fail to complete the steps above, and you have an emergency, it may be hours before you get help. On the other hand, a false alarm (i.e. you don't 'log-out' when you said you would) may result in unnecessary Search & Rescue (SAR) operations and misuse of essential resources.*

## **Safety Contact Responsibilities**

1. Ensure you are fully informed of the research team's planned activities and/or location and movements (i.e. have a copy of the FEAP accessible at all times).
2. Expect a phone call or text message informing you of the field team's intentions for each day that fieldwork is conducted (this includes log-out time).
3. Ensure you check for messages from the field (if the team are using a Garmin inReach these may be text messages and/or emails).
4. If you do not receive a call/text at the agreed completion time, first call the Fieldwork Leader, and then all other members of the research team. Call any other contacts provided (i.e. Marine Rescue, nearby National Parks office, accommodation providers). In other words, enact the emergency action plan.
5. Where repeated attempts to contact the above fail, contact Emergency Services whereby you will be asked to provide as much information as possible (this is where the [FEAP](#) is useful) and a decision will be made about activating a Search & Rescue (SAR) operation.
6. For international fieldwork – monitor the <https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/> website for any updates on international travel in general, or the country in which fieldwork is being conducted and relay these to the field trip leader.
7. If emergency services are called, UOW Security and the Research Supervisor must also be contacted.
8. Remain on standby.

**NOTE:** Failure to 'log-out' may result in unnecessary SAR operations and misuse of essential resources.

## 5.2.8 Remote Field Work

Remote fieldwork is defined as being work carried out in locations where it is difficult to summon help and/or where emergency assistance is expected to be more than 1 hour away. A minimum of two people is required when completing remote field trips.

All remote activities require the FEAP to be completed.

Additional consideration needs to be made with regards to communication on remote field trips.

Ensure you have access to the following before leaving:

- Hazards Near Me App
- Australian Fires App
- National Parks & Wildlife App
- Scanner Radio App
- Live Traffic App
- Specific contacts for NPWS, Forestry etc.

Other extra considerations should include additional fuel, food/water and batteries and two different forms of communication must be used at all times.

## 5.2.9 Supervision Requirements

Supervision ratios should be determined based on the experience of participants and the risks involved.

Independent field work should only be considered if:

- Risk assessment has determined the fieldwork to be low risk (the fieldwork may be high or medium risk by definition, including remote field work, but implemented controls will reduce the residual risk to a low level)
- Working alone has been included in the risk assessment
- Only experienced and trained persons are to undertake fieldwork independently
- Independent fieldworkers have first aid training

## Conducting face to face interviews

Only experienced interviewers should be conducting face-to-face interviews and focus groups as an independent fieldworker. Researchers without experience should receive on the job training from their supervisor or their nominee and must be accompanied by another researcher until they are fully trained and competent.

To reduce risk all fieldworkers conducting face to face interviews should carry the following:

- mobile phone – personal or University provided
- first aid kit for motor vehicle journeys
- UOW photo ID card
- consider the need for having a GPS location device or app installed on your mobile phone

Other ways to reduce risks during face-to-face interviews include:

- arranging interviews in daylight hours
- travelling only in daylight hours and following the driving controls
- where possible interviews should be arranged in public places
- if travelling to an unfamiliar location or site, consider taking another staff member or support person
- if an interviewee becomes aggressive or makes personal threats terminate the interview process immediately
- having established communication and emergency plans in place, e.g. utilizing the [FEAP](#).

At the time of the interview, the researcher should inform their Safety Contact person when they have arrived at interview location, have moved from one location to the next and when they return safely to their home or accommodation. Should the researcher fail to notify safe arrival by the agreed time the nominee should follow the communication plan and escalate response as required. If all contact attempts fail, a concern for welfare must be lodged with the police.

### 5.2.10 Participation Needs and Skills

All participants must disclose any medical conditions to the fieldwork supervisor. It is the responsibility of participants to carry any required medication for personal use and have medical clearance from their medical practitioner to perform any activities that may impact on an existing medical condition. It is not appropriate for participants with a potentially life-threatening medical condition to participate in fieldwork activities at remote locations.

Other participant/individual considerations include:

- Are specialist skills or training required? (e.g. training required to perform a task)
- Are participants appropriately experienced?
- Will participants with disabilities need extra assistance or reasonable adjustment? For information about supporting students with disabilities on fieldtrips contact the [Student Disability Services](#).

### 5.2.11 Vaccination Requirements

Some activities which may require immunisations include working with animals, working with untreated water or soil, working overseas and working in remote areas (see [Immunisation Guidelines](#)).

If travelling overseas, always seek medical advice (at least 8 weeks prior to departure) about any immunisations required or refer to the [SmartTraveller website](#).

### 5.2.12 First Aid

Consider the nature of injuries that could occur whilst undertaking the proposed activity, the number of participants and the distance from immediate emergency assistance. This will assist in determining the type of first aid kit needed and the number of first aiders required.

A number of Faculties and Schools have a variety of safety equipment for fieldwork. Please contact the relevant people in your area to determine what is available (for example Defibrillators, EPIRBs/PLBs, Remote First Aid Kits, Satellites Phones).

The following table outlines minimum first aid requirements for fieldwork:

Fieldwork Type (minimum participants on trip)	*First Aid		Oxygen Resuscitation	
	Requirement (up to 10 participants)	Additional Requirement (per extra ^20 participants or part thereof)	Requirement (up to 10 participants)	Additional Requirement (per extra 10 participants or part thereof)
<b>Independent, low risk fieldwork</b> (1 participant)	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>General and Remote fieldwork including working NEAR water</b> (minimum 2 participants)	2	1	N/A	N/A
<b>Boating in ENCLOSED waters</b> (minimum 2 participants)	2 (Option: one in vessel, one on shore)	1	1 (on vessel)	1
<b>Boating in OPEN waters</b> (minimum 2 participants)	2	1	2	1
<b>Snorkelling</b> (minimum 2 participants)	2	1	2	1
<b>Scuba Diving</b> (minimum 3 participants)	2 (at least one on surface)	1	2 (at least one on surface)	1

### Notes

One person may fulfil the conditions for multiple training requirements (i.e. First Aider AND Oxygen Resuscitation First Aider)

\* First Aid Certificate must be **REMOTE FIRST AID** if remote fieldwork is being undertaken (see Definitions)

^ If remote location applies, additional requirements increase per extra 10 participants or part thereof

### Example

A snorkel trip is being planned for 25 participants in a remote area on a class field trip. The minimum first aid requirements are:

- 3 x Remote First Aiders
- 3 x Oxygen Resuscitation First Aiders

## 5.2.13 Equipment

Consider all of your equipment requirements, including personal protective equipment and clothing, and any specialist equipment requirements. Will you need manual handling aids to lift and move heavy equipment?

All equipment, vehicles and tools must be checked for safety compliance prior to work commencing (including electrical testing and tagging requirements).

## 5.2.14 Communication and Emergency Requirements

For remote and high risk fieldwork the [FEAP](#) must be used to outline the methods and frequency of communication and any specific emergency procedures/equipment (and attached to the risk assessment). For all fieldwork consider the types of communication methods needed. Are mobile phones sufficient? Is there email access? How remote is the location? Are there communication devices for all vehicles in a fieldwork party? Is a GPS tracking device or satellite phone required? Is an EPIRB/PLB required? Is a Defibrillator available?

Where possible, contact should be made at agreed intervals with a nominated safety contact person. In some locations it may be more appropriate to set-up an alternate arrangement for communication for example with a local police station or a national parks office. The key principle is that communication occurs regularly and an emergency back-up plan is in place if contact is not made. The safety contact must be informed of the process to follow in case of a missed check-in or contact.

For remote, off-road driving, independent work, and water-based activities at least 2 methods of communication must be carried at all times (this is not '2 mobile phones' but 2 separate forms of communication). A second battery with isolating diodes should be fitted to the vehicle to provide reserve power for radio communication, refrigeration etc.

## 5.2.15 Heightened Bush Fire Risk

Bush fire danger may affect field work locations and thus it is important to be aware of the risk and plan activities accordingly. Bush fires can also affect travel routes and not just the final destination. Consider minimising the size of your fieldwork party, ensure you have efficient access to safe locations, plan your exit routes, identify safe shelter areas, alternative locations and transport availability.

It is the responsibility of the Fieldwork Leader to assess the risk of bush fire in the field area before embarking and to delay, alter or abort the trip plan should they deem the risk unacceptable to the health and safety of the participants.

If a fieldwork trip is in progress and a fire breaks out in the area, advice of the Rural Fire Service (RFS) or equivalent and other agencies (e.g. NPWS) should be followed at all times.

### Total Fire Ban (TOBAN)

Bush fires are more likely to spread and cause damage on days when the weather is very hot, dry and windy. These are usually on very high to extreme fire days. To reduce the risk of fires damaging or destroying life, property and the environment a total fire ban may be declared.

If a TOBAN has been declared, guidance from RFS and National Parks and Wildlife Service must be adhered to (or their equivalent agency).

A total fire ban means no fires out in the open. General purpose hot works (such as welding, grinding or gas cutting or any activity that produces a spark or flame) are not to be done in the open.

Activities such as driving over grassed areas should be avoided as engine sparks can start grass fires.

If a fieldwork activity is scheduled within the bushfire danger period (normally 1 October to 31 March in NSW), how a TOBAN will affect planned activities should be addressed in the risk assessment, and serious consideration needs to be taken by the HoS as to whether the fieldwork should be postponed.

## Fire Danger Ratings

The Bush Fire Danger Ratings provided by the RFS give an indication of the possible consequences of a fire, if one was to start. Bush Fire Danger Ratings are based on predicted conditions such as temperature, humidity, wind and the dryness of the landscape. The higher the fire danger rating, the more dangerous the conditions.

Ratings are issued each afternoon for the following day so there is time to safely leave bush fire prone areas before the risk increases. It is sometimes known days in advance if extreme or catastrophic ratings are expected to be issued and this can be used to assess the risk of commencing or continuing a field work activity.

Fire Danger Rating	RFS Advice	University Expectation
 <b>CATASTROPHIC</b>	For your survival, leaving early is the only option. Leave bush fire prone areas the night before or early in the day – do not just wait and see what happens.	<u>NO FIELDWORK ACTIVITIES ARE TO BE UNDERTAKEN.</u> Participants on current fieldwork activities are to retreat to a safe location (i.e. not a bush fire prone area) as soon as possible, until the warning is downgraded to “HIGH” or lower.
<b>EXTREME</b>	Leaving early is the safest option for your survival.	
<b>HIGH</b>	Leaving early is the safest option for your survival.	Follow all guidance for “MODERATE”. <u>SERIOUSLY CONSIDER POSTPONING FIELDWORK ACTIVITIES.</u> If field work will go ahead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure risk assessment covers bush fire danger.</li> <li>• Approval is required by Head of School/Unit (in writing e.g. email).</li> </ul>
<b>MODERATE</b>	Keep yourself informed and monitor conditions. Be ready to act if necessary.	Fieldwork may continue and dynamic risk assessments performed as required. Monitor conditions using apps such as Fires Near Me or refer to RFS website (or other state equivalents). Regular check-ins should occur with Supervisor/safety contacts to remain updated on conditions. This is particularly important in remote fieldwork. Remember that conditions can change suddenly and without warning. If unsure, fieldwork should cease.
<b>NO RATING</b>		Fieldwork to continue and go ahead as planned with no further action required. Always monitor the conditions and if the situation changes consult the RFS website for any updates.

## 5.2.16 Boating and Water Craft Activities

The University expects that a licence is held to operate all motorised boats, regardless of the speed at which the boat is travelling. The licence requirements may differ in each jurisdiction so local rules should be researched when planning the trip.

All UOW vessels are considered commercial vessels. Anyone driving a UOW vessel must be an approved person and have a valid coxswain level 3 certification.

Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs), otherwise known as lifejackets, must be suitable for the intended wearer as well as the expected conditions. They must be maintained in good working condition, and serviced at least every 12 months. This also applies to other safety equipment.

The [FEAP](#) is to be completed for all aquatic activities (the exception being a rocky shore/beach/aquatic excursion with over 20 participants) and given to all participants along with local boating procedures/guidelines.

The NSW Government website containing information on commercial boating and watercraft is:

- [Australian Maritime Safety Authority](#)

Further information on Kayaking can also be found in the [UOW Kayak Guidelines](#).

## 5.2.17 Diving and Snorkelling

Prior to commencing any dive or snorkel related fieldwork you must read the [SCUBA Diving Operations Manual](#).

As part of planning for a field trip that includes these activities, a number of forms and processes must be followed.

Any SCUBA Diving or Snorkelling undertaken whilst representing UOW must be planned and executed using SMAH's Field Equipment Safety System (FESS - <http://fess.uow.edu.au/>). If you aren't already familiar with this system please email [SEALS-fieldequipment@uow.edu.au](mailto:SEALS-fieldequipment@uow.edu.au) to request some advice on how to use the system and some assistance setting-up your certification listings and field trips. The UOW's Diving Officer must approve all diving related activities.

See Hazardous Chemicals/Dangerous Goods (including Gas Cylinders) for information on safely transporting SCUBA tanks and oxy-viva equipment.

## 5.2.18 Working Near Water/On Rock Platforms

Where there is a risk of participants being swept away by waves or fast flowing water PFDs or safety lines must be used. See Boating and Water Craft Activities for information on PFDs.

# 6 Safe Work Procedures

The supervisor should ensure that safe work procedures are developed for regular or repeated activities that pose a risk to health and safety. The safe work procedures will outline the steps involved in the task/activity and specify how risk associated with identified hazards will be eliminated or reduced. Refer to the [Safe Work Procedures Guidelines](#) for assistance in developing a safe work procedure.

SWPs are to be created and stored in [SafetyNet](#).

## 7 Incident Reporting

All incidents are to be reported to your supervisor ASAP and all injuries which require any medical assistance/treatment must be reported to both the supervisor and the Universities Injury management coordinator on **0409 457 851 or 42213931** ASAP to ensure that the appropriate treatment and cover for any costs is approved and obtained. See [Incident Management and Reporting Guidelines](#) for more information.

## 8 Insurance Liability and Cover

Supervisors should ensure they have knowledge of the extent of insurance provisions for the various categories of fieldwork participants where applicable including:

- Staff;
- Students;
- Volunteers;
- Collaborators;
- Honorary Employees.

Insurance provisions for vehicles and equipment should also be clarified with the Procurement Manager, Financial Services.

### 8.1 Insurance Provided

*PLEASE NOTE - Which policy is used for a particular claim is decided based on the event that has occurred, i.e. it may be best to use Travel Insurance for a particular incident instead of the Personal Accident Insurance.*

If anyone is found to be intoxicated during an incident all cover will be void.

The University has a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of staff and students, as well as sustaining the facilities and equipment used for their teaching and research. Workers of the University also have responsibilities which include working safely and following reasonable directions in the workplace, as described in the university's [WHS Policy](#). The University has developed a Work Health and Safety Management System based on the requirements set out within health and safety legislation to ensure work can be performed safely. This system includes University-wide and Faculty and School specific policies, procedures and systems (e.g. SafetyNet). Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, workers (including staff, students and volunteers) are required to comply with any reasonable instructions and co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure given by the University.

It is important to acknowledge the ramifications of not following these procedures and not receiving approval to conduct fieldwork. People working, studying or volunteering through University affiliated projects, as well as property owned and managed by the university, are covered by a broad and robust insurance policies, including workers compensation. The University's insurance policy with regards to equipment and property (e.g. field research gear, vehicles etc.) has an inbuilt flexibility to account for the fluid nature of fieldwork and its inherent uncertainties. However, failing to adequately adhere to University policies and procedures gives our insurer scope to reject any claims for damaged, destroyed or lost equipment. **The result of this is that the user may then be responsible for the repair or replacement of the damaged, destroyed or lost school-owned and managed equipment.** Similarly, with regards to personal injury, failing to adequately follow University procedures and gain approval for fieldwork may result in workers compensation insurance claims being disputed. Furthermore, individuals, fieldwork leaders, their supervisors and the University may be exposed to legal action under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

### 8.1.1 Employees

Employees are covered under Workers Compensation which is a form of insurance payment to employees if they are injured at work or become sick due to their work. **The University of Wollongong is self-insured.**

For more information see <https://www.uow.edu.au/about/services/financial-services/>

### 8.1.2 Volunteers

Volunteers are covered under UOW's Personal Accident Policy.

This policy provides cover for declared volunteers of the University whilst on volunteer work on behalf of the University.

Protection is subject to certain terms, exclusions, conditions and limitations. These are available and can be viewed in the Policy Wording and Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) located at <https://www.uow.edu.au/about/services/financial-services/>.

All Volunteers of the University must complete a Volunteer Acknowledgement (now [Unpaid Work Engagement Form](#)) with the event coordinator and/or supervisor. These forms are then kept within the Faculty/Department. In the event of a claim the Volunteer will need to provide a copy of this form with their claim to show that the Volunteer was authorised.

It is recommended that Faculties/Divisions keep a record of the number of volunteers that work on their behalf as it is important to declare this to Financial Services annually during the insurance renewal process.

### 8.1.3 Students

Students of the University are also covered under the Personal Accident Policy described above.

In the event of an incident, Australian Legislation requires that the claimer must first claim expenses through:

1. Private Health Cover (if available)
2. Then Medicare
3. Then an Insurance claim

Students can also claim under the University's Travel Insurance Policies (Domestic and/or International) but cannot claim from both the Travel Insurance Policy and the Personal Accident Insurance Policy. A decision will be made on a case by case basis as to the most beneficial policy.

### 8.1.4 Travel Insurance (for volunteers, staff and students)

The University maintains both a current travel insurance policy to cover students and staff whilst overseas on authorised university business or travelling domestically (>50km from Wollongong). It is up to the individual who is travelling to read the Product Disclosure Statement (PDS), Policy Wording and Policy Schedule located at <https://www.uow.edu.au/about/services/financial-services/>.

## 8.2 Public Liability

Everyone undertaking fieldwork with the University of Wollongong is protected under Public Liability Insurance. Public Liability insurance protects the business and people working for that business against the financial risk of being found liable to a third party for death or injury, loss or damage to property. If anyone is found to be intoxicated during an incident all cover will be void.

## 9 Review

In order to ensure that these guidelines continue to be effective and applicable to the University, it will be reviewed on a 3 yearly basis by the WHS Unit in consultation with the WHS Committee. Conditions, which might warrant a review of the guidelines on a more frequent basis, would include:

- reported hazards or injuries.
- non-conforming systems.
- WHS Committee concern.

## 10 Related Documentation

- [WHS Policy](#)
- [WHS Risk Management Guidelines](#)
- [Air and Health Monitoring Guidelines](#)
- [First Aid Guidelines](#)
- [Incident Management and Reporting Guidelines](#)
- [Working with Hazardous Chemicals and Dangerous Goods](#)
- [Biological Safety Manual and Guidelines](#)
- [Immunisation Guidelines](#)
- [Personal Protective Equipment Guidelines](#)
- [Safe use of Mobile Phone Guidelines](#)
- [Safe use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Guidelines](#)
- [Working with Sharps Guidelines](#)
- [Alcohol and Drugs in Employment - Guide for Supervisors](#)
- [Working Alone and After Hours Guidelines](#)
- [Thermal Comfort Guidelines](#)
- [High Risk Fieldwork Emergency Action Plan \(FEAP\)](#)
- [SEALS EPIRB AND PLB Procedure](#)
- [SCUBA Diving Operations Manual](#)
- [SEALS Vehicle Policy \(See SEALS Staff for access\)](#)
- [Kayak Guidelines \(See SEALS Staff for access\)](#)

## 11 Reference Documents

- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 NSW](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 NSW](#)

## 12 Version Control Table

Version Control	Date Released	Approved By	Amendment
4	August 2010	OHS Manager	Doc updated from Personnel to Human Resources Division. Last reviewed date on the hard copy doc was set to 'August 2010'. The OHS doc register 'Last Reviewed' field was not updated to maintain scheduled review dates. Changes approved by QA.
5	March 2012	OHS Manager	Re-brand.
6	May 2013	OHS Manager	Legislative update
7	November 2013	OHS Manager	Scheduled review. No major changes.
8	April 2015	Manager WHS	Aligned to the risk management methodology outlined in the Business Assurance Risk Management Policy. Risk matrix updated accordingly.
9	December 2017	Manager WHS	Review of entire guideline
10	December 2018	Manager WHS	Added more detail on insurance provisions
11	July 2020	Manager WHS	Included definition of collaborator. Included section on heightened bushfire risk and international fieldwork. Reviewed first aid table. Clarified that a boating licence is required regardless of boat speed. Integration of appendices into document. Clarified that fieldwork can be completed alone if it is deemed low risk by a risk assessment.
12	May 2023	Manager WHS	Included new Fire Danger Rating added a Remote Field Work section, made minor amendments, added new links.