

## UNIS Environmental Standard

### OVERRIDING GOAL Health – Safety – Environment

*“UNIS will be a leader in Health, Safety and Environment work. We will take precautions to prevent accidents and harmful effects of our activities. We will minimise any negative impacts on the external environment and nurture a working environment that is stimulating, safe and developmental.”*

#### **Partial goals for external environment, natural environment, historical sites:**

UNIS will conduct field-based teaching and research so as to cause the minimal impact on Svalbard’s fragile environment. All activities will be carried out based on an understanding of the local flora, fauna, heritage sites and natural environment. In cases where environmental concerns run counter to the planned activities, the environmental concerns shall take precedence.

#### **Knowledge goals**

- We shall have a thorough understanding of how our activity may negatively impact the environment and how we can avert the impacts. We shall be familiar with the various laws and regulations governing the natural environment on Svalbard. The UNIS guidelines and procedures shall build on current legislation and be known to and accepted by everyone at the institution.

#### **Awareness goals**

- We shall share a common understanding of the need for caution when we travel and engage in activities on account of the unusual fragility of the Svalbard natural environment. UNIS shall be an example of an institution which pays special attention to the environment in everything we do.

#### **Skills goals**

- All persons at UNIS shall take necessary training so as to be able to use the tools and aids that will prevent harmful impacts during their field work. Potential impacts on the environment and how we can avoid them will be part of the planning that takes place before all field operations.

UNIS engages in field-based research and tuition over much of Svalbard throughout the year. UNIS sees the development of research and knowledge as a necessary condition for good stewardship of Svalbard’s natural environment, and we are therefore dependent on the ability to make small, brief and reversible impacts. Our activity may affect the external environment in many ways. UNIS has therefore sought to define which of our activities may cause harm and how the damage may be minimised.

## Disruption of animal life due to motorised traffic

UNIS uses different types of motorised transport off the regular road network. The main types are as follows:

Transport type	Potential negative impact	Precautions
Large research ships	Disturbance of birds on bird cliffs. Spills of oil and garbage. Disturbance of sea mammals and polar bears.	Have good understanding of vulnerable areas (bird cliffs) and avoid them. Have sound routines for garbage handling onboard. Hire crews with local knowledge and make use of approved navigation instruments.
Smaller landing craft and local transport craft	Disturbance of birds on bird cliffs. Disturbance of fauna when landing. Disturbance of sea mammals and polar bears.	Have good understanding of vulnerable areas and seasons when transport may be especially harmful.
Snow-scooter	Disturbance of fauna onshore and on sea ice. Damage to vegetation.	Choose routes giving minimal disturbance to animals. Avoid transport on bare ground and vegetation.
Snow-cat tracked vehicle	Disturbance of fauna onshore and on sea ice. Damage to vegetation.	Choose routes giving minimal disturbance to animals. Avoid transport on bare ground and vegetation.
Helicopter	Disturbance of birds on bird cliffs. Disturbance of fauna onshore and on sea ice. Disturbance of sea mammals and polar bears.	Be especially cautious when flying close to bird colonies and roosting or feeding areas. Take special seasonal precautions when choosing flight path and altitude. Choose landing site that does not impact bird life or animals.
Fixed-wing aircraft	Disturbance of birds on bird cliffs.	Be especially cautious when flying close to bird colonies and roosting or feeding areas. Take special seasonal precautions when choosing flight path and altitude.

## Heritage sites

In all activities UNIS shall avoid coming into close contact with cultural heritage sites and shall actively seek knowledge about the areas in which we operate so as to avoid inadvertent damage or impact to culture sites. A safety zone of 100 meters around heritage sites will be respected.

## Gathering scientific evidence

In many contexts UNIS will need to gather scientific evidence from the natural environment of Svalbard. This means in the majority of cases extremely small interventions having little or no impact on the natural environment or heritage sites. Despite this almost all activities of this kind will require special permission. UNIS shall, when planning this type of activity, make a thorough review of the need for the scientific material and the volumes and types required. Before a request is made the need and usefulness of the samples shall be weighed against the negative impact that sample-gathering may have on the environment.

UNIS shall seek to conduct its activities of this type outside areas with conservation status and inside the areas specially facilitated for research.

## Setting up field camp and deploying scientific instruments and equipment

UNIS will seek to establish field camps that do not conflict with fauna, flora, heritage sites and the natural environment in general. When setting up camp due precautions shall be taken so that the area bears no visible marks and no pollution after breaking camp. Particular precautions shall

be taken to avoid conflict with polar bears. All deployment of scientific instruments shall be designed to avoid conflict with plant and animal life. Before deployment we must be sure that it is possible to recover the equipment after the project period is over.

## Environmental impact of operations at UNIS

UNIS is a major organisation by Svalbard standards. UNIS must organise itself to produce the minimum amount of garbage at the institution. Garbage produced will be sorted and sent for recycling. Special waste will receive special attention in accordance with strict safety rules and routines for surrender and destruction. UNIS' activities shall seek to utilise the resources already existing on Svalbard rather than importing more machinery, vehicles or tools.

## Cooperation with other institutions

UNIS will actively communicate the knowledge produced at the institution so that management and use of Svalbard's natural environment can be based on scientific knowledge. We will seek the broadest possible cooperation with other institutions so as to enhance knowledge about the natural environment on Svalbard. UNIS will be an open and active fund of knowledge for the local community in Longyearbyen in terms of transport and enjoyment of the Svalbard wilderness.

## Organisation of UNIS

UNIS maintains its own internal control system designed to ensure that all activities are planned and carried out in accordance with our internal rules and general legislation. All requests to deviate from the current rules must originate from the UNIS Executive and need to be carefully considered before submission. The UNIS Executive will at all times maintain a full knowledge of all ongoing field activities and measuring instruments located in the field.

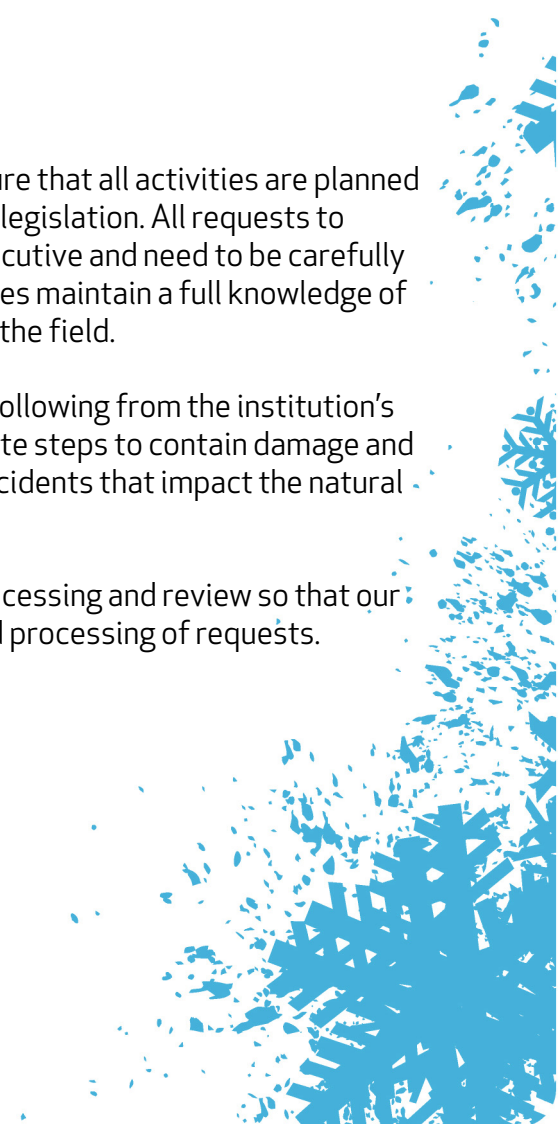
UNIS shall maintain contingency plans to deal with any damage following from the institution's activities. All staff and all students shall be able to take immediate steps to contain damage and to know where and how to sound the alarm in connection with accidents that impact the natural environment or heritage sites.

UNIS shall make arrangements for non-bureaucratic internal processing and review so that our internal rules and routines can provide a basis for uncomplicated processing of requests.

## References

### Internal documents

- UNIS Safety Instructions
- UNIS Field Manual
- UNIS Field Safety Folder



- UNIS HSE Field Briefing for Field Work
- UNIS HSE Manual
- UNIS Diving Instructions
- UNIS Strategy Plan
- UNIS Action Plan

Other relevant documents

- Svalbard Environment Act
- Environment Protection Regulations and Conservation Regulations.

