Fieldwork Procedure

1 Purpose

To outline the University of Southern Queensland's framework for managing the safe and effective conduct of Fieldwork activities.

2 Scope

This procedure applies to all University Members and Students involved in planning, supervising, approving, or participating in Fieldwork activities.

3 Procedure Overview

This procedure establishes the framework for the safe and effective conduct of Fieldwork at the University, ensuring compliance with legislative and policy requirements, while safeguarding Fieldworkers and the environment.

All Fieldwork must be planned and approved using a Risk management approach. Planning must consider the location, activity, and overall level of Risk. Fieldwork must not commence until all requirements are met.

Fieldwork planning and Risk management must be undertaken in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including Fieldworkers, organisational units, and subject matter experts, to ensure that all foreseeable Risks are identified and appropriately managed.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with:

- *Work Health and Safety Policy*

- *Health, Safety and Wellbeing Risk Management Procedure*

- *Relevant legislation and Codes of Practice.*

4 Procedures

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1.1 Senior Leader

Senior leaders responsible for managing business units at the University such as Directors,

Associate Directors, Academic Directors, Research Centre Directors, and Heads of School play a critical role in ensuring the safe conduct of Fieldwork.

Key responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the Fieldwork Procedure is effectively implemented within their respective areas of responsibility.

- Reviewing and approving all required documentation for Fieldwork activities, including the Safety Risk Assessment (SRA), Emergency Plan, Communications Plan, ethics or biosafety approvals, and any contractual obligations (e.g., for externally funded projects).

- Supporting consultation processes by facilitating engagement with relevant stakeholders, including Health Safety Representatives (HSR), third-party organisations, and other internal units as needed.

4.1.2 Fieldwork Supervisor

The Fieldwork Supervisor is the person responsible for overseeing the Fieldwork. An Academic Supervisor (for Research Activities) or a Discipline Lead (for teaching activities) may hold this role.

Key responsibilities include:

- Leading the planning and coordination of Fieldwork activities.

- Completing a Safety Risk Assessment (SRA) prior to commencement, in consultation with Fieldworkers and relevant stakeholders.

- Preparing and submitting the SRA for formal approval.

- Developing an Emergency Plan and a Communications Plan tailored to the specific Fieldwork activity.

- Ensuring all participants are informed of the SRA and are adequately trained in safe work procedures.

- Facilitating consultation throughout the planning and implementation phases, including with third parties where applicable.

- Delegating tasks to the Primary Field Officer as needed, while retaining overall responsibility for ensuring safe work practices are in place and followed.

4.1.3 Primary Field Officer

The Primary Field Officer is the designated individual responsible for overseeing Fieldwork activities in the field when the Fieldwork Supervisor is not present. This role may be assigned to a University Employee or a Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Student.

Key responsibilities include:

- Acting as the on-site lead for Fieldwork operations in the absence of the Fieldwork Supervisor.

- Supporting the implementation of Safe Work Procedures (SWP) and ensuring compliance with the approved Safety Risk Assessment (SRA), Emergency Plan, and Communications Plan.

- Exercising authority to direct or influence the actions of Fieldworkers during Fieldwork, particularly in emergency situations, to ensure safety and appropriate incident response.

- Maintaining communication with the Fieldwork Supervisor and nominated contacts as outlined in the Communications Plan.

4.2 Fieldwork Requirements

All Fieldwork activities should be planned by the Fieldwork Supervisor and require approval from the relevant Senior Leader prior to commencement. The planning process must adopt a risk-based approach, and the following documentation must be submitted prior to the safety briefing and commencement of Fieldwork:

1. Ethics or biosafety approvals (see 4.2.1) and/or other contractual requirements (e.g., for externally funded Fieldwork).

2. Any mandatory certifications such as the Working with Children Blue Card, professional licenses, and role-specific qualifications relevant to the work

3. A completed Safety Risk Assessment (SRA)

4. Safe Work Procedures (SWP) including any equipment or processes involved

5. A Communications Plan, including a check-in procedure

6. An Emergency Plan

7. SRA Approval and

8. Safety Briefing documentation

Any changes to approved Fieldwork plans must be discussed with the relevant Senior Leader to determine whether updated documentation or re-approval is required.

4.2.1 Initial Approvals

If ethics or biosafety approvals are required for the proposed Fieldwork, these must be acquired in accordance with the University's Biosafety Procedure, Human Ethics Research Procedure, and Animal Research Ethics Procedure as applicable. Where government permits or other regulatory approvals are required, these must be acquired in accordance with advice from the governing authority.

4.2.2 Safety Risk Assessment (SRA)

The Fieldwork Supervisor is responsible for conducting a Safety Risk Assessment (SRA) using the University's approved Risk management system (SafeTrak), in accordance with the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Risk Management Procedure. The SRA determines the overall Risk level of the proposed Fieldwork and informs the approval process.

The SRA should consider applicable University Policy Instruments and legislative requirements, including but not limited to:

- Biosafety Procedure

- Motor Vehicles and Travel Fatigue Procedure

- Incident Management Procedure

- Substance Management Plan

4.2.3 Risk Factors to Assess

The SRA should identify foreseeable hazards and outline control measures to reduce Risks to an acceptable level. Key considerations include:

- The nature of the Fieldwork Research

- Type of activities to be undertaken

- Location and environmental conditions of the Fieldwork site

- Travel arrangements to and from the site

- Equipment to be used, including first aid kits and communication devices

- Required vaccinations

- Medical conditions or personal circumstances affecting Fieldworker safety (including Reasonable Adjustments or emergency planning)

- Psychosocial hazards, including exposure to traumatic events, remote work and isolation, fatigue, or interpersonal conflict

- Specialised Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), skills and training required for safe participation.

If Fieldwork is conducted under the jurisdiction of a third-party organisation, the SRA must incorporate relevant documentation and safety protocols from that organisation.

The SRA must be reviewed and updated as per the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Risk Management Procedure to ensure the accuracy and the effectiveness of control measures.

4.2.4 Training Requirements

Fieldwork Supervisors must ensure that all Fieldworkers are appropriately trained and competent in any specialised skills required to safely conduct the proposed Fieldwork, as identified in the Safety Risk Assessment (SRA). Training must be completed prior to the commencement of Fieldwork, and records must be maintained in accordance with the University's procedures.

Training requirements may include specialised competencies relevant to the Fieldwork activity, such as remote first aid, vehicle, and equipment operation, working at heights, managing environmental and animal-related Risks, and chemical safety.

4.2.5 Safe Work Procedures (SWP) and Equipment

The Fieldwork Supervisor must ensure that all Safe Work Procedures (SWPs) identified in the Safety Risk Assessment (SRA) are available and accessible for any equipment or processes involved in the proposed Fieldwork. Existing SWPs must be current, approved, and appropriate for the specific activity. Where no SWP exists, the Fieldwork Supervisor is responsible for developing one in consultation with the relevant organisational unit or subject matter experts. New SWPs must be reviewed and approved prior to implementation.

All field equipment must be in good working order prior to use. Equipment must be inspected or serviced in accordance with manufacturer guidelines and the University's maintenance protocols.

4.2.6 Communications Plan

The Fieldwork Supervisor will develop a Communications Plan for all Fieldwork activities, including single-day trips to nearby areas or overnight and extended or remote expeditions. The plan should be tailored to the nature and location of the Fieldwork and must include:

- Travel dates and/or ranges.

- Location details.

- Communication procedures.

- Fieldworkers contact details.

- Any other relevant Information based on the activity and environment.

A check-in procedure for all activities, except low-risk single-day trips. This procedure should clearly outline check-in procedure for all activities, except low-risk single-day trips. This procedure should clearly outline:

- The method of contact (e.g., phone call, email).

- The timing and frequency of check-ins.

- The actions to be taken if contact is not made as scheduled.

- The designated contact person(s).

If movement recorders (e.g. personal locater beacons (PLBs) or satellite communication devices) are used, if utilised, they must be documented in the Communications Plan along with associated contact numbers and protocols.

Fieldworkers in remote working environments must have access to at least two, independent, functioning communications devices. These should enable contact via different systems (e.g., mobile network, radio, satellite), with consideration given to network coverage in the Fieldwork area.

All communication devices should be in working order prior to departure and spare batteries should be available where required. Damaged non-functional devices or must be replaced promptly.

4.2.7 Emergency Plan

The Fieldwork Supervisor must develop an Emergency Plan that outlines the actions to be taken in the event of a serious incident or emergency during Fieldwork. The plan must be tailored to the specific activity and location and should consider any relevant medical Information provided by Fieldworkers.

The Emergency Plan must be enacted immediately in response to serious incidents or when scheduled check-in procedures are not met. Responsibility for initiating the Emergency Plan rests with the Fieldwork Supervisor or Primary Field Officer but may also be undertaken by any

Fieldworker present at the time of the incident.

4.2.8 First Aid Kits

The Fieldwork Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that all Fieldworkers have ready access to appropriate First aid equipment, as identified in the SRA. This equipment must be available either in the Fieldworker's vehicle or on their person, depending on the nature of the activity.

For remote Fieldwork, all vehicles must be equipped with a remote first aid kit that includes an automated external defibrillator (AED) and adequate first aid supplies to treat the number of people that might reasonably be expected to participate in the activity.

First aid kits must be inspected prior to commencement of Fieldwork to confirm they are fully stocked with appropriate items. Any missing, damaged, used, or expired items must be replaced by the relevant organisational unit before the first aid kit can be considered suitable for use.

4.2.9 Approval

The Fieldwork Supervisor is responsible for submitting the Safety Risk Assessment (SRA) via SafeTrak. It should demonstrate that Risks have been identified, assessed, and appropriately controlled in accordance with the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Risk Management Procedure.

The relevant Senior Leader must review the SRA to ensure that the proposed control measures are adequate and that the activity complies with the University's Safety Management System. Fieldwork activities assessed as high-risk may require additional review and escalation for approval as outlined in the procedure.

Once the SRA has been approved, the Fieldwork Supervisor may proceed with conducting the pre-trip safety briefing, as outlined in Section 4.2.10.

4.2.10 Safety Briefing

A pre-trip safety briefing must be conducted by the Fieldwork Supervisor or Primary Field Officer to ensure all Fieldworkers are informed, prepared, and able to contribute to trip planning. Each Fieldworker must be provided with copies of relevant documents including Safe Work Procedures, Communications Plan, and the Emergency Plan. The Fieldwork Supervisor must maintain a record of this briefing and attendance.

Safety briefings must be delivered in-person or via an online video call and should cover the following topics:

- Nature of the tasks and Fieldwork being undertaken/equipment required.

- Itinerary.

- Applicable guidelines and/or Safe Work Procedures for the activity and equipment.

- The Safety Risk Assessment (SRA).

- The Communications Plan.

- The Emergency Plan.

- Incident reporting procedures.

- General safety expectations, including:

    - Acting lawfully and complying with the University's Code of Conduct.

    - Complying with regulatory signage, traffic rules, and instructions from site controllers or transport operators (e.g., bus drivers).

    - Complying with directions from the Fieldwork Supervisor or designated Fieldwork lead.

A printed copy of the SRA, the Emergency Plan and the Communications Plan must be stored and accessible for the group (e.g., in the vehicle).

5 References

Nil.

6 Schedules

This procedure must be read in conjunction with its subordinate schedules as provided in the table below.

7 Procedure Information

Accountable Officer	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Research)
Responsible Officer	Director (Health, Safety and Wellbeing)
Policy Type	University Procedure
Policy Suite	[Work Health and Safety Policy](#)
Subordinate Schedules	
Approved Date	30/3/2026

Effective Date	30/3/2026
Review Date	30/3/2031
Relevant Legislation	*Work Health and Safety Act 2011* Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 Managing the work environment and facilities - Code of Practice 2021 Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards at work - Code of Practice 2022 Rural Plant - Code of Practice 2024
Policy Exceptions	Policy Exceptions Register
Related Policies	Enterprise Risk Management Policy Insurance Policy Privacy Policy Records and Information Management Policy Research Code of Conduct Policy
Related Procedures	Animal Ethics Procedure Biosafety Procedure Emergency Management Procedure Human Research Ethics Procedure Incident Management Procedure Motor Vehicles and Travel Fatigue Procedure Work Health and Safety Risk Management Procedure Working with Children Procedure
Related forms, publications and websites	
Definitions	**Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary** Animal

Any live non-human vertebrate (that is, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, encompassing domestic Animals, purpose-bred Animals, livestock, wildlife) and cephalopods.

Employee

A person employed by the University and whose conditions of employment are covered by the Enterprise Agreement and includes persons employed on a continuing, fixed term or casual basis. Employees also include senior Employees whose conditions of employment are covered by a written agreement or contract with the University.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR)

A Research Doctorate or Research Masters program for which at least two-thirds of the Student load for the program is required as research work.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Student

A Student enrolled in an HDR program.

Information

Any collection of data that is processed, analysed, interpreted, organised, classified or communicated in order to serve a useful purpose, present facts or represent knowledge in any medium or form. This includes presentation in electronic (digital), print, audio, video, image, graphical, cartographic, physical sample, textual or numerical form.

Policy Instrument

A Policy Instrument refers to an instrument that is governed by the Policy framework. These include Policies, Procedures and Schedules.

Procedure

An operational instruction that sets out the process to operationalise a Policy.

Reasonable Adjustment

Measures or actions to assist Students with a Disability or Students who are carers to participate in learning, teaching and Assessment on an equivalent basis to other Students that are determined as

reasonable in accordance with the Disability Standards for Education 2005.

Research

Research is the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include the synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative.

Research Activities

Refers to activities that result in the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes.

Risk

The effect of uncertainty on objectives.

Student

A person who is enrolled in a UniSQ Upskill Course or who is admitted to an Award Program or Non-Award Program offered by the University and is: currently enrolled in one or more Courses or study units; or not currently enrolled but is on an approved Leave of Absence or whose admission has not been cancelled.

University

The term 'University' or 'UniSQ' means the University of Southern Queensland.

University Members

Persons who include: Employees of the University whose conditions of employment are covered by the UniSQ Enterprise Agreement whether full time or fractional, continuing, fixed-term or casual, including senior Employees whose conditions of employment are covered by a written agreement or contract with the University; members of the University Council and University Committees; visiting, honorary and adjunct appointees; volunteers who contribute to University activities or who act on behalf of the University; and individuals who are granted access to University facilities or who are engaged in providing services to the University, such as contractors or

consultants, where applicable.

Definitions that relate to this procedure only

Fieldwork

Fieldwork refers to all off-campus activity conducted outdoors or indoors (including, but not limited to, in remote or isolated areas), either within or outside Australia. These activities may include:

- Research (e.g., collecting geological, agricultural, or biological samples)

- Teaching

- Service or business development.

- Collaborative field activities with other institutions

- Study tours (offshore or offsite)

Examples of fieldwork include:

- Visits to rural or remote areas

- Water, agricultural, surveying, or construction activities

- Camps, excursions, or tours

Fieldwork does not include:

- Professional placements or work experience programs

- Conference attendance or travel

- Professional development leave

- Student exchange programs

- Offshore teaching at other institutions

- Working from home

- Short off-campus trips for meetings, administrative tasks, or

	shopping
	• Scheduled works by staff or contractors on satellite sites.
	Fieldworker
	Any University Member or Student participating in Fieldwork.
	Remote or isolated work
	Remote or isolated work means work that is isolated from the assistance of others because of the location, time, or nature of the work. It often involves long travel times, poor access to resources, or limited communications
Keywords	
Record No	24/679PL