Policy

Off-site Working (including Fieldwork)

Document Control

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Contents

1. Introduction

University policies establish standards and expectations for health and safety across the organisation and set the minimum standards expected.

This policy implements guidance issued by the Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA). It states the requirements that need to be in place within Business Units to enable staff and students to undertake off-site working safely.

Its aim is to ensure Business Units adopt a risk-based approach to the management of health and safety risks arising out of off-site working and sets out reasonably practicable actions to:

- Ensure the University fulfils its statutory and common law duties of care towards its staff and students, and
- Assist in making organisers of, and participants in, University activity that takes place off-site (including fieldwork) sufficiently informed of the health and safety requirements to enable them to plan and participate in the off-site activity safely.

2. Scope

This policy covers the safe and effective management of off-site working across all university activities.

Off-site working covers any work (including fieldwork) carried out by staff or students for the purposes of teaching, research or other activities while representing the institution off site (Off-site working in this context excludes homeworking which is covered by a separate policy relating to agile working). The scope of this policy therefore includes activities as diverse as attendance at conferences or recruitment fairs, undertaking social science interviews or visiting museums as well as activities more traditionally associated with the term fieldwork such as survey/collection work. It applies whether there is a single traveller or large groups undertaking the activity.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University Travel Guidance, Travel and Expenses Policy and the University's insurance requirements - see the Travel Sharepoint site for more information on these.

Each unit, which may be a Faculty, School, Department or Institute, will be referred to as Business Unit (BU) in this policy and should produce its own local arrangements on off-site working (see separate arrangements). Any local arrangements imposed at a local level must meet all requirements set out in this policy. Where there is a discrepancy, the University policy takes precedence.

The Health and Safety Department has established a University Health and Safety Management System (HSMS). The system is detailed in Health and Safety Management Systems Framework (MAN1.1) alongside the University Health and Safety Policy and creates a framework for the organisational management of health and safety at the university. All University policies and guidance are written to account for and implement these arrangements.

3. Policy statement

The University Health and Safety Policy, alongside the Vice-Chancellor's Vision Statement sets out the university's drive and ambition for health and safety, including defining our principal aims for health and safety. These aims are to ensure legal compliance established as a baseline and that everyone strives for best practice.

4. Regulatory Background

- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR) - there is an absolute duty upon employers to undertake a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of work-related risks
- BS 8848: Specification for the provision of visits, fieldwork, expeditions, and adventurous activities outside the United Kingdom (BS 8848:2007+A1:2009) - taken account of for fieldwork elements
- ISO 31030:2021 Travel Risk Management – guide for organisations
- USHA Higher Education Sector Guidance on Health and Safety in Fieldwork and Travel 2018.

5. Definitions

Off-Site Working

Any work carried out off-site (UK based or overseas but excluding homeworking and travelling between UK campuses) by staff or students for the purposes of teaching, research or other activities while representing the University of Nottingham. This is broader than the traditional definition of Fieldwork, see below.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork is any work carried out off campus for educational or research purposes where the University retains the responsibility for the health and safety of the participants.

This includes activities such as museum or industrial visits, social science interviews, surveying or collection work.

Risk Appetite
(In respect of travel University of Nottingham is willing to accept a moderate degree of risk in order to pursue its strategic objectives).

The risk appetite of an organisation is the level of risk that an organisation is willing to accept whilst pursing its objectives and before any specific actions are determined to be necessary in order to reduce the risk.

In the context of travel safety at the university, this is exemplified by travel to high-risk countries and/or to carry out high-risk activity, not being accepted without due justification and robust controls being in place in order to protect the health and safety of the off-site worker(s).

6. Roles and Responsibilities

General roles and responsibilities for health and safety are defined in the University Health and Safety Management System (HSMS) (MAN1.2 - Roles and Responsibilities). Specific responsibilities are detailed below and are considered to be in addition to the above. It is an expectation of university management to understand ownership and accountability. Roles identified below should be reflected in performance reviews to ensure safety alongside scientific endeavours.

University Council will

- Receive annual assurance reports from the Health and Safety Committee on compliance with this policy
- Receive a copy of this policy from the University Health and Safety Committee once approved.

University Executive Board (UEB) will

- Receive a copy of this policy from the University Health and Safety Committee once approved
- Ensure that they are provided with information on the significant risks and non-conformity with this policy
- Seek assurances that all mandatory requirements for off-site working are met
- Seek assurances that all health and safety arrangements for off-site working are adequately resourced
- Seek assurance that identified risk control measures are in place and are being acted upon
- Seek assurances that those with responsibilities for off-site working are adequately trained and competent
- Seek assurance that there are processes for monitoring health and safety performance for off-site working arrangements
- Seek assurance that competent health and safety advice is available to assist in managing and assessing risks from activities requiring off-site working
- Be notified of any significant incident or enforcement action and ensure appropriate action is taken
- Seek assurances that emergency plans are in place for activities that require off-site working
- Receive annual report of audits and/or assurance monitoring from the Health and Safety Department.

The Travel Management Committee (reporting directly to the University Health and Safety Committee) will

- Be the formal oversight and compliance committee for the university and will provide assurance to the University Health and Safety Committee, University Council and University Executive Board (UEB)
- Provide reports to University Council and UEB via the University H&S Committee
- Promote good practice among university staff and students in relation to the management off-site working identified in this policy
- Consider and advise on university policy and arrangements for safe off-site activity

- Be notified of any significant incident or enforcement action and ensure appropriate action is taken
- Ensure there is a plan for off-site working with clear objectives for ensuring continuous improvement and maintenance of good standards
- Communicate and consult on the management processes of all business-related travel, including health and safety elements
- Support the Health and Safety Department in considering any reports relating to compliance. This includes consideration of the detail of serious incidents and reports from any review or audits
- Act upon reports relating to University of Nottingham travel management, making appropriate recommendations to relevant stakeholders
- Review and make recommendations on off-site-related training.

University Health and Safety Department will

- Provide and keep updated, policy, arrangements, and guidance to ensure any statutory requirements for off-site working are met
- Provide competent advice and support on off-site working to the university
- Ensure appropriate oversight for compliance with off-site working Policy and provide reports to University Health and Safety Committee, Travel Management Committee and UEB
- Have oversight of health and safety training required for off-site working and ensure adequacy through routine review
- Monitor compliance with the university's health and safety policy and arrangements associated with Off-Site Working (including Fieldwork, Research, and other activity both domestic and overseas)
- Have oversight of situations where there are non-conformities with off-site working requirements
- Report investigation findings following incidents or non-conformities to the University Health and Safety Committee and UEB
- Lead on and coordinate visits by external agencies, including the Health and Safety Executive
- Receive annual assurance reports from business unit on off-site working
- Monitor business units are adhering to the university policy by carrying out audits (see University Health and Safety Monitoring Policy SAF-MAN3.1).

Head of Business Unit will

- Lead by example to develop and improve safety culture e.g., ensure direct reports are implementing the off-site working risk management arrangements in place
- Ensure that following any significant incident or enforcement action that an appropriate investigation is undertaken, and any findings implemented
- Ensure that local management of off-site working activities meets the requirements as set out in university policy and associated arrangements
- Ensure responsibilities are delegated and understood for conducting and approving off-site working and that those involved have received sufficient training to be competent in doing so
- Ensure off-site working is incorporated as appropriate into strategic decisions
- Review performance of direct reports in terms of off-site working risk management

- Ensure that there is robust record keeping of off-site working documentation in accordance with university policy.

Line Managers will
(Line Manager is taken as the staff member - Supervisor/PI, Trip Leader/Organiser or Fieldwork leader - who has management control and will approve the off-site working (they may or may not be undertaking the off-site working themselves.))

- Comply with all policy, arrangements, and guidance both at a university and local level
- Ensure that, where appropriate, suitable off-site working risk assessments are undertaken with enough advanced notice and recorded in line with university and local arrangements and that staff, students and others are following all safety systems and control measures to allow adequate review
- Ensure the University approvals process has been completed prior to the start of the trip
- Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place and approved before commencing off-site working
- Ensure that local resources are deployed effectively to ensure the off-site working process works effectively
- Ensure preventative measures ensuring the health of participants are considered as part of the off-site working risk assessment process
- Ensure that staff they're responsible for receive relevant training and that this is recorded robustly and that all participants know and understand how to implement the safety measures
- Monitor that off-site working risk assessments have been carried out, recorded, control measures effectively implemented and reviewed (including post trip)
- Ensure that supervisory duties as appropriate are allocated to members of the fieldwork team and ensure that delegated responsibilities are clearly understood
- Ensure that dynamic risk assessments are undertaken where necessary
- Where health and safety is being compromised suspend the activity pending a review of the off-site working risk assessment and involve the Business Unit Health and Safety Coordinator as necessary
- Report any significant failings relating to the off-site working risk assessment process to senior managers and your Business Unit Health and Safety Coordinator
- Ensure that the investigation of any significant accident or incident includes a review of the relevant off-site working risk assessment(s).

Business Unit Health and Safety Coordinators (HSCs) will

- Check that the local management arrangements for off-site working risk assessment meets the requirements of university policy and associated arrangements
- Ensure the local arrangements for off-site working risk assessment are recorded and communicated to relevant members of the Business Unit and those travelling off-site
- Ensure training (and ongoing competence) is in place during the planning, approval and undertaking of off-site working
- Ensure that assessments of high-risk off-site activities are checked by core members of the Travel Management Committee drawing on relevant expertise for peer review
- Monitor the implementation of the off-site working risk assessment process

- Where health and safety are being compromised suspend the work pending a review of the off-site working risk assessment
- Report significant failings relating to the off-site working risk assessment process to senior managers and the Business Unit Safety Committee/other local forum
- Support the review of off-site working risk assessments relating to a significant accident, incident or enforcement action.

The Off-site Worker(s) will
(This may be staff or student, an individual or group undertaking or participating in any off-site activity as defined in Section 5)

- Comply with all policy, arrangements, and guidance both at a University and Business Unit level
- Not commence off-site working without a reviewed and approved off-site working risk assessment in place (where required)
- Understand and comply with any instructions, codes of conduct or safety protocols given to them by the off-site working leader
- Undertake any necessary training as directed by their line manager
- Conduct themselves in a safe manner so as not to harm themselves or other participants.
- Disclose any health condition which may have a bearing on their own safety or that of others on the off-site working activity
- Report any shortcoming or defects in the off-site working risk assessment control measures to the off-site working leader / line manager (and Business Unit HSC if appropriate)
- Be responsible for taking reasonable care in their activities. In practice a lone worker will assume many of the duties of the off-site working leader and must ensure that their work has been agreed with their line manager
- Use any supportive technology that the university promotes to ensure their health and safety during their trip(s).

Occupational Health will

- Undertake a health assessment for off-site workers, if referred by the relevant manager, for issues relating to the off-site activity
- Ensure maintenance of health records / exposure records where relevant to the off-site activity.

7. Risk Assessments

All off-site working activities shall be subject to suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks (see the health and safety management arrangement SAF-MAN-2.3 for the principles of risk assessment and the Travel SharePoint for travel and off-site working risk assessment specifically).

In summary, university requirements for Risk Assessments are:

- Off-site working Risk Assessments must be in place
  - Low Risk - generic travel risk assessment available (see Travel SharePoint link above)

> – Higher Risk – specific travel risk assessment template to be completed with the relevant approval before the off-site activity proceeds. For the current approval process, see Travel SharePoint link above

- They must be valid and proportionate to the risk appetite of the university
- Control measures must be clearly identified
- The significant findings (residual risks) and control measures must be communicated to those at risk
- Off-site working Risk Assessments must be regularly reviewed to ensure validity
- Robust record keeping of off-site working risk assessments and associated procedures and training/competency records must be in place.

The university requires the following key points, relevant to off-site working, to be considered:

- **Location of the off-site work -** Using reliable third-party information (CHUBB World Aware/FCDO) to identify the status of country/specific region (regarding crime, disruptions, civil unrest, terrorist threat, seasonal variations, current political situation, Covid-19 etc)
- **Type of Work/Activity** - Taking account of the purpose of the trip and the type of work/activities being undertaken – (e.g. low-risk conference, remote fieldtrip, controversial research and associations)
- **Individual Risk Level -** Considering the experience, medical and health concerns, and protected characteristics of each individual that are relevant to the off-site activity
- **Insurance** – ensure that suitable insurance is in place.

Risk assessment must clearly identify the hazards, assess the risk of each hazard and record the appropriate control measures to mitigate the risks. Where risks cannot be reduced to an acceptable level, the trip must be changed, cancelled or postponed.

Approval of risk assessments is important to provide assurance to the university that travel and related activity risks are being suitably managed and, to meet the university's risk appetite criteria. The level of approval becomes more senior as the potential hazards increase in severity. For example, for a Severe/High rated country, approval would be required from Line Manager, HoBU and the Registrar and Insurance. In certain circumstances additional approval may be sought from the Travel Management Committee, internal experienced staff or specialist external consultants.

Control measures
(mitigations to reduce risk)

Depending on the level of risk, the traveller/off-site worker, with the relevant approver, must agree and record what control measures are required to sufficiently mitigate the risks. The control measures identified must follow the hierarchy of control, be suitable and sufficient and must aim to keep participants healthy and safe as far as is reasonably practicable. They must be capable of being implemented by all involved.

Additional or specialist controls may include:

- Preparation / Specific training for the off-site worker(s)
- Provision of specific personal security measures
- Protection during certain types of in-country travel

- Specific contingency plans
- Specific emergency procedures
- Monitoring and communication process(es) for travellers / off-site workers during their trip.

8. Training and Competency and Supervision

The university will ensure that all relevant staff who have responsibilities for off-site working, receive the appropriate level of training detailed below.

In addition, off-site workers themselves must be suitably prepared to undertake their off-site work and the associated travel; this may involve appropriate training and/or suitable levels of supervision. The table below defines specific requirements that are in addition to those in the Health and Safety Management System (SAF-MAN-2.5) for Training and Competency and MAN2.1 – Appointment of Safety Critical Roles.

Table 1: Training / Information Requirements for roles in relation to off-site working and travel		
Role	**Expected minimum experience and/or training**	**Supervised / supported by**
External Advisors for Travel Safety	Able to demonstrate relevant experience and competence in providing advice and travel-related services to the University. Evidenced by due diligence checks by UoN Lead appointing the individual or company.	UoN lead appointing the individual or company
University H&S Advisor(s) leading on Travel Safety, Operational Resilience Team & Insurance Team	Able to demonstrate relevant experience and competence in providing advice to UoN stakeholders in relation to travel risk assessment. Evidenced through relevant CPD.	Director/Manager of H&S, Insurance and Operational Resilience
Health & Safety Coordinators	Sufficiently familiar with UoN's travel management processes to support their Business Unit in applying the requirements appropriately. Achieved though UoN training and procedures.	HoBU
Line Manager Supervisor/PI, Trip Leader/Organiser or Fieldwork leader	Able to demonstrate relevant experience and competence in managing off-site work and the associated travel and in carrying suitable and sufficient risk assessments. Evidenced through previous trip experience and/or undertaking relevant training.	HoBU
Off-site worker/traveller (staff/student/other)	**Either** sufficiently experienced to undertake the off-site work and associated travel through local preparation and training as appropriate to the type of work and travel, e.g. for individual research/ business trips. **Or** adequately supervised by experienced staff, e.g. UG fieldwork trip.	Manager / PI / Trip Leader /Trip Organiser

Records of all training and instruction must be kept at university level (by Health and Safety Department and Operational Resilience Team) for the H&S Advisors and at Business Unit level for managers/PIs/trip leaders/organisers and off-site workers.

The university has a duty to ensure off-site workers are competent to carry out their off-site work and where necessary, due to lack of the necessary experience, knowledge or skills, appropriate supervision must be in place. The off-site worker's manager / supervisor is responsible for managing this.

9. Monitoring

To ensure high standards of health and safety are maintained during travel and off-site working, university policy is to carry out monitoring (checks) of activities in accordance with the university's Monitoring of Health and Safety Performance (MAN3.1). Monitoring must be carried out at both Business Unit and University levels, records of monitoring must be kept robustly and the responsible person must ensure that actions are being followed up and completed.

Monitoring at BU level should be carried out using the topic-specific mini-audit for off-site working. There is also a mini-audit question set for management of placements. The results of monitoring and action plans must be reported to the BU senior team and, where relevant the BU Health and Safety Committee.

Monitoring at University level will be led by the Health and Safety Department with reporting submitted to relevant senior managers and the University Health and Safety Committee.

10.   Emergency Procedures and Contingency Plans

These must be in place for all off-site working with the level of detail being proportionate to the type of work and associated travel.

In putting emergency procedures and contingency plans together, consideration must be given to:

- The likely cause of injury or ill-health (including personal illness), the medical services that are likely to be needed to deal with the situation and how they may be accessed or summoned, depending on the severity and location of the off-site worker
- In-country hazards such as flora and fauna (e.g. snake bite), weather climate (e.g. extreme heat) and likelihood of serious incident (e.g. earthquake)
- The need for emergency evacuation (e.g. Medivac) because of civil unrest, terrorism, adverse weather conditions, etc; and how it can be achieved for the location(s) involved.

The details must be recorded, either in the risk assessment or as a specific document. All details must be communicated to the off-site worker unless supervised, in which case the trip leader must have the details. Consideration must be given to how plans are accessed both in-country and by those who may be responding from campus in the event of an incident.

11.   Incident Reporting and Review

The Health and Safety Management System defines the university process for Incident Reporting, Investigation and Trend Analysis (see MAN3.02).

Any incidents that take place on university business off-site must be reported on the university's online system in order that there is a record of what happened, and the investigation undertaken.

In terms of reacting and supporting to serious incidents will be flagged with appropriate senior management.

As part of reviewing off-site working, investigation findings should be reviewed to ensure any learning is taken account of for future off-site activity. This may be within Business Unit or may have wider impact across the institution.

12.   Health and Fitness for off-site working

Each off-site worker must be fit to undertake/participate in the travel and off-site working activity. In particular this is important for longer international trips and where the off-site activity includes significant potential physical and/or mental challenges. Where there are concerns, the individual must be referred to the University's Occupational Health provider by their manager.

13.   Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Health and Safety Department and university health and safety community strongly support the university's commitment to Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). An Equality Impact Assessment on this policy and associated procedures has been carried out and can be viewed on the University of Nottingham EIA SharePoint site. Members of the university must not be disadvantaged in undertaking off-site working unless there is a health and safety risk that cannot be adequately mitigated. This must be recorded within the risk assessment.