

School of Geography

Fieldwork Diversity Policy

➤ Codes of Practice

The Fieldwork Diversity Policy is in accordance with the Queen Mary equal opportunities Code of Practice that states:

“All students and staff of Queen Mary will be treated equitably and will not be accorded less favourable treatment because of age, marital/civil partnership status, sex, disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, religious or political beliefs and transgender status. The only consideration must be that the individual is able to satisfy the requirements of the programme of study or post.”

It is also incorporated in the School of Geography field trip attendance and conduct Code of Practice.

➤ The School of Geography emphasises the importance of access to fieldwork for everyone

The Subject Benchmark Statement for Geography (QAA, 2002) highlights the critical role that fieldwork plays in Geography degree programmes:

Aim 2.2 of honours degree programmes - Geographers develop their geographical understanding through fieldwork and other forms of experiential learning, which helps to promote curiosity about the social and physical environments, discerning observation and an understanding of scale.

Point 5.7 of teaching and learning - An education in geography involves an active engagement with the external world. Fieldwork and experiential learning constitutes an essential aspect of this engagement.

The benchmark statement also notes that fieldwork contributes to: *developing a sense of place, awareness of difference, and tolerance for others*

The School of Geography considers that field trips are an essential part of all the undergraduate degree programmes that are taught within the School. Field trips are therefore compulsory components of all 1st year and some 2nd and 3rd year modules.

The School follows the UCEA definition of field trips ('Guidance on Safety in Fieldwork' 2005) as: 'Any practical work carried out by staff or students of the University for the purpose of teaching and/or research in places which are not under University control, but where the University is responsible for the safety of its staff and/or students and others exposed to their activities.'

➤ Field work in the School is based on the following premises:

- Field trips are essential from an educational point of view and are intended to enhance the overall learning experience of students.
- Field trips are organised at a particular place, area or country because that is considered to be the best locality to teach particular issues, techniques, approaches and regional

knowledge as well as providing hands-on experience through group and individual work in a different and often challenging environment. Therefore, in most instances alternative teaching, learning and assessment arrangements cannot be made, as the learning outcomes of the module would not be fulfilled, although this depends on the nature of the fieldtrip component in question.

- Field trips have benefits beyond the strictly educational, such as the development of group work skills and of fostering a closer community among the students.
- Field trips can be residential or non-residential and if residential may be based in one particular locality or may move between localities.
- All health and safety requirements must be adhered to by all participants in fieldwork at all times.

The School of Geography recognises and values people's differences and will assist them to use their talents to reach their full potential through access to fieldwork.

Fieldwork in the School is open to all students regardless age, marital/civil partnership status, sex, disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, religious or political beliefs and transgender status.

The University has a legal responsibility towards students to ensure that discrimination does not take place and reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure equal and fair access to fieldwork. We will do all we can to ensure no one will receive less favourable treatment or is to be disadvantaged by requirements or conditions which cannot be shown to be justifiable. All staff and students will be involved in creating an equality environment and one that values diversity.

Students with disabilities, including those with specific learning difficulties

Queen Mary University of London has a legal duty to anticipate the needs of its disabled students and to provide reasonable adjustments for them. This duty includes fieldwork as much as it does campus-based activities. The School of Geography will work with students to provide reasonable adjustments to planned activities to ensure that they can participate in fieldwork in the same way as their peers. Examples of such adjustments include wherever possible:

- Participation at a more accessible site (within the same trip)
- Participation in group work activities with all students
- Observation and analysis off-site
- Participation through lab work
- Provision of a support worker where relevant and required

Students may be excluded from fieldwork if they have a condition or fitness profile which could adversely affect their own, or others' health, safety and welfare. This information will be captured in the student medical questionnaire and field trip risk assessment that is completed for all trips well in advance.

Exclusion may also be justified if inclusion:

- Cannot be achieved by reasonable adjustments
- Might disadvantage, or put at risk, the group as a whole
- Would educationally compromise the fieldwork activity

➤ **Students with other diversity needs**

Reasonable adjustments to planned fieldwork activities should be made to accommodate the religious or other diversity needs of students. These will include transport, accommodation, dietary and related needs.

The nature of the field trips will be clearly identified in the module handbooks and in all School brochures. When registering for modules which involve field trips, students will be asked to sign a document stating that they are aware that they have registered for modules that include field trips and that they can and will adhere to the requirements of the module, including the field trip components, for which they have registered.

Students will be expected to be in attendance during all teaching times, which may include evening teaching sessions on residential field trips.

During the field trip all students will normally be expected to travel with the group and may not normally travel independently. It is not normally possible for any accompanying person to travel with the group during the field trip given that educational activity takes place during periods of travel, as well as in particular sites.

Where a student may wish to be accompanied at other times over and above travelling to and from the field trip venue, it will not normally be possible for an accompanying person to be present during the times when formal teaching and field trip educational activity is taking place.

If students wish to meet with relatives or other persons during a field trip, this can normally be arranged outside the premises where students are staying, and either before the start or after the end of the working day. Accommodation arrangements for any accompanying persons are the responsibility of the student concerned and any costs must be borne by them. Any person accompanying a student is not normally covered by College insurance.

When on field trips all students must adhere to health and safety requirements and those set out in the Risk Assessment for the field trip, in particular with regard to appropriate personal protective clothing and equipment. Most importantly, students need to be able to wear appropriate footwear and waterproof clothing so as not to compromise health and safety requirements.

Students wishing to attend activities (such as religious services) while on a field trip should contact the field trip organiser well in advance of travel. As long as the activity does not impede the running of the field trip and the meeting of its educational objectives, such students will normally be able to make their own arrangements to attend such activities.

➤ **Reporting disability or specific needs**

Although students may feel reluctant to reveal a disability for fear of embarrassment or compromising their field trip place, it is a strict requirement for students to disclose to the field trip convenor (or other appropriate staff member, e.g. personal tutor) anything that might affect their ability to engage fully with a field trip. Failure to do so can compromise the learning experience, not to mention the health, safety and welfare of yourself and others on the trip. All students should be encouraged to discuss any potential issue with the field trip convenor (or other appropriate staff member) well in advance of the trip (and ideally before registering for any module that entails a field trip).

Students need to be made aware that sometimes adjustments cannot be made without disclosure being given (although the University has a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that students disclose a disability, students do have the right to confidentiality).

Please Note: Information on a disability should only be used to inform the risk assessment process and to determine what reasonable adjustments are required. Not all information about a student's disability or special needs may be relevant to the field trip/work and therefore should be communicated to others only on a need-to-know basis. All information must be kept in accordance with the University's Data Protection Code of Practice.

➤ **Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored to judge to what extent it is working and to identify areas for improvement. Students who feel that they have suffered any form of discrimination in relation to field trips should raise the issue with the Head of School.

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Teaching and Learning Committee to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and practices of the School. The policy may also be reviewed if legislation changes or if monitoring information suggests that policy or practices should be altered.