Massachusetts URGE Pod Deliverable 6: Safety Plan

Safety action plan for individuals, labs and departments

Below is a summary of general action and discussion points that can be addressed within a group. These points are based on the 'Ten simple rules for building and antiracist lab' by Chaudhary and Berhe (2020).

1) People who are new to discussing race and/or that lack guidance are prone to adopting unintentionally weak policies that can be harmful (Gorski and Erakat, 2019). Therefore, our first action point to creating a safe working environment for everyone in our labs is **self-education**. For a place to become a 'safer' place for BIPOC, all the people that work in this space *must* put in the work to understand the inherent inequalities, injustices, and structural discrimination that operate simultaneously in their environment. This could be in the form of: a) a regular discussion group of scholarly publications on DEI topics, b) talks by invited DEI speakers, c) workshops on developing policies and conduct, d) formalized training sessions such as active bystander training, and e) opportunities for self-reflection and evaluation. It is important to remember that for progress to be made, we must foster a space where we can be 'comfortable to get uncomfortable' to talk about racism and other discrimination, because silence = acceptance. We strongly encourage PI's and group leaders to devote time to these activities during regularly scheduled lab meetings. By having at least one lab meeting per term devoted to one of the above or other DEI activities, lab leaders are signaling to all students that these efforts are serious and genuine, but also will instill a mentality among students, particularly those among the majority group, that these issues need continuous attention and work.

2) **Ask** and discuss with BIPOC students and colleagues **what they need to feel safe on campus**. For people working on campus, this should include: a) providing lists to security so they are aware of students, faculty, and staff who are authorized to working in a particular lab space, particularly during hours outside of the regular work week, b) encourage everyone to carry their university ID cards while on campus c) PIs should aggressively defend any student who is harassed by campus security/police for being in places in which they are rightfully entitled be working or studying.

3) **Provide opportunities for BIPOC that are not related to DEI initiatives**. Invite them to conferences, to give presentations, to co-author papers, to develop research proposals, to co-lead workshops. Read their work, cite their work, and nominate them for awards. Advocate for diverse leadership teams and panels, e.g. if yourself, as a white person, is offered a panel position and the existing team is not very diverse, consider rejecting the offer and suggest qualified BIPOC people instead.

4) **Evaluate mentoring practices for BIPOC students and colleagues**. Because of the dearth of BIPOC mentors in geoscience, mentoring predominantly falls to white folks at present (Martinez-Cola, 2020). This can be isolating for many BIPOC mentees who do not have mentors that look like them or have experience navigating largely white spaces as non-white people. Mentoring practices that recognise that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach and that centre the mentee through multi-mentor systems may be a better approach than more traditional hierarchical systems (Montgomery and Page, 2018). A check-in on how mentoring systems operate in our labs and departments is a *must*. In particular, mentors should: a) familiarize themselves with resources available for mentees, b) specifically affirm and validate their mentee's expertise and achievements, c) listen to and get to know their mentees, and d) use their privilege and social capital to reveal 'unspoken rules' in the academy. Importantly, mentors should be aware of culturally-relevant professional societies and social media communities for BIPOC people, and support BIPOC spaces in absence of white people. With the right resources and support at hand, mentees should feel confident to cultivate their own mentoring networks to suit them.

5) **Intentionally recruit BIPOC people**. Importantly this is second to inclusion and retention policies because workplaces need to be safe for BIPOC people in the first place. Further discussion on this is available in [our Session 5 document](#).

6) **DEI initiatives should be accommodated with sufficient time and resources**. Groups should discuss including DEI work as part of work-load models, dedicated working groups, etc. Leverage existing university DEI office of personnel for training, workshops, and assistance to improve the culture, comfort, and safety surrounding underrepresented minorities in your unit. If the university DEI office is nonexistent or understaffed, ask your chair or unit leader to push the administration for improved DEI resources on campus.

Field safety plan

Fieldwork is an important aspect of geoscience. It is a key experience and learning opportunity for students, and essential for many branches of geoscience research. Fieldwork is commonly an experience that forms unique connections between peers and communities. The unique physical, social, cultural, and potentially isolating aspects of fieldwork mean it can be a barrier to BIPOC (Morales et al., 2020). Below are some specific points that must be considered when planning, leading, teaching, and conducting fieldwork. This includes fieldwork on short (~hours) and long (~weeks, months) timescales, and in local, regional and international expeditions in all types of environments - urban or remote.

1) **Think about the groups of people that will be a part of the fieldwork**. People's minoritized identities (e.g. BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled) may not be 'visible', so do not assume anything about the group. Any aspect of the fieldwork could present challenges or barriers: physically, mentally, emotionally, culturally, socially, and consider how to address these. Recognize that this may also change during fieldwork. There may not be a one-size-fits-all approach. If in doubt, include the people who will be involved in the fieldwork in the planning!

2) **Research the spaces where the fieldwork will be conducted**. What are the historical, cultural, social characteristics of this space, with respect to race, sexuality, gender, ability? Is it physically safe? Could a stressful and challenging physical environment increase tensions within the fieldwork group? Are BIPOC people more likely to be harassed or feel unwelcome in this location (see preprint: Demery and Pipkin '*Safe Fieldwork Strategies for At-Risk Individuals*')? Is homosexuality illegal or discriminated against in the spaces? Is there appropriate infrastructure for disabled people? Can the people involved in the fieldwork afford the equipment needed, any travel required? What visas are required so that everyone can join the fieldwork equally? It is important to broadly consider the concept of 'access' (Morales et al., 2020).

3) **Communicate**. Just as fieldwork requires communication of physical risks and ways to address them (weather, terrain, safety glasses, helmets, boots), the social and cultural aspects also need to be communicated clearly. All fieldwork groups need to be given a **code of conduct** that clearly expresses that discrimination based on race, sexuality, gender, ablility is absolutely not tolerated and will be dealt with seriously. Fieldwork groups need to acknowledge that others on the field trip may have different life experiences and therefore will perceive spaces differently (*see A Commitment to Respect agreement below*). Discuss and prepare the fieldworkers for the social and cultural spaces they will inhabit during the field trip. **Clearly outline the procedures for an 'out' in the field - how can fieldworkers remove themselves from harmful situations to a safe place?** Communicate clearly that personal safety (physical, emotional, and cultural) is the priority, and leaving an unsafe situation is more important than finishing the fieldwork. Fieldworkers need to be aware that there are problematic and harmful stereotypes of what a geoscientist in the field looks like; a white person who likes camping and climbing, has outdoor equipment and skills, is upper-middle class, and drinks alcohol. Fieldworkers do not need to be any of these things to be successful fieldworkers. Fieldworkers, especially students or those early in their career, should also know that it is ok to not enjoy fieldwork or the outdoors. Geoscience is a hugely broad field!

4) **Provide and communicate resources**. What should fieldworkers do if they are uncomfortable or harassed in the field? Who should they speak to? What are the safety measures and reporting structures in place to take them to safety if they are not? What additional training do fieldworkers need to feel confident and able in the field e.g. outdoor skills, first aid training, bystander intervention, anti-discrimination, leadership? Are there any financial support structures and/or any grants that could be applied for? Would fieldwork be more safe if official-looking university branded vehicles used or apparel worn? See also [our Session 2 document](#) detailing complaints and reporting systems.

5) **Check in with your students/peers/colleagues during and post fieldwork**. Fieldwork is a dynamic situation. Think of a way to allow fieldworkers to reflect on their experiences - informally or formally - of fieldwork. Use this to improve things in real time, and also evaluate want can be done better next time.

6) **Broaden the scope of what fieldwork is**. If places are not safe for *all* fieldworkers, then reconsider whether that is an appropriate place to conduct fieldwork at all. If necessary, consider fieldwork that is closer to home, or that is punctuated in that it takes place over a longer time rather than one intensive chunk. Virtual fieldwork is an increasingly viable option that has shown a lot of promise even before the current pandemic. A good example of this, lead by Prof Chris Jackson, is the [termination of a long-standing field trip](#) for Imperial College of London students to Oman because of the country's laws on homosexuality.

Code of conduct

This is written as a general behavioural code of conduct with text that is largely derived from Prof Chris Jackson's previous Basin Research Group [document](#) at Imperial College. It is general so should apply to all working environments (classroom, laboratory, field, online, etc) but note that each specific working environment will have its own unique requirements.

Inclusivity and diversity
We value the participation of every member of our community and want to ensure everyone has an enjoyable and fulfilling experience, both professionally and personally. Accordingly, all members of the XXXX group are expected to show respect and courtesy to others at all times. We create our culture and our culture is inclusive.

Enjoyable, high-quality research can only be conducted when you feel safe, secure, and supported. All group members are thus dedicated to a harassment-free experience for everyone, regardless of gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age, and/or religion. We do not tolerate harassment by and/or of members of our group in any form, and we ask all members of the community to conform to the following Code of Conduct:

- All communication, be it online or in person, should be appropriate for a professional audience, and be considerate of people from different cultural backgrounds. Sexual language and imagery is not appropriate at any time.
- Be kind to others and do not insult or put down other group members.
- Behave professionally. Remember that harassment and sexist, racist, or exclusionary jokes are not appropriate.
- Harassment includes offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of discussions, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.
- Participants asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately.
- Contribute to discussions in meetings with a constructive, positive approach
- Be mindful of talking over others when discussing in groups, and be willing to hear out the ideas of others.

In addition to making group members feel safe and secure, diversity and inclusivity has numerous benefits to us all. Put simply, the greater the mix of people in our group, the greater the mix of skills, experiences, perspectives, and

ideas we can collectively draw on. But the benefits of diversity and equality cannot be fully achieved without creating an inclusive environment.

The Code of Conduct will be discussed with people who violate these rules, no matter how much they contribute to the group, or how specialised or needed their skillset is. If inappropriate behaviour persists after this initial discussion, formal processes, in line with university policies. To report an issue, please contact XXXXX; all communication will be treated as confidential. If you do not feel comfortable contacting XXXX directly, please feel free to contact XXXXX. See our Session 2 document for complaints and reporting.

Work in progress

- Create a brief handbook that breaks down suggestions for navigating the department and university for new students and staff.

Resources

Map of Countries that Criminalise LGBT People:
https://www.humandignitytrust.org/lgbt-the-law/map-of-criminalisation/

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'In the field' https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html