

## OBJECTIVE

The guideline is designed to help RMIT staff plan and undertake fieldwork safely in line with RMIT risk management procedures and government COVID safe requirements.

The advice should be used in conjunction with RMIT [COVIDSafe Plan](#).

## BACKGROUND

Fieldwork can present a range of hazards to participants and is often undertaken in environments where emergency services are not easily available.

The purpose of this guidance material is to ensure potential hazards associated with fieldwork are identified and controlled as far as reasonably practicable; and appropriate communication and emergency and COVID Safe procedures are established.

## SCOPE

Fieldwork is any work, teaching or research activity undertaken off campus to acquire data or information under the authorisation of RMIT.

Fieldwork does not include conferences, meetings, distance education, student exchange programmes, offshore teaching, sabbaticals, visits to other institutions or training courses.

NOTE – Referenced legislation applies to Australian jurisdictions only. RMIT campuses in other jurisdiction must refer to local applicable legislation, where available.

## WHAT MUST GO RIGHT?

The expected outcomes – known as ‘what must go right’ – will be that:

- Staff and students complete the required Field Trip risk assessment and apply any control measures
- Staff and students will follow and apply the RMIT COVIDSafe and associated guidelines
- Staff and students complete any applicable COVIDSafe training

## PROCEDURE

### 1. Implementation

#### *Risk Assessment*

All fieldwork must be planned and include assessment and control of the potential risks.

It is essential to conduct a risk assessment for all fieldwork and off-campus activities in order to identify associated hazards or risks and put in place appropriate controls to mitigate or reduce the risks.

The risk assessment will inform the planning of the fieldwork and help decide what resources, staff and equipment will be required. Management of risk should follow the following four-step process.

- Identifying the hazards associated with the fieldwork
- Assessing the likelihood and consequences of the risks
- Controlling the risks
- Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the risk control measures and improving them as required.

Risk assessments must be reviewed by all staff that are responsible for the fieldwork and their supervisors/managers as well as local health and safety representatives (HSR) and technical staff or equivalent that support the planned teaching and learning or research activity. HSR contact list can be found [here](#).

Also, all fieldwork risk assessments must be authorised by a supervisor (Operational Leader) of the fieldwork. If the residual risk is medium or greater, the activity is not to proceed until higher level controls are determined and implemented to reduce the risk. Authorisation requirements may change based on level of risk. Any Residual Risk equal or greater than High must be escalated to the Associate Dean, DVC or CIMT for discussion and signoff before the fieldwork can be undertaken.

A risk assessment must be shared with all participants up on completion and stored by the fieldwork organiser/s as a record.

Refer to RMIT [Operational Risks Management processes](#) for further details.

### *Transportation*

Various modes of transportation such as vehicles, boats or airplanes may be used for fieldwork. To ensure the safety of participants, it is important for field trip organisers to undertake essential safety requirements.

### *Vehicles*

This section is envisaged for all types of vehicles, consider the type and number of vehicles appropriate for the field trip.

- Only licensed and appropriately trained drivers should be in charge of field vehicles.
- Only registered and roadworthy vehicles are to be used for field trips.
- Vehicles should be well maintained according to the manufacturer's specifications.
- All appropriate insurances should be in place and cover all people and vehicles.
- Vehicles should be equipped with adequate spare parts and tools as per the area and length of trip.

### *Air Travel*

Air travel should be planned in line with RMIT's [Travel Policy](#).

### *Boats*

- Only licensed and appropriately trained personnel should be in charge of boats.
- Boats must be used in accordance with the relevant maritime legislation.
- Only boats designed and equipped for the purpose of the field may be taken out to the open sea.

### *COVID Safe Requirements*

In addition to other safety requirements outlined in this guidance, the controls required to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 must be outlined and implemented in accordance with RMIT's [COVIDSafe Plan](#) and government requirements for all fieldwork.

At minimum, this would include the following COVIDSafe requirements and specific controls put in place to address them.

- Keeping records of who participated in the fieldwork activity as per school or college procedures and RMIT [Privacy Policy](#).
- Completing daily health declaration

- Completing RMIT COVIDSafe training
- Physical distancing
- Hand hygiene
- Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces
- Ventilation in enclosed environments
- Face covering
- Emergency procedures for circumstances that will require the quarantine or isolation of participants (Although not mandatory, encourage participants to use COVID Safe app for contact tracing purposes).

### *COVID Safe Travel*

When planning fieldwork, there are various government requirements and guidelines for COVID-19 that must be considered regarding travel to regional areas and use of transportation.

If planning fieldwork interstate, have a contingency plan in case state borders close quickly that includes when and how you will return to Victoria.

Before you go

- Don't travel if you are unwell, isolating or in quarantine (stay at home)
- Check the restrictions
- Book ahead (staff should have a backup plan for an outbreak as conditions may change very quickly).

When using shared vehicles for fieldtrips, it is important to consider the following COVIDSafe measures.

- If using an RMIT Fleet vehicle, adhere to requirements detailed in the RMIT COVIDSafe Plan as it relates to fleet vehicle use.
- Limiting maximum number of people when using shared cars.
- Ensuring availability of disinfectant sprays and wipes in vehicles.
- Ensuring availability of tissues for sneezing/coughs.
- Keeping windows open for ventilation where possible.
- Ensuring availability of rubbish bags for disposal of contaminated/used tissues in vehicles.
- Using car ventilation system to draw in outside air (not on recycle).
- Advise participants to use masks when in vehicles.

It is also advisable to consider the following COVIDSafe measures when using buses for field trips.

- Ensuring availability of hand sanitizer on entry to bus.
- Assigning separate entry and exits points on the bus if possible.
- If all seats are filled, then masks are recommended.
- Allocate participants the same seat throughout the entire trip.
- Advising participants to wear a washable mask during long bus rides
- Minimise movement inside the bus during travel.
- Keeping windows open for ventilation where possible.
- Ensure all participants leave the bus during breaks and keep doors open if possible.
- Advise participants to keep a rubbish with them and dispose of it on arrival at site or on return home.
- Cleaning all handrails and commonly touched areas after each use of the bus.

Additional information regarding travel can be found at <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-travel-victoria#while-you're-away>

### *Accommodation*

For bedroom facilities the following COVIDSafe measures may be considered.

- Using single rooms where possible
- Shared rooms only if the participants normally live together in the same house
- Dormitory accommodation if the space between beds is 1.5 meters or above
- Using separate tents where possible, if not sharing tents can be used with 1.5 meters spacing between participants
- Putting students in set groups (bubbles) for shared accommodating, activities and travel to allow contact tracing where possible.

Additional measures may be considered for bathroom facilities.

- Individual ensuite is best option where possible and/if budget allows.
- Restricting shared personal toiletries
- Putting in place regular cleaning schedules and disinfectant sprays and wipes in each bathroom
- Advising participants to wear thongs/flipflops in showers to prevent open wound infection.

#### *Instrumentation and Equipment*

- Limit the amount of equipment taken on the fieldtrip
- Separate equipment for each participant where possible
- Separate equipment setup by a minimum of 1.5 meters where possible – if not then mandate the use of masks
- Put in place cleaning schedules if equipment is to be shared
- Use disposable gloves where possible to minimise contamination
- Ensure availability of disinfectants sprays, wipes and cleaning instructions

#### *Food Safety*

- Encourage use of personal cutlery or crockery, if not available use disposable cutlery
- Avoid shared food platters or utensils
- Advise all participants to follow good hygiene

#### *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*

If PPE is required for the activity under normal circumstances, then the same should be applied during the field trip.

#### *Personal Resources*

- Advise participants to use their own stationery and computers if required for the activity.
- Encourage participants to use their own hand sanitisers and wipes.
- Encourage participants to carry and use washable face masks as per public health directions.
- Advising participants to use their own clothing.

#### *COVID-19 Emergency Plan*

Fieldwork planning and risk assessment must include emergency measures to be taken if a participant becomes known to have COVID-19 or is suspected of being in contact with a confirmed case or feels unwell during a trip as per RMIT [COVIDSafe Plan](#).

Where there is a confirmed or suspected case or malaise, the field work organiser should immediately:

- Advise the Director HSW or Security.
- Commence procedures to separate known/suspected case from others.

- Send participants home for isolation or quarantining where possible; and
- Inform DHHS and follow the DHHS requirements for confirmed cases of COVID

Quarantine and isolation capabilities may depend on field work location. Fieldwork organisers should aim to quarantine participants in their homes as far as practicable. The COVID-19 emergency management plan should cover all such risks and associated control measures as per RMIT COVIDSafe Plan and government requirements.

### *Third Party*

Fieldwork involving third party partners would require a due-diligence check to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of participants.

Fieldwork organisers must check availability and adequacy of the third-party safety procedures and systems.

## 2. Supporting Documents

Lists the supporting and related Processes and Guidance Material, Legislative references, Australian and International Standards etc. that may be useful references for process users

- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [Victorian Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- [Safe Work Australia](#)