

**FIELDWORK AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
POLICY AND GUIDELINES**

Approved	Academic Board
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Responsible Officer	Academic Director
Author(s) and Role(s) from most recent	Discipline Coordinators Committee
Related Documents (explicitly cross-referenced)	
Higher Education Standards (2021)	5.4
National Code (2018) (if directly relevant)	

PART A: POLICY

1. Preamble

Sydney College of Divinity values authentic learning and is committed to developing graduate capabilities through field-based opportunities. This is particularly important for units where cross-cultural experience and intercultural development are integral to the learning outcomes. In such cases, field-based units support the provision of authentic learning in a variety of cross-cultural settings which enable students to develop and maximise their graduate capabilities and potential employability.

International fieldwork allows students to learn through direct implementation of their studies in real world settings, which is typically not available within a classroom scenario or a library situation. As such, international fieldwork is available only for approved units of study where the field-based work is an integral part of the unit curriculum.

Within various Sydney College of Divinity courses, there is the opportunity for students to include guided visits to one or more field locations designed to enhance their first-hand experience of sites of historical and/or religious significance. To facilitate such experiential learning, the College has incorporated suitable learning experiences into the formal curriculum where the field experience is integrated with the learning outcomes and the assessment requirements for each approved unit. Thus there is a direct link

between the site visit and the student's successful completion of the learning outcomes of the unit and the graduate outcomes of the course. This policy statement provides regulations and accompanying guidelines to ensure the academic rigour, ethical conduct and student welfare in the delivery of such units.

2. Principles of Fieldwork

- Field-based activities are incorporated into the curriculum as a practical, integrated learning activity to enhance student achievement of desired graduate attributes and employability skills.
- Students are advised of their responsibilities and relevant college policies and procedures to minimise risks to health, safety and welfare of all stakeholders involved in field placements.
- Students and staff must participate in all planning, orientation and preparation activities as required prior to departure.
- Students and staff have a responsibility to work safely in the field, taking reasonable care and practical steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of themselves and all others among whom they work in the field.
- Fieldwork Partnerships are arranged to ensure suitable and timely access to specific cultural guidance and supervision before and during the site visit.
- Students and staff must abide by all legitimate instructions given by the Fieldwork Partners.
- Fieldwork agreements, which outline the roles and responsibilities of all parties, are negotiated with Fieldwork Partners.
- Students are informed at the outset of the unit of any fieldwork requirements, including costs, travel dates and conditions, and cultural and academic requirements during the placement period.

3. Scope

SCD has accredited fieldwork units within various courses that allow students to engage in an immersive learning experience. This may involve visiting:

- Overseas sites that are relevant to the biblical world (eg Old Testament sites, New Testament sites);
- Overseas sites that are relevant to the history of the Church and its theology (eg Patristic sites, Reformation sites);
- Overseas or local sites that are relevant to a mission or ministry based practicum;
- Overseas or local sites that are relevant to a major research project (eg involvement as team members on an archaeological dig relevant to the biblical world);
- Other overseas or local sites that have intrinsic academic value as a part of the programs of the College (as approved by the Academic Board).

4. Roles of the College

Prior to Field Experience	During Field Experience	After Field Experience
Explain expectations, establish learning goals and assessments, and familiarise with fieldwork protocols	Assist students to make sense of the field experience	Debrief with students and help reflect critically on their learning in the field experience, including summary instruction and evaluation
Prepare students for placement through orientation, pre-briefings, and guided instruction, reading and research	Assist students to deal with tensions, difficulties, cultural and health issues, including any placement related conflict	Assist the student with final assessment tasks and integrating the field component with unit outcomes
Ensure student's travel, insurance and medical requirements are up-to-date prior to departure	Provide regular guidance to assist students to connect their learning objectives with the field practices	Evaluate the learning experience for future students
Assist students to complete any specific Fieldwork Partner requirements	Guide and support students in ethical behaviour	

5. Integration of Fieldwork with Learning Outcomes and Assessment Profiles

Fieldwork units will include a rationale and a detailed outline showing how the field experience is integrated with the learning outcomes and the assessment requirements for each approved unit. This outline will be approved by the relevant Discipline Coordinator prior to offering the unit.

6. Regulations

a. Students

- (i) Students must be a *bona fide* student formally enrolled in an accredited course of the Sydney College of Divinity or in a comparable course in another institution and be enrolled as an SCD Cross-Institutional student.
- (ii) Students enrolled in a fieldwork unit must attend an Information Meeting conducted by the Teaching Body well before departure, which will include all enrolled students, participating faculty and, where relevant, a representative of the travel company involved.
- (iii) Students enrolled in a fieldwork unit must receive preliminary instruction and guided readings relevant to the issues to be encountered and submit a specified assignment before the travel commences, and complete further assignment tasks during and following the field placement as outlined in the Course Unit Booklet.
- (iv) Students enrolled in a field immersion unit must meet all organizational requirements of the Fieldwork Information Booklet.

b. Faculty

- (i) The Teaching Body must appoint an appropriately qualified faculty member to coordinate the unit and allocate sufficient staff to ensure the efficient and safe conduct of the learning experience and the academic integrity of the unit.
- (ii) As well as having distributed the Course Unit Booklet at the usual time at the beginning of the unit, the unit coordinator is responsible for ensuring the construction and distribution of the Information Booklet well in advance of the site visit.

c. Documentation

- (i) A comprehensive Fieldwork Information Booklet must be distributed to all tour participants (students and faculty) well before departure, including at least the following:
 - i. All travel details and costs involved;
 - ii. A full itinerary of the site visit, including details and key features of sites to be visited and relevant contact details at the sites;
 - iii. A full list of participating staff and any other personnel and their respective responsibilities;
 - iv. Full details of any government requirements pertinent to the travel arrangements.

- (ii) A clear and comprehensive Course Unit Booklet must be distributed to all unit participants (students and faculty) at the beginning of the unit, in compliance with the SCD CUB requirements.

d. Specific FEE-HELP Regulations:

- (a) All transport, accommodation and meals are to be charged to students directly as incidental fees, and cannot be charged in the tuition fee. Only tuition-related activities can be deferred on a student's FEE-HELP loan. Any non-compulsory activity (such as optional sightseeing) cannot be allocated as tuition fees. Any experience a student could arrange independently of the group, even if it involves the same learning experience, cannot be charged in tuition fees.
- (b) Notwithstanding the guidelines within this policy, Teaching Bodies are to ensure the application of FEE-HELP complies at all times with the latest regulation updates of the Department of Education and Training.

PART B: GUIDELINES

In conducting a fieldwork unit, the Teaching Body should take all necessary steps to ensure the safe and ethical conduct of the whole unit. These Guidelines detail some important processes that will help to attain that end.

- a. The Teaching Body should investigate, with all due diligence and in a timely manner, the government requirements regarding costing, travel companies, travel and accommodation, as well as the public reputation and reliability of the travel company involved, with special regard to its personnel, travel delivery, and its financial, pedagogical and safety record.
- b. The Teaching Body should advertise the details of travel beforehand with a brochure articulating the itinerary/dates of sites to be visited, the costs involved, the travel company and other relevant travel details.
- c. The Teaching Body should provide students well before departure accurate details regarding passports, currency, special equipment needs, and instructions regarding medical, health or safety issues, as well as clear instruction concerning special cultural sensitivities.
- d. The Teaching Body should ensure it has full contact details of family or other emergency contact people for all participating students and staff.
- e. The Teaching Body may extend the learning experience to non-students, provided that such participants pay for the travel independently, meet all the requirements of the travel organisation, and do not divert staff from their primary pedagogical and pastoral oversight of the students.
- f. The Teaching Body must conduct a risk assessment and have a risk management plan that recognises the guidelines and advice of the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- g. The Teaching Body is responsible for the financial management of the field experience. Any cost of financing the cash flow of a fieldwork unit is a cost and risk to the Teaching Body, not the SCD.
- h. The Teaching Body should ensure all marketing is conducted in accordance with the ethical framework of the SCD.