

Deliverable - Safety Plan

Education is essential but action is also imperative for achieving the objectives of URGE. Therefore, each URGE topic is paired with deliverables for individual pods to draft and share. This deliverable is a safety plan, whether you work in a laboratory or in remote field settings.

Consider spaces in your organization as well as in the broader geosciences that have barriers to access for people of color. Much of the attention on this topic has been regarding field work but this also applies to spaces closer to home, e.g. a Black graduate student walking home late from lab work may be more likely to be stopped and questioned by police. Consider that Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other people of color will face different challenges from one another.

Suggested discussion questions:

- **Where is your work done? Are these spaces uncomfortable or unsafe for people of color?**
- **What training does your organization require or offer? How often? Do you find this training effective? What would you introduce to make it more effective?**

Deliverable: Develop and publish a safety plan specific to your pod (lab, university, organization).

- This safety plan should include a code of conduct as well as a process for reporting violations, as covered in your Complaints and Reporting Policy deliverable from Session 2.
 - Outline training resources that are available and requirements for antidiscrimination, bystander intervention, and de-escalation training.
- Example Safety Plan: (Demery & Pipkin, 2021) www.preprints.org/manuscript/202008.0021
 - Example Code of Conduct: [Basin Research Group \(under “Inclusivity and Diversity”\)](#)
 - More Resources: https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html

Pods should upload their safety plans to the URGE website by 4/16/21. We also encourage pods to post on their organization’s website and share over social media (#URGEoscience & tag @URGEoscience). Sharing deliverables will propagate ideas, foster discussion, and ensure Accountability.

1 R. E. Bernard, E. H. G. Cooperdock, No progress on diversity in 40 years. Nature Publishing Group. 11, 1–5 (2018).

2 <https://notimeforsilence.org/>

3 <https://www.change.org/p/geoscientists-call-for-a-robust-anti-racism-plan-for-the-geosciences>

4 www.sciencefriday.com/segments/making-outdoors-inclusive

5J. Anadu, H. Ali, C. Jackson, Ten steps to protect BIPOC scholars in the field, Eos, 101, DOI: 10.1029/2020EO150525 (2020).

6A.J.C. Demery, M.A. Pipkin, Safe fieldwork strategies for at-risk individuals, their supervisors and institutions. *Nat Ecol Evol*, (2021).

URGE Geo Session 6 Deliverable
Texas A&M University Geology & Geophysics Pod

Pre-plan drafting discussion:

- **Where is your work done? Are these spaces uncomfortable or unsafe for people of color?**

We discussed how so many geographic locations generate uncomfortable feelings and actual danger for BIPOC, LGBT+ individuals (such as Louisiana; rural Montana).

However we also discussed the situation where white students are doing field work in South America, where THEY are actually the minority, and feel comparable troubles to BIPOC/LGBTQ+ individuals.

- **What training does your organization require or offer? How often? Do you find this training effective? What would you introduce to make it more effective?**

Very little training - the full extent is maybe one class dedicated to required equipment, field conditions, and safely plan in one 45min-1hour class weeks before the trip. No formal training and no formal plan.

Our pod agreed that our safety plans for general department conduct, the laboratory, and the field should list what our pod members agree is important to include. The goal is to share these informal lists, ideas, and suggestions with the other pods in our college before drafting a formal document.

G&G Department Safety Plan

Code of Conduct

An effective code of conduct (per ADVANCEGeo

https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/codes_conduct.html):

- Identifies and defines appropriate and inappropriate behaviors
- Goes beyond ethical treatment of data to include the treatment of people
- Clearly specifies reporting and investigative procedures
- Outlines disciplinary action for conduct violations
- Includes protection against retaliation
- Has built in mechanism for continued re-evaluation of its effectiveness and for its revision

Example Plan (From Imperial College, UK):

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.

Enforcement of Code of Conduct: The code of conduct should include language for how to hold members of the department (faculty, staff, and students) accountable, and how to handle violators of the code of conduct at various levels- including who they should report to. Ex: the department head should be the primary enforcer(?)

Example (Imperial College, UK): Chris will discuss the Code of Conduct with lab members who violate these rules, no matter how much they contribute to the BRG, or how specialised or needed their skill set. If inappropriate behaviour persists after this initial discussion, formal processes, in line with Imperial College's work practise policies, will commence. To report an issue, please contact Chris Jackson; all communication will be treated as confidential. If you do not feel comfortable contacting Chris directly, please feel free to contact a member of the Postgraduate Research Committee (Saskia Goes, Sam Krevor, Rebecca Bell or Stephen Neethling).

Complaints and Reporting Policies- what our pod knows so far:

- The Department has **no** set plan for reporting complaints/incidents
 - Currently Dr. Ishara Casellas Connors is the interim ombudsperson for the college for reporting any incidents
 - For grad students there are also other ombuds officers students can contact and report things:
 - <https://grad.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Ombudsperson#>
 - An ombuds officer cannot:
 - Advocate for the University or the student, or any particular point of view.
 - Make or change University decisions, rules, or policies.
 - Set aside a decision or supersede the authority of another University official.

- Participate in formal grievance procedures.
- Provide legal advice.
- Conduct formal investigations.
- Debbie Thomas offered to give a presentation to COG graduate students on existing reporting structures at TAMU and how the reporting process works, who gets involved
 - This presentation was scheduled for some date in Fall 2020 but was cancelled due to lack of interest (only 2 or 3 grad students registered to attend)
- TAMU Sexual Harrassment/Sexual Violence Reporting: <https://stepinstandup.tamu.edu/>
- Other race/safety related instances - are there sites to report this? We would like to see links to these in every "field trip handout" so that if a student experiences such instances on a trip, they can report. <https://tellsomebody.tamu.edu>
- TAMU Stop Hate: <https://stophate.tamu.edu/>

Training Resources

- Bystander Intervention Training (specific to interpersonal violence- not sure if this covers racial aggressions): <https://greendot.tamu.edu/>

Lab Safety Plan (for laboratories in our department)

Ensuring General sense of safety and well-being

- Maybe each lab is required to meet once a year for grad students, undergrads, and PIs to have a discussion about safety and inclusion so they can create a plan together
- Need better protocols around being alone in a room with someone (leaving the door open for example)
 - And a reporting system or protocol in case a student doesn't feel comfortable working alone with another lab member

Enforcing Laboratory Safety (acids, dangerous equipment etc)

- Maybe the field work coordinator (see field safety plan section) also needs to serve the role of ensuring lab safety and enforcing lab safety training
 - PIs write their own lab safety protocols but the coordinator would review them- make sure things are not missing, make suggestions for improvements
 - Issues with faculty being the enforcers of the required university safety training → sometimes they don't follow through, emails get lost
 - Could also do random assessments (unannounced) to check if students are working safely (beyond the standard fume hood inspections etc)
 - And they send reports to PIs
 - Similar to EHS review they tell PIs to shutdown until they review safety protocols again with their students

- If a PI receives enough citations maybe then it goes up to the department head → talk to the PI

Field Work Safety Plan

Our pod would like to note that while planning for field work can be a very challenging/involved process it is worth it. It would be a disservice to students to take away field trips or field work because faculty or administrators do not want to take on the risks/challenges of planning properly. We do not need to shy away from field work. There are simple steps we can take to make it safer and more inclusive.

Need for a Field Trip Coordinator:

- **Rationale:** there's a lack of resources for field trip/field work planning for faculty → maybe we need another staff member dedicated to helping faculty plan for field work (safety, codes of conduct, training, and all other logistics) similar to the university resources faculty get for writing grants.>>**A Field Trip coordinator** - an official staff person whose only task was making sure everything was in order before any and every field trip.
- **Who should hold this position: Paid Staff Member**
 - **Why:** concerned this field trip coordinator position will be given to a grad student (potentially without pay, or power to enforce rules/procedures put in place) → this has not worked well for similar roles in the past. Better if this is not a student or faculty service role but a paid staff member position.
 - Why can a student not hold this role: need to make a list
- **Levels to this recommendation:**
 - If we can't have a Field Trip Coordinator staff member position then we need at least:
 - 2nd level recommendation
 - 3rd level recommendation
- **Incentives to establishing this position and/or creating a more formal, well designed support and organization structure for field work planning:**
 - Increases retention and recruitment of students by demonstrating a commitment to safety and equity and inclusion in the field
 - Could help advance the stature of the department in the geosciences community if equitable, safe, and well-planned field experiences are made a facet of our program

General Code of Conduct

Per ADVANCEGeo field codes of conduct should include the following (https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html#codes):

- Protection for targets: protect their safety, allow them to continue their fieldwork with minimal disruption, protect privacy as much as possible.

- Always have an "out": all field workers must have access to transportation and communication devices whenever possible, with no gatekeepers.
- Always have multiple resources/avenues to contact help available for all involved and witnesses
 - Multiple people with the power to communicate with students and make decisions to protect individuals
- Encourage bystander intervention and reporting
- Mandatory training for faculty leaders to educate about various safety and social concerns of underrepresented students
- Transparency of Code of Conduct, safety plan, and procedure for documentation to ensure that all students, TA's and faculty are aware and prepared.

General Protocols to ensure inclusivity and comfort

- **Our top recommendation to the department is to formalize and standardize these general safety measures for all field work and field trips executed by faculty and student members of our department**
 - **Rationale:** If safety is discussed thoroughly beforehand, it ensures the comfort of all people involved, especially students who may be new to the field, for the duration of the trip
- Required First Aid and Wilderness Safety Training
 - for all participants not just faculty/ grad student TAs
- Bathroom break plan
 - Training on how to go to the bathroom in the field and plans for menstruating in the field
- Driving
 - Driver training/screening before letting TAs drive in remote, potentially treacherous locations
 - Policy: If you're not comfortable driving (for any reason- size of car, road conditions, lack of experience driving) please don't drive
 - Maybe the department could offer backroads driver training (through an accredited driving course for example) but at a discount to grad students
 - Including basics of towing a trailer, driving a large vehicle
- Multi-mentor approach to teaching/training/supervision in the field so that grad student TAs are able to help undergraduate students without having to go through a faculty member or having to disclose information to more than one person
 - To maintain confidentiality of sensitive issues- again, ensures people's comfort and can empower them to speak up when they need help
- Smaller groups to promote social bonding so that people feel comfortable talking to their peers/TA if they are having an issue whether it be medical, emotional etc

Racial Risk Assessment of Sites

- Include risks to BIPOC, LGBTQ+, women and what the response plan is (how you will react, what you will say, how you will handle any external folks/threats involved)

Pre-Departure Checklist

- Make sure all students know safety procedures for field trips
- Establish multiple designated contacts (faculty, TAs, and/or small groups) to discuss issues that may arise in the field - so when in the field every student knows who they can safely approach.
- Worst case scenario plans for emergencies in the field
- Equipment training or loan system (for students without camping/field/hiking equipment, and optional training on how they are used (students enter the field with a new tent and no idea how to pitch it)).

Procedures for Documenting Incidents

- Within the Department, no reporting structure in place.
- <https://stophate.tamu.edu> for University Wide Reporting System with links to resources and forms for reporting instances.
- For non-hate/bias-based instances use this link: <https://tellsomebody.tamu.edu>
- We suggest: implementing a form for reporting either anonymous/ anonymous complaints/ issues during and after field trips, with the idea that these can be solved (hopefully) before the end of the trip.
 - After the trip: Create a report summarizing issues faced by students and how those can be prevented on future trips.

Relevant Training

- First Aid Training - Mandatory, as part of TA training; Funded by College. Must undergo renewal training every 2-4 years (?)
- Other Suggested trainings that the department does not currently require or offer:
 - Risk Mitigation Preparedness Training: Begin to think about and discuss potential dangerous or harmful situations that could occur in the field. The goal would be that everyone is on the same page for situations.
 - Cultural awareness training - hopefully someone with experience of the area that will be visited can provide background information for what students should expect when they arrive. This could be faculty or graduate students with experience in the region.
 - Procedural and safety training for drivers
 - Wilderness training (avoid these plants, don't use the restroom near these bushes, how to ID and remove ticks, how to avoid rolling your ankles, hiking tips etc)