Safety and Conduct Plan

This Safety Plan outlines the Code of Conduct, incident reporting, and training access relevant to laboratory and field work. The goal of the plan is to provide Lab Group Leaders, Advisors, Graduate Teaching Assistants, and Professors/Instructors a starting point for conducting research and field experiences in a safe and inclusive manner. The plan is divided into 3 parts: 1) a general Code of Conduct, written mostly for Lab Groups, 2) Field Work Preparation and Safety, 3) List of university-provided training and training available from other sources to inform parts 1 and 2. This Safety and Conduct Plan is a work in progress and should be reviewed and updated annually.

Code of Conduct for INSERT LAB GROUP NAME

The following Code of Conduct was originally written by Dr. Lauren Simkins at the University of Virginia and modified to fit the needs of the University of Alabama Department of Geological Sciences. This is a general code and each lab group that uses it is strongly encouraged to review and make changes prior to adoption and use.

The University of Alabama Department of Geological Sciences includes undergraduate, graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, staff, and faculty. The [INSERT LAB GROUP NAME HERE] operates within the department, is open and inclusive, and functions as a space to respectfully support and encourage members both professionally and personally. This code is not a legal document and does not replace the Department of Geological Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, Graduate School, and university-level policies and directives. Instead, the purpose of this code is to provide guidelines for creating and maintaining a safe, healthy, inclusive, research space, in which each individual member is comfortable and productive. If any of the below elicits confusion or concern, please let me or the Department Chair know.

Inclusivity and Conduct
An inclusive environment is supportive of people regardless of their gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, appearance, race, age, religion, and socioeconomic, educational, and cultural backgrounds. Such an environment is necessary for producing high-quality research, maintaining personal well-being, and developing collaborations. We do not tolerate harassment or discrimination by and/or of members of our group in any form, and I ask all members to conform to the following Code of Conduct:

- All communication should be appropriate for a professional audience, and be considerate of people from diverse backgrounds.
- Be kind to others, and contribute to discussions using a constructive, positive approach.
- Behave professionally.

Harassment and sexist, racist, or exclusionary actions and communication are not appropriate, and participants who are asked to stop these behaviors of any kind are expected to comply immediately, and disruptive and threatening incidents will be reported to the university. Violence of any kind is not permitted, and will result in immediate formal reporting with the university and necessary officials.

- Harassment includes offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, appearance, body size, race, age, religion; sexual images in public spaces; deliberate intimidation; bullying; stalking, following; harassing photography or recording; sustained disruption of discussions; inappropriate physical contact; and unwelcome sexual attention.
- Be mindful of talking over others and be willing to hear the ideas of others. Talking over others is disruptive and leads to unproductive interactions.

To facilitate discussion and ensure that everyone is heard:

- Wait for others to pause or finish their train of thought before you begin speaking.
- Pause long enough between thoughts or explicitly invite others to respond when speaking so that others feel welcome to contribute.

### Harassment and Incident Reporting

Reporting channels and resources:

- **UAct Incident Reporting Policies**
- **Harassment Policy**
- University of Alabama Reporting Channels and Resources Related to Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Assault, or Sexual Violence
- University of Alabama, Division of Student Life Complaint and Appeals Form. This non-anonymous form asks first that efforts are made to have “incidents resolved directly with the staff or department involved”, then requires listing the names of all involved parties, and asks: “Please provide a detailed description of the incident/complaint using specific, concise, and objective language. Please include any prior action taken to date to resolve the complaint. What is the outcome you are requesting?”, and the opportunity to attach supporting documentation.
- **Title IX Compliance**
- **Harassment** Information and FAQ- directs people to Hazing and Harassment Hotline, Director of Equal Opportunity Programs, Office of the Dean of Students, Office of Student
Conduct, and a list of Designated Harassment Resource Persons.

- Hate and Bias Hotline: 205-348-2427, sourced to a third party hotline manager
  - Or report hate or bias incidents online
  - From the hate/bias reporting website: “After processing the report, Navex will provide the information to designated University officials for appropriate action. Reports submitted to Navex will be handled promptly and discreetly.”
- The Department of Geological Sciences is currently in the process of creating an additional resource to anonymously report minor incidents.

**Mental Health**

Graduate school and, generally, scholarly life can be challenging for mental health due to:

- Low pay and quality-of-life issues
- Lack of community, and feeling distanced from family and friends
- Responsibilities at home
- Feelings of isolation and uncertainty in your research
- Uncertainty in your post-higher education career options
- Dealing with ‘negative results’ in your research, that are often more challenging to solve and leave you with little to show relative to time spent
- Burnout by feeling the need to work endlessly, and the subsequent exhaustion

Everyone should take an active approach to the maintenance of their mental health. I want to ensure that you have the time and resources you need to be successful and happy, but often I will not know if you are struggling with mental health or have difficulty coping with any of the above listed issues. I encourage you to talk to me if there is anything placing undue stress or preventing you from performing at your potential and causing you to be unhappy during your time here. The above issues and waning mental health are common in academic and research settings, but that does not mean it is acceptable to, nor should you, suffer and/or doubt yourself through the process.

For information and help managing mental health see the following resources at the University of Alabama:

- Mental Health Screening
- Mental Health Services
- American Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP)
- Counseling Center

**Individual Contributions**

Although we collectively make up the [INSERT LAB GROUP NAME HERE] and share research progress with each other, your project is your own and you should feel ownership of it. In science communication, we often refer to ‘we’ which encompasses all individuals directly involved in the development of the project and those who have made major contributions to the work. You should, however, acknowledge that you are lead on the project. It is professionally courteous to acknowledge others involved in the project (e.g., your adviser :) and, if applicable, co-adviser and other collaborators), and it is professionally required to acknowledge funding
sources (e.g., NSF, department fellowship). Except for in rare circumstances (i.e., you leave the program with uncompleted research and are not actively involved in seeing the project through), you will be listed as first author on all presentations and publications primarily based on your project.

Outputs and Open Science Members of the group should be open about their science and encourage feedback from others. Peer evaluation of products like conference abstracts, manuscripts, and proposals is highly encouraged and, if possible, before sending to me. Authorship on any manuscript or presentation will be openly discussed in group meetings and should, if possible, include everyone who has made a significant contribution to the work. A ‘significant contribution’ can include but is not limited to interpretations of primary data and development of significant ideas presented in the work. It is not expected that all members of the [INSERT LAB GROUP NAME HERE] are included as co-authors on your works; however, it is possible that other researchers in the group will make significant contributions with your knowledge and support, and they should be included as co-authors. This is common for collaborative research communities who support open science.

Author order on manuscripts or presentations should be determined by the relative contributions made by each author rather than, for example, seniority or position. Another way to establish author order could be the timing (first to last) of when collaborators began involvement in the project. Determining author order can be extremely tricky and there are no ‘one-size-fits-all’ guidelines; therefore, I can help you through this process. To help inform Editors, reviewers, and readers of our papers, we will include an author contribution statement for each paper. Research products (e.g., data, maps, code, documents) should be backed up often - I suggest daily - on an off-site, cloud-based storage system, such as OneDrive, Google Drive, or UABox offered to UA students, staff, and faculty. Research products used and described in published manuscripts should be made publicly available to the scientific community either as main-text figures/tables, supplemental files associated with manuscripts, and/or shared via an appropriate online data repository. You should discuss with me if you think there is good reason to keep research products exclusive.

Graduate students and postdocs are required to publish manuscripts in a timely manner. See the DGS Graduate Student Handbook for more details. I also encourage you to discuss this actively with your advisors to maintain a timeline for completion. This is especially true for PhD students, who are required to publish papers as part of their degree qualifications.

Conferences
Undergraduates that have collected sufficient data are encouraged to present their project at a regional or national meeting(s) prior to graduation. Graduate students and postdocs are also strongly encouraged to present their work at one regional, national, or international meeting per year. You are expected to apply for all appropriate travel funding regardless of whether I have travel funds available to you. Prior to submission of an abstract to a conference, the
undergraduate or graduate student must first discuss this with the project leader (lab PI, lab leader, advisor). The department of Geological Sciences and Graduate School have travel funding opportunities, including the A.S. Johnson Travel Fund Scholarship and the Graduate School Research and Travel Grant. See the Travel Fund link on the department's website for further information.

Working Hours
I recognize that many of you have personal responsibilities and obligations in addition to your research and coursework. For both students and postdocs, I appreciate that, at times, it can be difficult to balance those demands, and that a classic 9-to-5 day may not be optimal. Because of this, the exact hours you choose to work is up to you. Being on campus between [INSERT BEST TIMES FOR YOU AS LAB LEADER/PI HERE] most days will, however, help facilitate collaborative working and lead to a more fulfilling research experience.

Undergraduate students should choose working hours between these times as well, and plan work in the lab or along-side other group members on a regular basis. When possible, meetings and events will not be arranged outside these hours to allow participation by all group members. Work at night and on weekends is sometimes necessary especially before deadlines, but will likely lead to a drag on your overall productivity if it is a regular occurrence. If you feel that you are having difficulty maintaining a healthy work-life balance, please let me know.

Holidays
As a student or postdoc in the [INSERT LAB GROUP NAME HERE], you are expected to take at least two weeks of time off per year beyond normal university holidays (e.g. federal holidays, fall/spring/winter breaks). You should take this time to relax, visit family and friends, and generally unwind. Please inform me in advance when you plan to take holidays, if you will not be present at weekly meetings, or are taking planned time away from research.

Meetings
Graduate students and postdocs will have individual meetings with me each week at a scheduled and regular time. I will block an hour so that there is sufficient time, although we likely won't need a whole hour each week. Between my schedule and yours, it will be difficult to reschedule, so we need to stick to our scheduled time to the best of our ability. Undergraduate students will be paired with graduate students who are working on similar/complementary projects for their weekly meetings. These meetings are to be scheduled at a mutually agreeable time. We will have a weekly group meeting at a scheduled and regular time. Everyone involved in research in the [INSERT LAB GROUP NAME HERE] group should attend. Outside of the individual and group meetings, I am happy for anyone to come by my office anytime with questions/concerns/ideas.

Social Activities
Occasionally we will plan activities outside of working hours and off-grounds. All members of the
group will be invited and encouraged to attend. Most social events will be open to family and significant others.

**Individual Development Plans**

Individual development plans are not currently required by the department. However, if properly implemented they are capable of helping students stay on track within their degree programs and toward successful careers. For graduate students and postdocs, a general plan may cover specific obligations (e.g., teaching), research objectives, and professional skills you would like to obtain during your time here. These plans can be targeted at 2+ years for Masters students and 4+ years for PhD students and postdocs. These can also be tailored to help you best prepare for your desired career path, while providing you a breadth of ‘marketable’ skills that can be used in many professions. While I do not currently require this, I do recommend it. If this is of interest, let me know.

**Communication**

Communication should primarily be via email, slack, or in person. You are not expected to answer email after normal working hours and should not expect others to do so. Communication regarding urgent matters should be relayed via email and texting or calling me at any time, especially if you are in the field, travelling, or in a dangerous situation.

**Other guidelines/points**

- You should be proactive about your research and in the pursuit of research and travel funding.
- Let me know if you are lacking resources/experiences that you need to successfully conduct your research and prepare for your future career.
- Graduate students and postdocs need to create and maintain a professional website, develop application materials (e.g., CV, research/teaching statement), and apply to at least two jobs prior to defending.
- By the time you defend, you should understand what the professional market is like and use your time within the group to train for your future career, not just to get the degree.
- Remember that I am an advocate for your success, well-being, and safety while you are here. There are behind the scene ways that I support you, and I am fully invested in your success. Please let me know if you need help beyond what is immediately perceivable.

**[INSERT GROUP NAME] Mentor/Mentee Contract**

There are many examples of “contracts” between advisor/mentor/lab PI and students that define expectations, set guidelines and rules for both student and faculty. These documents are meant to help the student and mentor understand exactly what is expected from each other. Contracts may sound unnecessary and strange; however, removing the ambiguity of the student research experience and setting ground rules early on can greatly improve the experience and the science of the lab group as a whole. See this link to an example *Mentor/Mentee Contract* originally written by Dr. Lauren Simkins at the University of Virginia.
Field Work Preparation, Expectation, and Safety

When conducting field work or leading a class field trip, either for an hour, a few days, weeks, or months, remember that the perspectives and experiences of others will be different than your own.

Preparation and Expectation
Discuss with the students and any TAs what the field work is typically like. Do not assume TAs or students understand, give them examples of what to expect on the trip. Also, do not assume that students know how to behave and carry themselves in the field. Depending on the course or group, the participants may be field novices, in which case careful guidance is needed to ensure a good first (and future) experience. A bad first experience can often color an individuals’ perception of future field excursions. Teaching Assistants should also be instructed on how to behave responsibly in the field, especially since they are taking on a teaching role. Give TAs guidance on the field exercises and goals for the trip, let them know what is expected from them: What are their duties on this field trip? How should they interact with and help students?

Make sure students know what to bring, in detail. This includes but is not limited to: water bottles, clothing, sun protection, notebook/pens, class notes, and etc… If students will be working in groups, let them know their assigned group prior to the trip. This will allow them to prepare and collaborate early on with their peers.

Every field trip should have a printed document explaining the purpose of the trip, the general location (at a minimum), expectations for students, gear/equipment/personal items to bring, safety considerations/hazards at the location(s), and what will be provided by you or the department. It may also be useful to set ground rules in this document as well (quiet hours if overnight, what not to do, policy on alcohol/tobacco/drugs… etc.).

Consider addressing the following questions with TAs and students before you begin any field excursion, regardless if it is ‘local’ or far-traveled. Remember, these are guidelines. Additional assessment may be required, especially for international field trips or field work.

1. Have you visited the area previously?
2. Are you familiar with nearby communities, their history, and cultural perspectives?
3. Does the area have special significance to indigenous populations?
4. Do you have a local collaborator or do you know others who have conducted field work at this site that can ensure you are aware of potential risks?
5. Have all participating students and researchers been trained in the safety procedures?
6. Have you alerted local authorities/managers of your visit, timeline, and goals?
7. Is the area public or private? If public, skip to question #10
8. Have owners or controlling companies provided written permission to visit?
9. Have you notified surrounding property owners that field work will take place?
10. In the case of field work in a wilderness or hard to reach area, have you contacted local park rangers, local law enforcement, or a local contact of your plans?
11. Have you examined posted information on owner/company organizations and affiliations to check for discriminatory/dangerous practices?
12. Can you confirm no team members will be working alone?
13. Is there a method of communication between team members lacking cell service?
14. Will all team members have access to a vehicle?
15. Has a safe meeting point been selected for team members to reach in case of problems?
16. Has the entire team reviewed the plan of action should dangerous situations, people, weather, or wildlife be encountered?

Safety Considerations and Gear
A list of all required safety gear should be made, in detail, prior to the trip. Ensure enough time to acquire the supplies/equipment before each field excursion. The type of safety gear needed depends on the trip and should consider, for example, distance from campus, duration of trip, weather conditions, the needs and abilities of your participants, the type of activity (spelunking, hiking, water sampling, hammer use, etc…).

Recommended Safety Gear that the Trip Leaders should supply
- First aid kits (Yes, multiple, depends on size of group)
  - Consider the contents of your first aid kits carefully.
  - Do you need to supplement the kits with additional supplies?
  - Consider a separate blister kit
  - Make sure the kits are stocked!
- Extra water (2-4 liters in case of emergency, depending on group size)
- Extra sunscreen (make sure it is not scented and is as allergen free as possible)
- Visibility vests
  - Very useful for roadway work
  - Enhances visibility for hunters (deer, turkey, etc. season)
  - Lets local people know that the group is professional
- Hard hats
  - Required for quarries or mine workings
- Safety glasses
  - Required for quarries or mine workings
  - Important for hammer use (rock fragments go farther than you think)
- Gloves
  - Rocks can be sharp
  - Protects against blisters (and spiders, pokey plants, insects, etc.!!)

The Trip Leader should also do the following prior to the trip:
- Distribute list of gear that participants will need to bring
- Have participants sign safety and/or conduct waivers
- Have participants notify you of any medical conditions. For example…
  - Heart conditions, asthma, allergies, daily medications (this is a big one, no matter what is for, this is critical information), mobility differences due to injury or disability… etc.
  - Identity and Inclusivity Considerations

Field work is seen as a ‘rite of passage’ for many field instructors and leaders. However, these experiences often bring to light real and imagined barriers to field work of groups outside the “norm” of the discipline (Morales et al., 2020). Barriers may be financial, physical, cultural, or social, and these barriers may not be shared by all participants. Women, minorities, LGBTQIA+, and other underrepresented groups are the most likely to experience these barriers.


See Demery & Pipkin (2020) https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202008.0021/v1 for a list of suggestions for improving the field experience for these groups.

Other information:
- https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html?fbclid=IwAR3l7tyc4Gcfe1HJfKsKVkOg4KugmrU
- https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2020/03/scientists-push-against-barriers-diversity-field-sciences

**Field Code of Conduct**

Trip leaders should prepare a code of conduct for the field. The University of Alabama has a general [Code of Conduct](#) that covers all university sponsored and related events; however, it is important to formulate a version for field trips and field work. Require acknowledgment from the student that they have read the code (or at the very least acknowledge that they will be held accountable for the items and resulting consequences as per the university’s code of conduct).

- **Reporting Violations**
  - Students report to TA's or instructor if comfortable
    - Depending on severity, talk to students (separately) first? Or the group as a whole?
■ If Title IX or Harassment, the incident may reported (see below)
■ Make sure the TAs are aware that they may be approached by students
  ○ If the student is not comfortable reporting to the TAs or instructor they may use the following resources:
    ■ Contact the Chair of the Department of Geological Sciences
      ● Currently this is Delores Robinson (dmr@ua.edu)
      ● If the incident/complaint does not fall under Title IX, then the Department Chair will forward the matter to the Associate Dean of the college.
■ UAct Incident Reporting Policies
■ Harassment Policy
■ University of Alabama Reporting Channels and Resources Related to Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Assault, or Sexual Violence
■ University of Alabama, Division of Student Life Complaint and Appeals Form.
■ Title IX Compliance
■ Hate and Bias Hotline: 205-348-2427, sourced to a third party hotline manager
  ● Or report hate or bias incidents online

**Training: Internal and External Options**

The following is a list of recommended trainings for instructors, TAs, and even students. This is not a comprehensive list and includes trainings for both lab and field based activities.

- Bystander intervention
  - Many organizations offer this periodically. Check with the following sources:
    - University of Alabama Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (see events)
    - Geological Society of America
    - American Geophysical Union
    - Other professional organizations
  ○ The University of Alabama Safe Zone Ally Training Program
  ○ Title IX training (required by UA for all TA’s and instructors)
  ○ Wilderness first aid training (Highly recommended!)
    - NOLS
    - Red Cross
    - The Department of Geological Sciences can reimburse or pay for this training.
    - Cultural training (outsourced?)

**Reference List**


Example Safety Plan: (Demery & Pipkin, 2021) www.preprints.org/manuscript/202008.0021/
Example Code of Conduct: Basin Research Group (under “Inclusivity and Diversity”) Example Code of Conduct for Lab group: Ice and Ocean Group
Example Mentor/Mentee Contract: Mentor/Mentee Contract by Dr. Lauren Simkins at the University of Virginia

Other websites referenced or used:
- https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html?fbclid=IwAR3l7tyc4Gcfe1HJfKsKvkOg4KuqmrU
- https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2020/03/scientists-push-against-barriers-diversity-field-sciences