

# Academic Field Trips Guidelines

Academic field trips have long been integral to the University's curriculum. In recent years, growing concern about travel and increasing attention to the need to manage risks associated with virtually all University activities prompts us to look at the manner in which academic field trips are conducted and to recommend certain best practices that are consistent, clearly communicated and offer the greatest likelihood of student safety, recognizing that the University cannot provide absolute assurances in this regard.

For purposes of this document, an *academic field trip* is defined as a course-related activity which normally involves travel for the group of students enrolled in a class<sup>1</sup>. An academic field trip serves educational purposes and occurs outside of the classroom at a location other than the campus on which the course is regularly taught. Such trips may be scheduled during normal class hours or for extended periods outside of class.

## General Guidelines for Faculty

- Academic field trips are University sponsored events.
- Whenever possible, academic field trips should be clearly identified in the course syllabus (as to location, time, means of transportation, and with some reference to inherent risk associated with the particular activity). The syllabus should also identify the academic field trip as "required" if this is the case.
- In addition to the description of risks in the syllabus, faculty members should discuss in appropriate detail with students the risks associated with the activity, relevant emergency preparedness information, as well as expectations for behavior during the activity (including transit to and from the location(s)).
- If there are students who will be participating for whom special accommodations are potentially necessary (as a result of disabilities), faculty should discuss these matters with the student(s) in individual settings. If needed, the Office of Disability Services for Students can assist with planning for accommodations.
- A College/department may require a student to sign a standard "informed consent" waiver that acknowledges risks associated with this activity.
- A faculty member or other designated University representative must accompany all academic field trips.
- Whenever practical, the site of the academic field trip should be reviewed by the faculty member or an appropriate University representative in advance to evaluate potential risks and to mitigate, to the extent possible through effective planning, risks associated with the location.

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<sup>1</sup> Independent study, internships, class meetings, off campus work on an individual project are not considered an Academic Field Trip.

- The University, through the Department, School or College, should have complete information about the location, duration and transportation route for each academic field trip on file and accessible prior to the occurrence of the event.
- The University, through the Department, School or College, should have a complete list of all participating students including emergency contact information on file and accessible prior to the start of the event.
- University vehicles or chartered buses should be used for field trips.
- The faculty or staff member in charge of each academic field trip should ensure that s/he has access to communication (e.g., cell phone) throughout the event.
- Each department should have a designated contact person on campus with information about the academic field trip and participants in the event that emergency communication is necessary.
- Faculty members should not use their private cars to transport students on field trips. It is recommended that they use University System vehicles or rent vehicles for this purpose. Employees must take a defensive driving course if they will be operating University System vehicles. USNH employees who drive their private cars in the course of their official job responsibilities are excluded from liability coverage under the University System's automobile insurance policy. The University is covered, but employees' only coverage for their liability is whatever they have under their personal automobile insurance. Further, the University System's general liability policy excludes coverage for claims arising out of the use of an automobile.
- Students should not be required to drive their own vehicles to a field trip site; neither should they be required to provide rides to other students.

### **General Guidelines for Students**

- Students participating in college-sponsored field trips are expected to conform to the same standards of behavior as published in the Students' Rights, Rules and Responsibilities. Any violation of the student code of conduct or local, state, or federal laws may result in disciplinary action or sanctions by the College/University.
- The University does not have liability or automobile coverage for students driving themselves or other students to University-sponsored events. Automobile insurance policies held by the students are the primary and only policies covering them for injuries to themselves and others, as well as damage to their vehicles or other vehicles.
- Departments should notify students who choose to ride in a private automobile that they do so of their own free will.

## **Vehicles**

- Anyone who operates a University owned vehicle for field trip activities must attend the University Defensive Driving Course. If a University owned vehicle is used for a field trip, the vehicle is insured for liability and physical damage by the University.
- If a vehicle is rented by the University and the vehicle is being used for University business, the vehicle is insured for liability and physical damage. The person renting the car should not allow others to drive the vehicle unless such use has been authorized by the rental agency.
- If a chartered bus is used, the bus service must be approved by Purchasing. A list of approved bus services can be found at <http://www.unh.edu/purchasing/Qualified%20Bus%20Firms%208-2-06.pdf>.
- If a personal vehicle is used for a University field trip, the driver's own insurance policy serves as the primary policy.
- Any traffic and parking violations are the responsibility of the driver, not the institution.

## **Foreign Study**

- For foreign study, please refer to the guidelines for International Programs.

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