

Response plan for major incidents during field courses

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	Page 2
1. Roles and responsibilities within the School.....	Page 3
2. Communication with the School.....	Page 3
2.1 GPS Tracking Devices.....	Page 3
3. Insurance contact and process.....	Page 4
4. Travel Changes.....	Page 4
4.1 Flight delay or Cancellation.....	Page 4
4.2 Changes to FCO travel advice.....	Page 4
5. Emergency Incident Management.....	Page 5
5.1 Missing Persons.....	Page 5
5.2 Ill health of Staff.....	Page 5
5.3 Acute Health, safety and security incidents.....	Page 5
5.4 Steps to follow in the event of an emergency.....	Page 6

Introduction

The University of Manchester has a duty of care to its employees and students to ensure that in event of a major incident during field courses staff are fully equipped with the information and contact details needed.

Prior to a trip taking place a full Risk Assessment will be completed by the Field Course Leader, and will be checked and verified at various levels within the school.

This document is aimed at SEED staff and provides advice on the steps that should be followed during a major incident, along with contact details of colleagues and the University insurers. All employees associated with fieldwork activities will be expected to familiarise themselves with this document.

Students will have received a Risk Assessment of the trip and been fully briefed on all Health & Safety issues prior to departure. The University therefore has an expectation that students will follow this advice and not take unnecessary actions which may result in a major incident.

Please note that this document should be read in conjunction with the Staff Field Course Handbook which contains more detailed information relating to the Field courses.

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Suzi Edwards	24.8.15	1.0

1. Roles and responsibilities within the School

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Tim Allott	Head of School	+44(0)1612753662	Tim.allott@manchester.ac.uk
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Fieldwork Mobile		07827234491	
First Assist travellers helpline	Emergency Insurance Contact	+44 20 8763 3155 Fax: +44 (0)20 8763 3035 Telex: 8951673 IAS-G	international.ops@firstassist.co.uk

2. Communication with the School

The frequency of communication will be determined as part of the Risk Assessment process and should be commensurate with the risk.

Field Course staff will be issued with a mobile telephone and 24 hour emergency school contact information, which they must ensure they carry at all times.

All incidents, accidents or near misses should be communicated with the school at the earliest opportunity. Where this is determined as a major incident the school must be informed immediately using the emergency contact information provided.

2.1 GPS Tracking Device

Field course staff travelling to high risk areas will be provided with GPS tracking device technology. This will allow the field course leaders to check in with the school daily via text message to a dedicated contact number, and also allow the school to track the movements of the group.

This technology is also fitted with a SOS button, which when activated alerts a 24 hour service to contact everyone on the emergency contact list, and arranges local rescue anywhere in the world.

3. Insurance contact and process

In the event of an emergency the field course leader will need to contact First Assist Travellers Helpline, after the immediate scene situations have been addressed (see 5.4).

If the incident occurs in a no coverage zone the field course leader will contact First Assist as soon as possible.

FirstAssist provide a professional 24 hour emergency service:

- do not try to provide your own solution to your problems but let *FirstAssist* act for you from the outset
- *FirstAssist* need to be informed promptly of your problem
- you must leave *FirstAssist* to decide what is the most suitable, practical and reasonable solution.

Information *FirstAssist* will need:

- the name of the insured – *The University of Manchester*
- the name and location of the person requiring assistance
- the extent of injury, nature of illness, or other problem requiring assistance
- local contact details of the person requiring assistance.

For further details of services provided by the *FirstAssist* Travellers' Helpline see:

- [University travel insurance leaflet](#) (pdf)

4 Travel Changes

4.1 Flight delay or Cancellation

In the event of a flight delay or cancellation the Field Course Leader should decide on the basis of the threat analysis whether or not the field course should proceed. The decision to proceed with or cancel the field course must be then be approved by the Head of School or the Head of School Administration.

4.2 Changes to FCO travel advice

Should the FCO advice change to advise against travel to a destination country, the field course must be cancelled.

If the FCO advice changes to advise against travel to a specific area of the destination country and the field course itinerary includes a visit to this area, the Field Course Leader should consider whether or not it is academically and logistically viable to go ahead with the field course.

The decision to proceed with or cancel the field course in these circumstances must be approved by the Head of School or the Head of School Administration.

5. Emergency Incident Management

An emergency incident is defined as:

- an accident leading to a fatality or serious injury,
- serious illness,
- missing person,
- civil unrest, natural disaster or extreme weather posing serious risk to participants,
- personal assault of a staff member or student participant,
- any situation with media involvement.

5.1 Missing Persons

The leadership team should be able to account for the whereabouts of the participants at all times, including during personal time. Where members of staff are unable to locate a participant, they are to be considered missing. Staff must immediately make every effort to establish their whereabouts by questioning participants, using recorded contact information for the participant and allocating staff to search.

Where a participant has been missing for 24 hours, the Police must be contacted and the Emergency Incident Plan (see 5.4) implemented.

5.2 Ill-health of Staff

Should the ill-health of a staff member immediately prior to departure result in the staff to student ratio falling below 1:10, the Field Course Leader should conduct a risk analysis.

The Field Course Leader should decide on the basis of the threat analysis whether or not the field course should proceed.

The decision to proceed with or cancel fieldwork in these circumstances must be approved by the Head of School or the Head of School Administration.

5.3 Acute Health, safety and security incidents

Acute health, safety and security incidents may include the following:

- act of terrorism
- political instability
- natural disaster
- endemic or epidemic disease.

Should an acute incident occur within seven days of the date of departure, approval to proceed with the field course must be obtained by the Field Course Leader from either the Head of School or the Head of School Administration.

5.4 Steps to follow in the event of an emergency

In the event of an emergency incident, the Field Course Leader or other supervisory member of staff should:

- assess the situation,
- protect the group from further injury or danger,
- Activate the SOS function on the GPS tracking device (if applicable)
- give first aid and / or call emergency rescue services and / or Police as appropriate,
- give the following information to the emergency services (if applicable):
 - name of staff member in charge of the incident,
 - telephone number of the staff member in charge of the incident,
 - location of the incident,
 - nature of the incident,
 - name(s) of the individual(s) involved,
 - condition of the individual(s) involved,

After analysing the initial threat and following the steps above, the Field Course Leader or other supervisory member of staff should then:

- contact the University's emergency assistance provider FirstAssist, they will assess the situation and provide an appropriate solution,
- telephone the School emergency contact as soon as possible. They will provide instructions on how to proceed,
- remove the rest of the group to a secure location and place under the care of a member of staff who can protect them from the attention of the media, if necessary requesting the Police to assist,
- calm and comfort the participants,
- not make any statements to the media nor allow anyone else to make statements other than expressions of sympathy but refer the media to the Media Relations Office at the University,
- monitor the contact between group members and home. This is intended to ensure that relatives of those involved are contacted either by the University or the appropriate authority,
- retain all equipment involved in an unaltered condition,
- not allow anyone external to see a group member without an independent witness being present and remember that no one, unless they are in a relevant official capacity, has the right to see anyone who does not wish to see them,
- complete a copy of the appropriate Report Form

The Field Course Leader should consider whether it is appropriate to curtail the field course or whether any member(s) of the group should return to the UK immediately.

The decision to continue or to curtail the field course or for any members of the group to return to the UK must be approved by the Head of School or the Head of School Administration.

The Field Course Leader and administrative team are responsible for ensuring that there is an in-country representative identified who can support the group in the event of an incident.