

URGEO

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



URGE Session 6 Deliverable: Safety Plan

This is what was compiled by the University of Utah College of Mines and Earth Science (CMES) Megapod (Pods 1-2-3) toward a Safety Plan.

This safety plan applies to several commonly occupied spaces, including the lab, field, lab/research group interactions, classrooms, and University-associated events. Note that this extends to social interactions in all of these spaces.

SUMMARY: CURRENT POLICIES

There are five main policies currently in place at the Geology and Geophysics (GEO) department and/or CMES level that address safety and code of conduct:

- 1) [Professional Ethics Policy](#) (est. 2018)
- 2) [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Statement](#) (est. 2020)
- 3) [Safety Plans](#), which include lab and field safety separately (est. 2020)
- 4) [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) (“Student Code”)
- 5) Individual lab/research group code of conduct agreements, which are elective.

Health and safety – in research labs, fieldwork, and classrooms – is a primary concern and priority for our College. This focus on safety is represented by numerous waivers, safety check templates, and published, faculty-approved policies and procedures, particularly in GEO. These policies aim to protect physical safety and set clear expectations for behavior and consequences for harassment. However, there is not enough attention to inclusivity and specific safety concerns likely to be faced by minoritized students and faculty. While the policies encourage diversity and inclusion, they lack an anti-racist approach. The current field safety plan emphasizes physical safety, but does not include specific inclusivity concerns or race/gender/other safety issues. It does not account for the risk posed by people, within or outside the field group, in the risk assessment. Setting safe emotional spaces and mitigating psychological trauma risks are not included. There are also currently no known consequences in place for violating safety policies.

Reporting violations

All racist and bias incidents can be reported directly U of Utah’s Racist and Bias Incident Response Team at <https://diversity.utah.edu/initiatives/rbirt/>.



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Discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct can be reported through the Office of Equal Opportunity at <https://oeo.utah.edu/>.

Trainings

All trainings are completed on a voluntary basis. Many training resources are available through the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion office at <https://diversity.utah.edu/>. The Office of Inclusive Excellence at <https://inclusive-excellence.utah.edu/> provides a wealth of diversity and inclusion resources and training opportunities for faculty, staff, and students, with a strong current focus on macroaggression training and awareness. The College of Mines and Earth Sciences has offered and funded several voluntary training opportunities, such as an Unconscious Bias workshop and a Whiteness at Work online training. GEO Faculty training participation and reviews are tracked on a google spreadsheet by the Diversity and Climate Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend improving the following:

- 1) Propagate the following “how to report violations” streamlined text through all of our policies, make it visible to our faculty and students, and revisit it regularly.

“How to report violations

All racist and bias incidents can be reported directly U of Utah’s Racist and Bias Incident Response Team at <https://diversity.utah.edu/initiatives/rbirt/>.

Discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct can be reported through the Office of Equal Opportunity at <https://oeo.utah.edu/>.

Please report. Collective change starts with reporting.”

Professional Ethics Policy

- 1) Update language for reporting violations in accordance with above streamlined text.
- 2) Incorporate a more specific and clear anti-racist approach to encourage equity, with specific consequences.
- 3) Change the name of the policy to reflect diversity, equity and inclusion focus.
- 4) Address the common role of alcohol in bias and harassment incidents and outline consequences.

Field Safety Plan

- 1) Include prompts that address inclusivity concerns or race/gender/other safety issues. Include considerations and practices that promote the emotional safety of individuals in



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the field group, as they interact with one another and as well as how they interact with individuals outside the group.

- 2) Expand scope of plan beyond research-based field work only to field camp and class-based field trips.
- 3) Include discussion sessions in the curriculum of field courses to discuss racial risk assessment of sites and other student concerns that may arise. Preparation for discussion sessions should include reading of the Code of Conduct for Field-Related Activities and an anonymous survey as prerequisite.
- 4) Make field experiences both inclusive and optional, not mandatory. Optional field experiences are not an excuse to be exclusionary in their design and execution.
- 5) Ensure that financial resources is not a limiting factor for those choosing field experiences including registration fees, camping gear. Solutions could include running a gear exchange program. Seek out alumni funding support and consider offering scholarship based on financial need.
- 6) Develop a reporting system for safety plan violations, beyond existing incident and near-miss incident reporting, with consequences.
- 7) Provide additional staff and resources for field safety planning, possibly extending to on-trip support. This could be particularly valuable for international field work, multi-week field sessions, class field trips, and/or field camp, where safety planning is a large undertaking and associated environmental stress can lead to fatigue and a lack of emotional and physical safety and for individuals. These settings are ripe for bias, harassment, and trauma. Current or additional staff would need specific training in both physical safety concerns and the training to bring up, discuss, and provide a safe place for race-related (and gender) safety and inclusion issues, separate from the PI or instructor to remove unsafe power dynamics.

Training

- 1) Revise faculty annual review criteria and policies to value DEI focused training participation. In this model, training remains voluntary but valued.
- 2) Incorporate training for graduate and undergraduate students into required courses (e.g., for graduate students - graduate orientation, Reviews of Earth Science; for undergraduate students – Wasatch in the Field, Field Methods).
- 3) Delineate and highlight training resources on the GEO EDI webpage.
- 4) GEO has a list of various trainings, but to be useful moving forward, there is a need to curate and strategize about what is required and of whom.



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CODE OF CONDUCT

The GEO Department has a seven-page [Professional Ethics Policy](#), posted to the department website.

Link address:

<https://earth.utah.edu/resources/documents/FINAL%20GEO%20Professional%20Ethics%20Policy%202021-01-20.pdf>

GEO faculty ratified it in 2018, and it was updated in January 2021. The document includes a summary section, definitions, preamble/statement of importance, definitions, and code of conduct. **The code of conduct includes sections that address principles, responsibilities, student-advisor relationship, harassment, bullying, and discrimination, reporting and investigating incidences of misconduct.** Faculty are encouraged and reminded each semester to include a shortened version of the ethics policy in their course syllabi.

In addition to the Professional Ethics Policy, the GEO Department has posted an [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Statement](#) to the department EDI webpage.

Link address: https://earth.utah.edu/equity_diversity_inclusion/index.php.

The University also has a [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) ("Student Code"; Policy 6-400) in place that addresses academic behavior and violations but also behavioral violations and harassment.

Link address: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>

Violations can be and are reported to the CMES Academic Affairs committee and they are forwarded to the University process with the Senate Consolidated Hearing Committee.

Link address: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-011.php>

Though not required, several GEO PIs have developed lab or research group guideline documents. For example, the MagMaXLab code of conduct, led by Dr. Sarah Lambert, addresses safety and harassment as follows:

"I will provide a work environment that is intellectually stimulating, supportive, safe, and free from harassment. I take extremely seriously any difficulties you experience in relation to this statement – if there are conflicts with another lab member, please inform me and I will work with you and the other lab member to find a resolution. I will strive to understand your unique situation and am open to your suggestions on how to improve your experience in the lab."



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PROCESS FOR REPORTING VIOLATIONS:

Reporting procedures were summarized in the U of Utah Pods1-2-3 URGE Session 2 deliverable but can be best streamlined as follows:

“To report a bias incident on campus, visit <https://diversity.utah.edu/initiatives/rbirt/>, which is the Racist and Bias Incident Response Team webpage in the Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

Discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct can be reported through the Office of Equal Opportunity at <https://oeo.utah.edu/>.”

The existing [Professional Ethics Policy](#) also outlines the process for reporting and investigating incidences of misconduct, but text should be updated to be consistent with streamlined text above.

TRAINING RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The GEO Dept. Diversity and Climate committee lists available trainings and tracks participation and reviews of trainings on a volunteer basis in a google spreadsheet. These have included several CMES-sponsored voluntary training events like an Unconscious Bias workshop by Project Implicit and a Whiteness at Work online module by Adaway Group. Attendance at voluntary DEI training events has been moderate, commonly with many of the same individuals participating, with a disproportionate number of self-identified women. On the University of Utah campus, several trainings available are offered through Human Resources, WellU, the Office of Inclusive Excellence, or various resources centers, for instance the LGBT Resource Center, with links in the above GEO-DEI spreadsheet.

The University of Utah Equity Diversity and Inclusion office, (www.diversity.utah.edu) provides wealth of resources. This includes a number of resource centers (<https://diversity.utah.edu/centers/#>) focused on minoritized groups, and Friday Forums (<https://diversity.utah.edu/forums/>)

“Friday Forums is a commitment to the state and region in elevating national conversations and showcasing models of disrupting complicit racism. Each session welcomes national thought leaders to lead discussions and provide opportunities for participants to share ideas on actionable items towards a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus.”



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Broadly, resources related to EDI are listed on the [GEO EDI webpage](#), and include resources categorized as resources on campus, underrepresented peoples organizations, internships, fellowships and grants, scholarships, and other resources. Training resources are not specified.

FIELD WORK SAFETY PLAN

CMES Safety Website

The CMES safety committee hosts a webpage (<https://cmes.utah.edu/safety/index.php>) that addresses a broad range of topics related to safety, including field safety. The site provides a seven-page [field safety plan template](#) as a word document. As of 2020, each individual or group of individuals that carry out field work are required to fill out a field research safety plan and submit it for approval to the CMES safety committee.

The existing Field Research Safety Plan uses a fairly standard HSE template that includes location info, emergency contacts, hazards assessment, etc. It does not include specific inclusivity concerns or race/gender/other safety issues.

Excerpt from the Field Research Safety Plan template:

*“The purpose of this plan is to ensure that an adequate level of safety is provided for field research operations involving University of Utah personnel, and to provide an effective method for contacting and/or locating personnel in the field. The completed form should be shared with all members of the field research team and kept on file in an easily retrievable location with the department contact listed below. **A copy of the plan should be kept on site for the duration of the work.** Multiple trips to the same location can be covered by a single plan. The plan should be revised, and redistributed whenever a significant change to the location or scope of fieldwork occurs”*

University Field Safety Policies

There are additional University policies relevant to field safety including:

Policy 3-030: Travel Policy

Link: <https://regulations.utah.edu/administration/3-030.php>

Policy 10-003: Field Trips

Link: <https://regulations.utah.edu/miscellaneous/10-003.php#:~:text=No%20person%20shall%20be%20permitted,signed%20pursuant%20to%20Se>



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[ction%20IV.&text=Funds%20administered%20by%20the%20university,participating%20on%20a%20field%20trip.](#)

Rule R3-030D: International Travel Safety and Insurance

Link: <https://regulations.utah.edu/administration/rules/R3-030D.php>

These policies are intended to provide clear instructions for travelers on university approved travel (including field trips and field work) as well as outlining department accountability for ensuring compliance and knowing when individuals are traveling.