



**Appalachian State University  
Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences**

**Field Safety and Standards Policy and Procedures  
Informed Consent Agreement  
for GES 2751 - Geology Field Methods**

The GES (formerly Geology) Department has offered some version of “Prep” (GLY 2735, 2745, GES 2751, etc.) for decades (since 1980s), with an exemplary safety record and hundreds of alumni. Indeed, many of the hundreds of geology and environmental science graduates, whether they are in academia or industry, confirm that “Prep,” = including geologic field methods, is one of the most useful courses of their career, and other universities have modeled their own course offerings after ours. We expect to build upon this record, and to do so we wish to ensure that our present and future students are informed and prepared for the nature of the course.

GES 2751 - Geology Field Methods is a course that introduces students to geologic field methods. Due to timing constraints, this course requires weekend participation involving physical activity in somewhat remote areas, in a variety of weather conditions. We want students to have a safe and enjoyable experience in this course, and we wish to minimize surprises - either to students or to faculty - in regards to a student’s physical/mental health in the field. The best way we can promote safe field experiences is by making the course expectations clear and requesting that students let us know if they have need for any physical/mental health accommodations. This document is not intended to intimidate students, but instead set out clear expectations.

The following document serves as an informed consent agreement for the following purposes, whereby:

- the student is informed about what to expect from the GES 2751 course,
- the student is informed about what will be expected of them in the field, and
- the instructor knows in advance if the student will need reasonable accommodations to safely participate in field activities, so there is sufficient time to develop accommodations that best fit the student’s needs

This informed consent document requires the student’s signature, stating that they understand all of the items outlined. Any related procedures and accommodations shall be implemented in a manner consistent with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as subsequently amended.

**Confidentiality:** *The handling of all records and subject information will be strictly confidential and revealed only to those required to have access, e.g., the Office of Disability Resources (ODR), Appalachian’s Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences, clinical agencies, etc. Any breach of confidentiality will be considered serious and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.*

## **What to expect in GES 2751 - Geology Field Methods:**

### **Weekend and Overnight Lab Meetings**

**Because fieldwork takes significant time (including transportation), weekday field trips are not practical.** Therefore, this course meets during weekdays as well as on some Saturdays and Sundays, and includes overnight field trips where camping is required. Students are expected to attend all course meetings and field trips. A list of gear you will need for fieldwork, as well as where to rent it, borrow it, or get it as cheaply as possible is provided at the end of this document.

### **Expectations in the Field**

Students are expected to be able to perform the following while in the field:

1. Be willing to work unsupervised with 2-3 field partners. All fieldwork is team-based for safety reasons.
2. Be able to hike at least 3.5 miles in rugged, uneven, and/or steep terrain in remote areas with insects and wildlife typical of our region, with no cell signal
3. Be able to perform geologic fieldwork in a variety of weather conditions ranging from snow and sleet, to rain, to full sun at 90°F with high humidity. Field work will be suspended by the faculty member if weather conditions are unsafe.
4. Use the bathroom outdoors and practice leave-no-trace waste removal
5. Camp overnight in remote areas with no cell signal
6. Walk through tall grass, weeds, brush, leaves, and wooded areas on or off trail
7. Carry sufficient water, food, fieldwork supplies, and health/safety supplies in a backpack while hiking/working (typically up to 20 lbs. but may be more, depending on the field assignment)

### **Behavioral/Social Attributes**

This class involves teamwork in remote locations, and good social behavior is a must. Therefore, each student is expected to:

1. Develop problem solving skills and establish good time management practices while in the field. This includes making time-sensitive decisions that reflect the terrain, weather, and their own health/safety as well as the health/safety of field partners.
2. Develop supportive and cooperative relationships with field partners and instructors.
3. Be able to learn to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility, and to maintain functionality in the face of uncertainties inherent in outdoor, remote field environments.
4. Be compassionate towards others, exhibit integrity, accountability, attentiveness, and motivation.

## **Procedure for registering for GES 2751**

1. The “Field Safety and Standards” form (this document) will be provided to the student prior to registration for GES 2751.
2. The student must discuss the expectations on the form with their GES advisor, and fill out and sign the form in order to receive a permit to enroll in GES 2751.
3. All answers will be provided to your lab instructor so they are aware of any accommodations you may need before the course starts. Only your lab instructor, Lauri Miller, and the department chair will have access to this information.

## **Reasonable Accommodations Due to a Disability**

In GES, we will do everything we can to accommodate our students who wish to participate but are unable to perform required field activities due to disabilities. Students that need accommodations to participate in GES 2751 must do so through the Office of Disability Resources (ODR). Faculty cannot provide accommodations without ODR involvement.

At any time within the course, students needing reasonable accommodations in order to meet any of the physical/mental health course requirements must:

1. Make requests to the Office of Disability Resources (ODR) *at least two weeks prior to a field trip where they will need accommodations (preferably much earlier)* and inform the instructor that they will be seeking accommodations. This is so that instructors have sufficient time to implement necessary accommodations.
2. ODR will engage in an interactive process to determine eligibility and may consult with the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences to determine reasonable accommodations.
3. If reasonable accommodations are approved, ODR will notify students regarding eligibility and will create an Accommodation Plan to identify the approved reasonable accommodations.

## **Injuries/Illnesses during the semester**

1. If a student is injured, is ill, or the student’s health status changes, this must be reported to the Instructor of the course within 24 hours and/or prior to field experience.
2. If necessary, the Instructor may request that the student provide verification from a health care provider of the student’s temporary inability to perform field activities.

**The following questions will be answered online [via this form](#). Responses will be collected by the department chair and administrative assistant, and forwarded to the relevant GES 2751 lab instructor. All answers will remain confidential.**

**In GES we will do everything we can to accommodate students who wish to participate but are physically unable to perform some of the requirements outlined below, consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act and in consultation with the Office of Disability Resources on campus.**

1. Are you willing and able to attend laboratories on weekends (Saturdays, Sundays, or both)?

Yes       No

2. Are you able and willing to hike at least 3.5 miles in rugged and uneven terrain, in a variety of weather conditions ranging from snow and sleet, to rain storms, to full sun at 90°F with high humidity?

Yes       No       I will require ODR accommodations for this activity

3. Are you willing and able to use the bathroom outdoors in the wilderness and use leave-no-trace waste removal practices (i.e., carry out all used toilet paper and feminine hygiene products)?

Yes       No       I will require ODR accommodations for this activity

4. Are you willing to camp overnight in remote locations that lack mobile phone service?

Yes       No       I will require ODR accommodations for this activity

5. Are you willing to walk through tall grass, weeds, leaves, brush, and in wooded areas, possibly off trail?

Yes       No

6. Are you willing to hike in areas with insects and other wildlife typical of our region?

Yes       No

7. Are you able and willing to carry sufficient water, food, fieldwork supplies, rock samples, and health/safety supplies in a backpack while hiking (up to 20 lbs., depending on the field assignment)?

Yes       No       I will require ODR accommodations for this activity

10. We request that you provide any information that would help first responders treat you in the event of an emergency. This information should include - but is not limited to - any dangerous allergies (medications, foods, insect bites and stings, etc.), and any medical/physical/mental health conditions that may be exacerbated by fieldwork conditions (i.e., asthma, panic attacks, fainting spells, diabetes, existing injuries, etc.). Please use an additional sheet if necessary.

**Signed Affidavit:**

I certify the following to be true:

1. The information I have submitted in this informed consent document is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge.
2. I understand that any request for accommodation must be made with my instructor and through the Office of Disability Resources (ODR), and will be evaluated to determine the feasibility of the requested accommodation. ODR may require additional supporting documentation in some cases.
3. Declining to participate in course activities will negatively impact my grade in the course, unless:
  - a) I have discussed my needs with the Instructor ahead of time and we have mutually agreed upon an alternative assignment or some reasonable accommodation, or
  - b) I have a note from the Dean of Students.

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Applicant's Signature

Date

*If you have any questions regarding this document and/or about the specific expectations of the course (section) in which you wish to enroll, please speak with your GES advisor and/or the instructor of the GES2751 section in question.*

### List of gear you will need for this class:

- “Prep Kit” from the Bookstore (~ \$35)
- Rock hammer (instructor will give you details on the type of hammer you need; note that regular hammers that are used in construction are not acceptable)
- Hand lens
- Backpack that is comfortable to wear for extended periods of time
- Water bottle (students should make sure to carry at least 2 liters of water per day, if it is quite warm, 3 liters are required)
- Closed toed, **sturdy** shoes (no sandals!) that do not give you blisters
- Weather-appropriate clothing, gear, and basic first aid materials - *you are responsible for your own comfort in the field*
  - sunscreen
  - bug spray
  - raincoat & rain pants (note: Frog Togs ponchos are really cheap and easily go over a backpack, you can get these at Walmart or the Mast General Store)
  - sun hat and sunglasses
  - weather-appropriate warm clothing (i.e., sweatshirt/fleece/jacket)
  - toilet paper/tampons/pads/Divacup, etc. and a ziploc bag to carry out paper waste. There are no toilet facilities at field sites, only woods.
  - Any needed medications (instructors are not allowed to give you medicine in the field, including drugs like Advil and Tylenol)
  - First aid materials such as band aids, antiseptic/antibiotic ointment, etc
  - anything else you may need that fits in your backpack and will keep you happy and comfortable in the field for long hours.
  - extra clothes for any overnight trips (particularly an extra pair of socks and a winter hat) to keep warm at night; temperatures often drop into the 40s.
- Tent, sleeping bag, and sleeping pad for overnight trips.
  - If you do not have these already, you can rent them from UREC (<https://urec.appstate.edu/rental-gear>). Students and faculty frequently rent gear from UREC and it is high quality and well-maintained.
  - If you wish to purchase your own gear, there are numerous camping stores in Boone as well as second-hand outdoor gear at ReGear, and a variety of discount stores online.
  - The department will have limited sleeping bags, sleeping pads, and tents available for your use.
- Sufficient food for the amount of time required for the field trip.
  - Meals will not be provided by the instructor, so make sure you have enough food to eat for the entire time you are in the field!

### Things that are not permitted on field trips, under any circumstances:

- Controlled substances, illegal drugs, etc.
- Alcohol
- Weapons
- Pets