FAQs for Coordinating Field Experiences During COVID-19

Field experiences (fieldwork) are practice-based experiences where students participate in components of a discipline or profession through the hands-on application of disciplinary concepts. Field experiences typically occur under the direction or supervision of a faculty member or a non-licensed professional. This type of experience is primarily intended to support professional and discipline-based competency development but is not required for professional licensure or accreditation. Experiences where students are only observing professional activities (e.g., field trips) are not considered field experiences in this context. Field experiences are also distinct from placements or practicums.

As course instructors and support staff plan for course delivery involving field experiences during COVID-19, a number of questions have been raised with respect to their facilitation. Detailed below are responses to some common questions related to courses that involve field experiences. If you have additional questions not covered by this document, please consult your academic division.

For responses to common questions regarding experiential learning that are not COVID-19-specific, please visit the FAQ page hosted on the University of Toronto's Experiential Learning Hub . Some answers may vary depending on the program you collaborate with, so further consultation with your division or academic unit is advised.

Please note that COVID-19 is a public health risk and it is not possible to prevent against the presence of the disease.

Given the evolving circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and its impact on our local communities, are students permitted to participate in fieldwork experiences?

> It is possible for students to leave campus for field experiences, so long as the University Program has ensured that a) the site is appropriate for the intended learning outcomes and b) adherence to both University of Toronto and Public Health Ontario or relevant municipal (e.g. Toronto Public Health, Region of Peel Public Health) health and safety guidelines is ensured. The Program is responsible for advising students as to any requirements that must be abided by and students are responsible for abiding by these rules and those set by the site being visited. If a student's circumstances are such that they do not feel able to participate in field experiences, they should contact Accessibility Services (for disability related accommodations) or their Program to determine whether and what modifications are available.

As a response to COVID-19, are there specific health and safety parameters for students performing field experiences, such as physical distancing requirements?

> Programs and students are expected to work closely with external partners, in advance of the commencement of a field experience, to learn more about the health and safety instructions and procedures in place at the field experience location to ensure a safe working environment.

> Coordinators of the field experience must inquire with the site directly regarding their health and safety processes. A resource providing helpful guidance on the appropriate questions to ask external partners is available by emailing placements@utoronto.ca and requesting access to the 'Discussion Guide Checklist for Evaluating Non-Health Science Placements'. While this document was prepared for practicum/placement purposes, many of the questions will be relevant for field experiences as well.

For reference, the following resources detail the status of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario and the current policies in effect:

- https://covid-19.ontario.ca/index.html
- https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-stop-spread
- https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/

Students should not engage in field experiences (fieldwork) if they develop any COVID-19 symptoms indicated by Public Health Ontario and must notify U of T's Occupational Health Nurse immediately by email at ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca if they test positive for COVID-19 . Students then may not visit the University or a fieldwork site until they receive clearance to do so from U of T's Occupational Health Nurse (or are otherwise in compliance with U of T procedures, particularly those relating to on-campus activities).

What health and safety measures must be adhered to for fieldwork experiences?

We strongly recommend all students familiarize themselves with U of T's Framework and Guidelines on Off-campus Safety, Guidelines on Safety in Field Research, Off-campus Safety Guidelines, and other related policies on Field Research Safety. Students are also encouraged to frequently visit COVID-19 Information for University of Toronto Students and to regularly check their emails and divisional websites for updated communications and announcements of COVID-19 related policy or procedural changes at U of T.

- *U of T's Framework and Guidelines on Off-campus Safety:*
  https://ehs.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Policy-on-the-Framework-on-Off-Campus-Safety.pdf

- *Guidelines on Safety in Field Research:*
  https://ehs.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Guidelines-on-Safety-in-Field-Research.pdf

- *Off-campus Safety Guidelines:*
  https://ehs.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Sections-A-to-G-Off-Campus-Safety-Guidelines.pdf

- *Field Research Safety:*
  https://ehs.utoronto.ca/field-research-safety/

- *COVID-19 Information for University of Toronto Students:*
  https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/

Students engaging in fieldwork should also follow public health best practices, including:

- Wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer frequently and after touching common surfaces
- Avoid touching their face
- Avoid congregating in groups, even during breaks
- Maintain physical distancing as much as possible

- Wear a mask and/or other PPE when social distancing is not possible or when required by the site
- Wipe computer and workstation (if applicable) with disinfectant at the start and end of each day

What considerations should be made regarding modes of travel between the campus and fieldwork sites?

When considering travel options for course-related day excursions, please keep in mind the following:

- Students may wish to explore options to address the need for using public transit to access sites. Course instructors may want to consider options that allow students to travel during off-hours when transit is less busy. Students should be encouraged to discuss these options with their instructor.
- Students who are driving themselves with personal vehicles to sites for any course-related experiences should be explicitly made aware that, in the event of accident/injury, liability would be assumed by their personal insurance.
- Students who are concerned about their ability to access an excursion should contact their instructor for options.

I am considering offering a "virtual" field-based experience in my course. Are there resources to help adapt Experiential Learning courses and experiences to a remote format?

Yes. Faculty and staff are encouraged to consult the following:

- Tri-Campus Working Group on Remote Experiential Learning: Resources from this group are available via SharePoint. The documents uploaded to this platform offer guidance on how to modify internship classes, research projects, and other forms of EL to a virtual context.
- Adapting Experiential Learning for Remote Delivery Webinar Series: Two sessions of this series focused on Field Experiences, and their session recordings and slides are available below:
  - Field Work Films: Notes on Recording for Remote Teaching
  - Field Experiences
- The Centre for Community Partnerships has also drafted a document to specifically aid in the adaption of community engaged learning courses,
- The EEU has conducted an environmental scan of remote experiential learning courses across North America, which may also be of further assistance.
- The Toronto Academic Health Science Network (TAHSN) has a page of COVID-19 Resources that may also be helpful, including TAHSN Principles for Virtual Learning.