

FSC OPERATIONAL CODES OF PRACTICE

No. P3 : Groups Away from Permanent Supervision [GAPS]

Mandatory : All UMs
: All FSC staff leading or assisting with groups carrying out fieldwork.

Discretionary :

- 1.** Guidance Note : As the background to this FSC OCoP, the HS & W agreed the following statement of Groups Away from Permanent Supervision.
- “Unsupervised groups would normally be expected to be over 16 years of age. In certain circumstances, where educationally suitable, groups of 14-16 year olds may also undertake project work in suitable locations; they should be visited as frequently as necessary, which may include shadowing, checkpointing, etc.. There must be a Unit strategy for student welfare appropriate to the circumstances and including the age and experience of the group. Unsupervised student groups (that is groups which are not in the direct charge of a tutor who is within the immediate area, and can be reached within a few minutes by any of the students) should only be allowed to carry out fieldwork provided:
- a. that the sites are considered to be safe for the work in question at that time and there are entries for those sites in the Unit’s Fieldwork Sites Information;
 - b. that the tutor has briefed the students as to the nature of any potential hazards (as detailed in the Fieldwork Sites Information) of the site.
 - c. that the tutor has a record of who is working where and a time scale to cover the work-in-hand;
 - d. that each group has been issued with a first aid kit and given an instruction sheet on what to do in case of an emergency;
 - e. that one of the students in each group has been designated as group leader.”

With regard to section 1.b. above, the statement originally made by the HS & W has been modified in the light of current FSC OCoPs [See section 4.4. of FSC OCoP No.1.].

2. GAPS Activity

If, at the time of an activity involving GAPS, the accompanying staff state that they believe that the activity should not take place or that it should be terminated, the activity **must** be quickly reviewed and, if concern still exists, terminated and an agreed alternative activity substituted.

3. Size of groups undertaking GAPS activity

3.1. In all bar the single exception described in section 4.2. below, the mandatory minimum size of a group is two students.

Guidance Note : It is recommended that, when the GAPS activity is taking place in rural locations where possible assistance from inhabitants and passers-by is unlikely to be immediately available, the minimum size of a group should be three students [in the event of a serious injury to one student, seeking assistance and looking after the injured student can then be handled by the other two students].

3.2. There are circumstances, when students are carrying out so-called 'individual project work', where an individual student devises a study which they are prepared to carry out on their own.

The tutor **must** attempt to persuade the student concerned to join other students carrying out a study on a topic [such that the individual students would be investigating separate aspects of the topic], or to go to the same fieldwork site as other students [it would not be necessary for the students to be working on the same or even related topics] or to persuade another student to join them in carrying out their chosen study [so that again the individual students would be investigating separate aspects of a common topic].

If this can not be done, then :

- a. The location of all of the fieldwork **must** be such that it is visible from a Unit building [or its immediate exterior] in which Unit staff will be present throughout the duration of the fieldwork.
- b. Staff in the building **must** be detailed to check on the student at regular and frequent intervals [recommended maximum of 30 minutes].
- c. The tutor **must** be satisfied that the study can be completed by the

student working alone and that the student is capable of undertaking the work in a safe and responsible manner

- d. The student **must** be made aware of this position and must be instructed to inform the designated staff member when they have completed the fieldwork.
- e. If the tutor is not satisfied that the above conditions can be met in full, permission to carry out the work **must** be denied and the reasons explained to the student concerned.

4. Dealing with difficulties encountered by students undertaking a GAPS activity.

- 4.1. As part of the pre-activity briefing, students **must** be appraised as to typical examples of emergency situations [e.g. threats of physical violence; serious injury.] and non-emergency difficulties [e.g. essential equipment fails; delayed return to rendezvous point].
- 4.2. All groups **must** be issued with a map of the area, in which the group will be working, annotated with details such as locations of public telephones, permitted access routes, location of known hazards [see FSC OCoP No. P1], location of dwellings where possible assistance may be available, etc. It is important that, where OS maps are used for this purpose, the scale used is such that the clarity and precision of the annotations are not impaired.
- 4.3. All groups **must** be issued with a first aid kit [as detailed in FSC OCoP No. IM3: First Aid Kits] and advised as to its contents and their use.
- 4.4. All groups **must** be issued with written instructions as to actions are to be taken by the group members in both emergency and non-emergency situations, including any recommendations with regard to seeking assistance from inhabitants of or passers-by in the area where the group will be working.
- 4.5. With regard to emergency situations, it **must** be ensured that the actions to be taken by the group members are such that the Unit will be informed of the situation at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore and unless it will have already occurred as a result of actions taken by the group members, a procedure **must** be established whereby any FSC or accompanying staff [who are out in the general area of any GAPS activities] are informed by the Unit of the emergency situation and of what actions they are to take.

4.6. With regard to non-emergency situations, it **must** be ensured that the actions to be taken by the group members are such that, once group members have established contact, a member of FSC or accompanying staff will be able to meet and assist the group within a recommended maximum of 30 minutes

4.7. In the context of sections 5.5. and 5.6., it is considered that group members **must** never be more than 30 minutes walking distance from a means of establishing contact with either the emergency services, or the Unit or with a member of FSC or accompanying staff.

Guidance Note : Thus, in a non-emergency situation, these recommended time limits mean that group members would be receiving assistance within a maximum of 60 minutes. If this total time limit is exceeded then :

- a. Any assistance may be of little use eg. a group, who had required replacement equipment, may not have sufficient time left in order to collect required data.
- b. A non-emergency situation may well have developed into an emergency situation.

4.8. The UM **must** ensure that the documents, stated in sections 5.2. and 5.3. above, are available for every location that is used for GAPS activities, and that the form of any such documents issued to groups is such that the documents are weatherproof.

4.9. The UM **must** ensure that any procedures or actions necessary to fulfil the requirements, noted in sections 5.5. and 5.6. above, are established and readily available in written form to all staff who may be involved in such situations.

4.10. The tutor is responsible for the issuing of the documents, described in sections 5.2. and 5.4. above, to the groups, and for ensuring that the documents are legible and that they will remain so whilst in the possession of the groups.

5. GAPS group or group member missing in the field.

5.1. The procedures to be followed are described in FSC OCoP No.4 : Missing personnel in the field.