

The University of Georgia
Department of Marine Sciences
Lab and Field Safety Plan

Table of Contents:

Statement of Purpose.....1

UGA Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.....2

Lab and Field Code of Conduct.....3

- Expectations
- Unacceptable Behaviors
- How to Report
 - Reporting Procedures/Resources
 - Outline of Disciplinary Action
 - Contact Information

Lab and Field Racial Risk Assessment.....6

Field Pre-Departure Checklist.....7

Lab and Field Agreement.....8

Training Resources.....9

References.....10

Statement of Purpose:

The Marine Sciences Department recognizes that BIPOC faculty, staff, and students are at higher risk than their peers when performing research in the lab and, particularly, in the field. This Safety Plan is designed to address the particular challenges the BIPOC community faces within STEM; however, these policies can/should also be adapted to any at-risk persons within the lab or field. *

*This statement is acting as a placeholder right now and is still a work in progress. We plan to revise the statement, as a POD, at the completion of the semester.

UGA Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy:

(Taken from the EOO UGA Website)

“The University of Georgia (the “University”) is committed to maintaining a fair and respectful environment for living, work, and study. To that end, and in accordance with federal and state law, University System of Georgia (“USG”) policy, and University policy, the University prohibits harassment of or discrimination against any person because of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or national origin, religion, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status by any member of the University Community (as defined below) on campus, in connection with a University program or activity, or in a manner that creates a hostile environment for any member of the University Community. Incidents of harassment and discrimination will be met with appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal or expulsion from the University.

Bias based on the protected categories of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or national origin, religion, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status will not hinder employment, study or institutional services, programs, or activities. Bias factors will not be permitted to have an adverse influence upon decisions regarding students, employees, applicants for admission, applicants for employment, contractors, volunteers, or participants in or users of institutional programs, services, and activities. The University of Georgia will continue in its efforts to maintain an institutional environment free of such bias and restates its policy prohibiting the interference of such bias.

The University follows the USG Sexual Misconduct Policy 6.7 found at:

<https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section6/C2655> and the USG Policy to Prohibit Discrimination & Harassment found at: <https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section6/C2654>. This Policy incorporates by reference the applicable sections of the USG Sexual Misconduct Policy and the USG Policy to Prohibit Discrimination & Harassment. All allegations of discrimination and harassment based on the protected categories other than Sexual Misconduct alleged against a student Respondent(s) will be covered by this Policy together with the USG Sexual Misconduct Policy and the USG Policy to Prohibit Discrimination & Harassment.

Every member of the University Community is expected to uphold this Policy as a matter of mutual respect and fundamental fairness in human relations. Every student of this institution has a responsibility to conduct themselves in accordance with this Policy as a condition of enrollment, and every University employee has an obligation to observe University policies as a term of employment.

In addition, one aspect of performance appraisal for University personnel at all levels of supervision and administration will include the qualitative evaluation of their leadership in implementing this Policy. Merit and productivity, free from prohibited bias, will continue to guide decisions relating to employment and enrollment.

Nothing in this Policy prevents a University Community member from filing a complaint with a state or federal agency or court.”

- [Equal Opportunity Office, University of Georgia](#)

UGA Marine Sciences Lab and Field Code of Conduct

Expectations:

Everyone within the UGA Marine Sciences department has the right to be free from discrimination, unlawful harassment, sexual misconduct, and violence. Title IX is a federal law that gives everyone the right to equal access to education and employment in the absence of harassment and discrimination. Whether you are in the lab or in the field, you are expected to follow the law, as well as specific guidelines laid out in University of Georgia policies and the university-wide Code of Conduct. All faculty, staff, students, and visitors are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that does not infringe upon the rights of others. Violations will result in serious sanctions.

Unacceptable Behaviors:

Discriminatory harassment: Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct based on race, color, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or national origin, religion, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status when it is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to:

1. Unreasonably interfere with the individual's work or educational performance;
2. Create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment; or
3. Unreasonably interfere with or limits one's ability to participate in or benefit from an institutional program or activity.

Discrimination: Decision-making based on race, color, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or national origin, religion, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status. Other examples that may constitute discrimination as defined above include, without limitation:

1. Hiring, termination, promotion, salary actions, and other employment decisions based on protected categories, i.e. race, sex, disability, etc.;
2. Assigning grades, or making academic decisions based on protected categories, such as race, sex, disability, etc.; and/or
3. Refusing acceptance or admission to a person with a disability without consideration of accommodations.

Retaliation is adverse employment, academic or other actions against anyone reporting a violation of this policy (including reporting to any UGA faculty, staff, management team member, police, or Title IX office).

Title IX Violation is the collective term used for incidents involving discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, and/or retaliation.

Power-based personal violence occurs when an individual asserts power, control, or intimidation in order to harm another.

Microaggressions are the “everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their group membership. These messages may invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of targets, marginalize or demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment.” (<https://policy.ku.edu/CLAS/code-of-conduct-CSTEM#Misconduct>)

Definitions for Discriminatory Harrassment and Discrimination are defined by the [UGA EOO](#)

How to Report:

“Any administrator, supervisor, faculty member, or other person in a position of authority who is not a Privileged Resource Employee or Support Resource Employee (a “Responsible Employee”) who knows of, or receives a complaint of, potential discrimination or harassment or potential violation of the Prohibited Consensual Relationship provision (see Section II.B above) must fully report the information or complaint to the EOO promptly. Student employees who serve in a supervisory, advisory, or managerial role are Responsible Employees and in positions of authority for purposes of this Policy (e.g., teaching assistants, residential assistants, student managers, orientation leaders, etc.) and must also promptly report discrimination or harassment to EOO. A complaint or report of discrimination or harassment made to any Responsible Employee generally obligates the University to investigate the incident and take appropriate steps to address the situation. The responsibility to investigate rests with EOO and not with the Responsible Employee who receives the complaint or report. Failure to promptly report may constitute a separate violation of the NDAH Policy and may provide a basis for discipline under this Policy. This provision does not apply to disclosures of sexual misconduct to privileged or confidential resources as identified by the USG Sexual Misconduct Policy or this Policy.

The University encourages any person who feels they have been discriminated against or harassed to promptly report the incident to the EOO or discuss the incident with the confidential resources identified above. Any member of the University Community who observes discrimination or harassment of another person on campus, in connection with a University program or activity, or in a manner that creates a hostile environment for members of the University Community should report the conduct to EOO. No member of the University Community should assume that an official of the University already knows about a particular discriminatory or harassing situation.

If a Complainant reports discrimination or harassment to a Responsible Employee but wants to maintain confidentiality, the Responsible Employee or person in a position of authority must

relay the request for confidentiality when reporting the alleged discrimination or harassment to EOO. The request for confidentiality will be considered but cannot be guaranteed as referenced above.

Complaints and reports of discrimination and harassment should be reported as soon as possible after the incident(s) in order to be most effectively investigated. Complaints may be made in person, in writing (via complaint form, email or otherwise), or over the phone. Under some circumstances, including for complaints made under Title IX, EOO may require a Complainant to submit a complaint in writing. Complaints can also be made anonymously, but this may limit the extent to which the complaint can be investigated. Information on filing complaints can be found at: <https://eoo.uga.edu/eoo-report>.

Where the discrimination or harassment alleged is potentially of a criminal nature, University Community members are encouraged to also contact the University Police Department (for conduct that occurred on campus) or local law enforcement in the relevant jurisdiction (for conduct that occurred off campus). Except as required by the Clery Act for purposes of crime statistics reporting, police will not be notified of a sexual assault without the Complainant/victim's consent unless there is an imminent threat of harm or the incident involves someone under the age of 16. University Community members have the right to simultaneously make a complaint under this Policy and to law enforcement." - UGA EOO Office

Complaint Form Link: <https://eoo.uga.edu/Forms/ndah-complaint-form/>

Include Contact Information for relevant persons:

Department Head

Grad Coordinator

Field Guide/Lead

Lead PI

Lab and Field Racial Risk Assessment:

“Risk assessment is an integral part of geoscience fieldwork. It is imperative that these assessments include race-related risks associated with field trips. The racism and other forms of discrimination experienced by BIPOC students in the field are exacerbated because these spaces are outside of the campus environment, sometimes in a community of people who may or may not have had prior interactions with minoritized students.” - Joshua Anadu, [10 Steps to Protect BIPOC Scholars in the Field](#)

Faculty should consider the experiences of BIPOC students/postdocs/techs when completing the risk assessment. This would require:

- Speaking with colleagues about issues faced in that location in the past
- Researching statistics of racial violence reported at the field sites
- Researching and sharing local customs/jargon/policies etc with all attendees who may be unfamiliar with the area in order to help prepare them for the new environment
- Making sure all team members have some combination of official documentation/visible badges/lab clothing

Lab work:

- A. At UGA in Athens: Athens is a major university with thousands of students, and this population size presents unique risks to BIPOC students in the lab. Some considerations should be made to:
 - a. Working hours of students in the lab: making sure students leaving after dark have a safety plan for getting home safely. This could include prohibiting all solo lab work or only barring solo lab work after dark.
- B. SkIO is an isolated campus on Skidaway Island with typically < 50 people on campus at any given time, but often fewer than 20. Like Athens, the population size requires unique risk assessment:
 - a. Often in tight-knit communities, it can be harder to speak out/report harassment/discrimination. There is inherently less anonymity and a higher chance that the harasser and harassed have the same colleagues/operate in the same social circle. Considerations should be made to ensure all persons who wish to report harassment/discrimination/assault/etc feel comfortable and have the opportunity to do so anonymously. This could look like a designated third-party advocate, not associated with the SkIO field site, that can take the report and elevate it properly.

Field work:

- A. Sapelo Island
 - a. Sapelo Island is a common field site for UGA Marine Science faculty/staff/students to visit and perform field work. All participants must learn about the local Gullah-Geechee Hog Hammock Community. Everyone should be made aware that they are merely visitors and must be respectful of the local culture and the people who call Sapelo Island their home.
- B. Cruises
 - a. Cruises, as a key experience students will share within the Marine Sciences, should be an especially important topic of conversation regarding the risk assessment. Cruises do not allow for easy escape from a potentially harmful or violent situation. An additional plan of action should be in place to address the specific environment of the ship, which can be especially isolating for extended periods of time.

Field Pre-Departure Checklist:

The Field Pre-Departure Checklist will serve as a final safety check before commencing field travel/work. The checklist will include a list of considerations each PI should address, but every PI or lab is free to add more items to the checklist based on experiences at specific sites or additional knowledge:

- **Have you had relevant discussions with the group regarding the Code of Conduct, behavioral expectations, etc?**
- **Do students/techs/etc have all relevant information/plan of action/list of resources readily available before/during/after the field work?**
- **Have all members travelling completed required training?**
- **Has everyone signed the Lab/Field Agreement?**
- **Does everyone know of/have a plan to leave a potentially dangerous situation in the field?**
- **Have you discussed your presence with the local community at the field site that you will be working in the area and that there will be diverse students in your group?**

Lab and Field Agreement:

Entering a new discipline and conducting field/lab work for the first time, or in an unfamiliar location, can be a daunting experience, especially for students who have historically been excluded from and discriminated against in these spaces. It is recommended that groups that conduct research should have a form of lab and field agreement that outlines appropriate code of conduct in these settings, expectations of supervisors and peers, assessment of risks, information about reporting incidents, etc.

Not only would such a document act as a guide for inclusive field behavior but also as an indication for students, post-docs and staff that supervisors and institutions promote diversity, inclusivity and anti-racism. The presence of such documents would imply that the research groups, departments or institutions are open to conversations surrounding diversity and provide a safe space for minority students to conduct research.

Students and staff in the department of Marine Sciences at UGA may conduct research at a variety of locations including, but not limited to: UGA campus, Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, UGA Marine Institute (UGAMI), or remotely on research vessels.

We recommend that each lab institute a field agreement that members must sign before traveling. UGA Field sites, such as UGAMI or SkIO, may also institute a specific agreement that all visitors sign (both UGA associated visitors and external visiting scholars). Currently, these institutions and MARS department are expected to abide by UGA's Code of Conduct but do not have lab or field specific documents.

Examples of such agreements and codes of conducts can be found below:

ISU/UNL Geology Field Camp Agreement: <https://wp.las.iastate.edu/ge-at-camp/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2016/02/Code-of-Conduct-2019.pdf>

Basin Research Group Code of Conduct: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/10y7TP48ik1rcQBPA5Do8mZM7DJ5EbF0hyWP-csgb1QE/edit>

UNOLS shipboard civility training: <https://www.unols.org/shipboard-civility>

The field agreement should be specific to each lab and field site; however, listing the behaviors prohibited by the Code of Conduct and the Repercussions for violating the Code of Conduct should be included in all agreements.

Training Resources:

First year graduate students must take introductory training including lab safety training and ethics training. These training address issues of physical safety in a lab setting and ethical conduct in an academic setting. It is typically the responsibility that individual research advisors discuss training specific to their research as well as expected interactions and behaviors. These UGA wide lab trainings provide an opportunity for training on lab and field inclusivity.

UGA as an institution has a number of DEI trainings presented by the Office of Institutional diversity (https://diversity.uga.edu/faculty_and_staff/individual_opportunities/cdi_program/) such as the certificate program. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee in the department of Marine Sciences participated in the *Diversity at UGA: Beyond the Numbers* and the *Countering Unconscious Bias* training. The Equal Opportunity Office also provides training on UGA's policy on Non-discrimination and Anti-harrassment, Sexual Misconduct, accomodating students with disabilities and making an environment that is inclusive of LGBTQ+ students (<https://eoo.uga.edu/Trainings/>).

Additionally, there are diversity related courses offered through UGA's Professional Education Portal (PEP). Our department's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee has been working on implementing trainings for committee members, as well as all members of the department from the Office of Institutional Diversity. Departmental seminars offer a space for DEI trainings, as well as for representation of BIPOC speakers and scientists.

Bystander intervention is a critical way privileged members of the department can/should protect BIPOC members of the lab/community/etc - especially in the field when an at-risk person's ability to leave a situation is likely compromised or impossible (at-sea for example). The Hollaback organisation suggests the 5D strategy for bystander intervention training, which stands for: direct, distract, delegate, delay, document. We feel that the 5D strategy is especially relevant for fieldwork preparation and can address specific disparities that could arise onboard a research cruise.

We suggest that the department provide specific lab and field training for both faculty and students. All students, but especially BIPOC students need mentors that can provide the necessary support for them to succeed. A part of these lab and field specific trainings should specifically address risks and struggles minority students may experience in the field and how to effectively mentor students through these experiences, even if the faculty themselves do not identify with the experiences (Martinez-Cola, 2020).

References:

The entirety of the Safety Plan was heavily influenced by the readings/interviews/resources provided by the [URGE](#) team (specifically the Session 6 materials) and those found through the [ADVANCEGeo website](#).

The Lab/Field Code of Conduct was based on the The University of Alaska Fairbanks - Toolik Field Station's [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) template developed by Brie Van Dam and the University of Kansas Center for STEM Learning [Code of Conduct](#).

The 5D training material can be found at: <https://www.ihollaback.org>

Other sources that were referenced in the making of this document:

Demery, A.C., Pipkin, M.A. Safe fieldwork strategies for at-risk individuals, their supervisors and institutions. *Nat Ecol Evol* (2020).

Martinez-Cola, Marisela. (2020). Collectors, Nightlights, and Allies, Oh My! White Mentors in the Academy. 10. 25-57.

We would like to thank all those who have dedicated time to crafting/sharing these resources.