

**RTM Faculty/Staff Orientation Manual**  
**for**  
**Outdoor Classes**

**California State University, Northridge**  
**College of Health & Human Development**  
**Department of Recreation & Tourism Management**

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Orientation Manual for Faculty and Staff in Outdoor Recreation

**Table of Contents**

<b>1</b>	<b>PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSE AND GOALS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP AND STAFF DEFINITIONS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.a	Ratios .....	5
2.b	Teaching Assistants .....	6
2.c	Graduate Assistants .....	6
2.d	Graduate Assistant--Primary Level .....	7
2.e	Graduate Assistant--Secondary Level .....	7
2.f	Professor-in-charge .....	7
<b>3</b>	<b>SAFETY GUIDELINES (General and Specific – Consult SOP document) .....</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>RTM FORMS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>CSUN Faculty Information .....</b>	<b>11</b>

California State University, Northridge  
College of Health & Human Development  
Department of Recreation & Tourism Management  
Orientation Manual for Faculty and Staff in Outdoor Recreation

## **1 PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSE AND GOALS**

The professional area of outdoor recreation/environmental education supports the mission of the department and University in terms of providing a meaningful academic experience for all students. The outdoor faculty is committed to maintaining high standards of scholarship in all courses. The program serves several major student population groups: RTM students specializing in outdoor recreation professional preparation, Recreation Majors who take outdoor classes as electives for personal or professional development, and a cross section of students across the campus seeking personal growth and development of leisure skills in outdoor pursuits.

In addition to developing professional skills among majors, the program seeks to build within students a sound environmental ethic through nature education and interpretation. It is our belief that by raising the students' awareness of their responsibility as stewards of the earth they will lead more environmentally sustainable lifestyles. Staff are expected to use the *teachable moment* for cultural and historical interpretation as well as environmental interpretation whenever they are in the field rather than just during the RTM 351 class which is designed in large part to specifically teach environmental interpretation and adventure education. Although the priority of a skill class such as rock climbing will focus on the stated skill development objectives, we will maximize our teaching opportunity to teach our broader philosophy as stewards of the earth and its peoples.

Furthermore, the outdoor programs seek to develop in students an increased self-awareness, self-empowerment, leadership skills, and communication skills. In outdoor education this is sometimes referred to as education *in the outdoors* rather than education *about the outdoors*. The major outcomes of many of our programs are directed toward these broad issues of personal growth, leadership development and team effectiveness.

The faculty in the outdoor professional area believe it is important to work closely with other disciplines within the University. The faculty believes it is essential that outdoor recreation be made accessible to the multi-cultural community served by the University. To this end, it is important to identify and encourage potential outdoor recreation leaders from a variety of cultures and groups.

The faculty in the outdoor professional area have a continuing commitment to research. We believe that research in outdoor recreation is necessary to support the notion that outdoor recreation contributes to the student's academic performance, develops positive peer relationships, imparts to the student a sound environmental ethic, provides lifelong skills, and helps the student improve self-esteem. Opportunities for research in the classroom setting are encouraged.

Educational methods within our academic and service programs are diverse. Faculty is encouraged to use a variety of methods in order to achieve the goals and objectives of a particular class. The faculty share a common commitment to experiential education in both the area of content in certain classes (e.g. RTM 351 - Outdoor Education Methods) as well as methods of instruction for outdoor related curricula in general.

Some classes will clearly involve experiential methods as a means of creating

California State University, Northridge  
College of Health & Human Development  
Department of Recreation & Tourism Management  
Orientation Manual for Faculty and Staff in Outdoor Recreation

personal growth and will manage the level of risk and adventure in order to foster learning through a process of adaptive dissonance. Classes such as RTM 310 - Adventure Recreation and Human Relations and RTM 302 - Leadership in Recreation and Human Service clearly provide some classic experiential designs which place students in a series of progressively challenging problem-solving tasks (i.e. Walsh & Golins 1976, Wright, 1984). The problem-solving task focuses the learning experience so that students are accepting responsibility as part of a small group.

Student needs form the basis for the design and then engagement of students into learning experiences. Students volunteer for these courses within the broad context of University requirements for taking credits toward graduation. The active involvement of students is the goal and since most of our courses are elective in nature that helps achieve that end.

Student needs are varied and are always changing. Within each unique class changes are made to facilitate motivation as well as to maintain consistent acceptance of responsibility. An example of variation based on student need is our lowering of the level of physical challenge in wilderness settings over the past decade based on the dwindling lack of physical fitness and lower emotional resiliency in students due to shifts in modern urban culture. The instructor is encouraged to find the right level of challenge and recognize that this is significantly influenced by the cultural context of students. Faculty are also eager to adapt outdoor learning experiences to the special needs of students with disabilities.

Standards of performance or mastery need to be consistent with necessary outcomes. A student may not need as significant a physical challenge as two decades ago in order to achieve the desired affective outcome such as perceived emotional competence and mastery. However, students should be expected to achieve the same standard of knowledge or skill demonstration for a particular class even though there is cultural pressure to make the test easier. The lack of preparation a student may bring to the classroom just amplifies the challenge to the instructor to once again alter their method in order to achieve the outcome. Additional assistance in test preparation or dispensing information in smaller chunks are examples of shifts in methodology to achieve the cognitive or psycho-motor outcome. In the end it is about outcomes. The challenge of teaching is creating the necessary means to those ends not to diminish the level of achievement standard.

Students are provided a non-coercive opportunity to accept responsibility for their challenges and learning. Participation is frequently listed as a part of the grading rubric in the credit class experience. But this participant role is clearly defined as representing an attitude and behavior of general participation not as something which is determined by a student's choice of involvement within a specific act. In other words, a choice not to do a climb or to respond with a given frequency in group discussions is left with a student. The challenged by choice phrase is often used to represent this freedom. Students are expected to be physically present for a designed learning experience and participate fully in the activity in a significant role. This participation will vary based on the activity but will, as a minimum, include a level of being fully present and fully engaged with safety systems present within the activity. For example, a student may choose not to leap from our trapeze platform and will feel no threat to their grade for

California State University, Northridge  
College of Health & Human Development  
Department of Recreation & Tourism Management  
Orientation Manual for Faculty and Staff in Outdoor Recreation

such a choice but will be expected to participate in the group belay at the ground level among other activities.

The change process provided to students always includes a level of choice within a designed educational experience. This commitment provides a participant based rather than a strictly facilitator-based change process. Both in the more personal change process or the intellectual change process, instructors are designing based on the current level of student capability. Beginning with current needs the difficult challenge is to provide the opportunity for great progress within the time frame restrictions of the educational experience. Group and individual learning contracts is a helpful tool to maximize the change process. Instructors are encouraged to challenge students to excel and to resist the lowering of academic standards which has become a national problem.

The direct experiences provided to students are based on achieving certain learning objectives. Direct experience alone is insufficient for obtaining those objectives. Students must be engaged in a reflective process to fully capture the potential of the learning experience. Faculty may use a number of reflective exercises that will assist students to gain the insight as well as to see the application of the insight to other contexts and applications. This integration or synthesis of the lessons is the desired end. Exercises such as the group debrief or discussion, journal assignments, research papers, and on-line chats are some of the common ways in which to facilitate both generalization of learning and its transfer. The student is encouraged to explore both present and future applications of learning experiences.

## **2 LEADERSHIP AND STAFF DEFINITIONS**

It is our policy to identify new leaders from among the students taking our classes. Therefore, the outdoor recreation faculty has established a program to encourage student leadership training through a Teaching Assistant Program.

It is our policy to establish an order of preference for accepting students in the T.A. program. Priority will be given to outdoor recreation majors. Continual efforts will be made to recruit minorities and women into the TA program. In this program, there are two levels of student leaders: Teaching Assistants (T.A.) and Graduate Assistants. In addition to the T.A. program, graduates of the outdoor program or persons from outside the University with outstanding credentials in the field may be appointed as Adjunct Professors or volunteer as special lecturers.

Appointments of T.A.'s and G.A.'s must be approved by the Outdoor Coordinator but individual faculty seek to recruit and select TAs for their specifically assigned classes. All T.A.'s and G.A.'s are under the direct supervision of the professor-in-charge of the class in which they are assigned.

### **2.a Ratios**

Ratios are detailed here for the RTM program and the general protocols are

California State University, Northridge  
College of Health & Human Development  
Department of Recreation & Tourism Management  
Orientation Manual for Faculty and Staff in Outdoor Recreation

also listed in the SOP as general guidelines for both RTM and OA supervision.

All trips must have a professor-in-charge and additional support leadership (T.A.'s or G.A's or designated class leaders) to bring leadership ratio to at least 1:8 for activities such as backpacking, orienteering, winter camping and mountaineering (which includes snowshoe and cc ski travel), flat water canoeing/kayaking, sailing, and top-roped climbing, and caving. High ropes course event ratios will be a minimum of 1:12. Group initiatives will be a minimum of 1:24 depending on the specific initiative. Rock climbing classes must have a minimum safety ratio of 1:8 but will frequently have a ratio of 1:5 for instructional purposes depending on the conditions. Water based classes will maintain the ratio of 1:12 when on the water. Higher ratios, as determined in consultation with the Department Outdoor Coordinator or OA Manager, may be required for any activity under special situations.

In general conditions ratios are assuming provision for some combination of 2 staff for wilderness course situations in backcountry environments. Certain front country situations may have a single instructor for class supervision though generally there will be 2 staff. Normally this will be a professor-in-charge and a T.A. or G.A in the case of RTM programs and OA will have a combination of Primary and Secondary/Observer to represent the 2 staff minimum. Thus a given course may have a ratio of 1:8 and would have 2 assigned staff for anywhere from 1-16 students. Limitations the university places on minimum class size will usually provide a functional ratio of 2:15 depending on the class if we are allowed to continue with current policy.

In youth based programs, all supervision will include a minimum of 2 faculty/staff and staff will maintain a publically visible interaction with any youth under their supervision (i.e. no isolated, non-observable interaction in consideration of child abuse issues). RTM currently has an approved waiver from general CSUN HR guidelines for the mandatory third party background check for youth programs because adult supervisors come with the youth group. Sponsored programs without adult sponsors for youth will be required to file the traditional third party check.

## **2.b Teaching Assistants**

**Qualifications:** In addition to having successfully completed a relevant course, T.A.'s must have a commitment to safety, willingness to follow instructions, and having achieved or in process of certification in basic first aid and CPR. Duties will be expanded to include some instructional experience under the direct supervision of the professor as warranted. As the experience level of the T.A. increases, the level of responsibility may increase accordingly. TAs do not need to be a major in the RTM program.

## **2.c Graduate Assistants**

The Graduate Assistant classification is reserved for those individuals who are graduate students at CSUN. A Graduate Assistant student appointed to serve in this capacity does not need to be a classified RTM major.

Under certain circumstances, a Graduate Assistant may be asked to lead a field trip where he/she carries out the duties of the "professor in charge." Therefore, it is essential that the GA's be selected with care for this level of responsibility. For the purpose of identifying those individuals qualified to assume the role as trip leader (professor in charge) there are

California State University, Northridge  
College of Health & Human Development  
Department of Recreation & Tourism Management  
Orientation Manual for Faculty and Staff in Outdoor Recreation

established two levels of GA's: primary and secondary.

It is the policy of this faculty that no GA will be in charge of a trip unless he/she is a primary level leader and has another GA or a, TA accompanying him/her.

## **2.d Graduate Assistant--Primary Level**

The individual classified in this level must have a minimum of three years of varied wilderness leadership experience, demonstrate mature judgment as determined by observation on at least one training trip, and, where possible, interview(s) with former associates. An WFR (Wilderness First Responder) certification is required. The individual must have solid teaching skills, mastery of appropriate technical skills, and be able to represent the philosophy of the outdoor recreation program and the mission of the department.

It is essential and mandatory that a Graduate Assistant-Primary Level, have strong human relations skills, and have a command presence as a leader. He/she must be thoroughly familiar with the department emergency procedures and all other policies stated in this manual.

## **2.e Graduate Assistant--Secondary Level**

In general, should ascribe to the above standards but may lack field time experience and/or need strengthening in a skill area. (For example may lack WFR but has other First Aid training). However, the individual should show great promise as a wilderness leader and have strengths in other areas.

Note: The Department Chair may waive one or more of the above requirements for an individual who has considerable leadership experience or other relevant qualifications.

## **2.f Professor-in-charge**

In general, the Professor-in-charge must meet the above standards for a Graduate Assistant (Primary Level) and have been appointed as a tenure track Professor, University Lecturer or an Adjunct Professor as defined by the Administrative Handbook. This appointment will be recommended by Department Chair and submitted for review to the Provost by considering the following qualifications:

1. Master's degree in outdoor recreation or closely related field preferred. Bachelor's degree required.
2. Demonstrated competencies in appropriate outdoor recreation skills and have verifiable knowledge of the subject matter.
3. Wilderness First Aid and CPR training with current certification in Wilderness First Responder (EMT preferred).
4. Highly desirable: teaching outdoor recreation in higher education.
5. Highly desirable: current membership in a related professional organization.
6. Highly desirable: evidence of continuing education in the field of outdoor pursuits.

### **3 SAFETY GUIDELINES (General)**

*Safety is to be an integral part of the training, and experiential process of our programs. It is to be woven into all department programs and taught by every instructor through his or her own conduct, example, and approach to the solution of problems. Safety is not only overt precautions to prevent accidents, but also an analytical attitude toward every experience.*

*As an instructor, your greatest responsibility during a course is for the well-being and safety of your students. You already have the essential qualities to carry that responsibility successfully. But there is a continued need for checking yourself and sharpening your awareness. The principle of the accident-dynamic demands alertness. "If accidents happened when we thought they would, they wouldn't". (Jim Udall)*

*The following set of questions can help to keep you vigilant as situations develop. "Am I in the right place, at the right time, with the right equipment, with the right people, and with the right level of alertness, clarity and energy?" (VOBS)*

*On the grim side, another attitude check is to imagine yourself before a judge and a jury explaining how a student died while under your care.*

*As a training resource to help us to be at our best in terms of 'Thinking and Doing Safety' we have three directives for you as an instructor.*

*#1. Review the training resource in appendix 1 of this manual. Part I covers the 'risk assessment' process used by RTM for each of the activity and/or activity venues used in courses. The training slides show a sample risk assessment table/chart. There will be a completed 'table/chart' for your course area available from the Outdoor Coordinator. Familiarize yourself with that risk assessment sheet.*

*#2. The pdf file of the powerpoint training slides in appendix 1 has a second section - Part II. Part II reviews a safety model for making decisions in the field setting based on an adaption of some early work by Jim Udal from Outward Bound. The model is about 'thinking' about safety and having an appropriate world view about the nature of accident dynamics, the dynamic nature of physical environments, student factors, and instructor attitude factors. Understand the model.*

*3. There is a separate document use must know: The Safety Operational Protocols (SOP) document that can be found at our accreditation site or the Canvas outdoor training site or get from the outdoor coordinator. Please review that periodically. SOP represent our practices (rules as it were) that we use in different activity venues. The SOPs have been developed from our internal 'risk assessment' process (#1 above) as well as consultation with other professional practice in the industry. SOPs are essential but they are not sufficient. Field Instructors still need to make appropriate judgements (thinking in the moments as outlined in #2).*

*The Outdoor Coordinator will provide an opportunity to answer any questions.*



California State University, Northridge  
College of Health & Human Development  
Department of Recreation & Tourism Management  
Orientation Manual for Faculty and Staff in Outdoor Recreation

*Instructors should also take advantage of other training opportunities that deal with larger mental health or behavioral health issues that might arise on a course (though this is not anticipated as a regular event given our student population). The QPR training (Question Persuade, Refer) from the counseling center will be available to you to help with adverse student reactions you might encounter.*

*Also - the mandatory employee training on Title 9 and Gender Equity has a module on de-escalation and you will receive emails directly from HR requiring you to take that online training.*

*Below are some common procedures in pre-trip planning. Some of these are re-stated in the SOP document.*

### **3.a Instructor Guidelines**

While students are the primary protectors of their personal well being and safety, instructors must assure that students are aware of general safety guidelines, their role in the safety plan, and any specific knowledge or skill necessary for their safety.

#### **3.a.1 Pre-Trip Information**

Prior to every trip each student must be given a trip information sheet providing at least the following information:

- a. Date
- b. Location of trip
- c. Directions to trail head or other designated start
- d. Estimated time of departure and return to trail head
- e. Driving precautions where applicable
- f. Equipment required from student
- g. Potential trip hazards
- h. Trip policies from Section 3.a.2.

**This pre-trip form as well as release forms and transportation forms are provided at an orientation meeting.**

#### **3.a.2 Trip Policies**

- a. No firearms, no pets; no friends or family, not in the class, are allowed to participate in actual field experiences.
- b. No illegal drugs, marijuana, alcohol or firearms are allowed on the trip. And students can be given a failing grade assignment for disregard of these safety policy prohibitions.
- c. Students are expected to follow safety guidelines and procedure presented by staff.

#### **3.a.3 Post-trip**

Return all University equipment in good, clean condition.

Please review the Pre-Trip Checklist that is to be submitted prior to your departure for the field.

California State University, Northridge  
College of Health & Human Development  
Department of Recreation & Tourism Management  
Orientation Manual for Faculty and Staff in Outdoor Recreation

The form is included in the forms section at the online depository and also available from the outdoor coordinator. It is listed here as a means of communication.

The pre-trip packet submitted to the outdoor coordinator at least 3 days prior to the trip will include:

- Pre-Trip Checklist
- Student Release and Health Statement Forms (one set to field/one set to office)
- Student Driver Forms
- Student Information Sheet
- Trip Planning Sheet

The packet can be submitted as an electronic folder (encrypted zip folder - all zip folders are encrypted) or as a paper packet left in the coordinator's campus mailbox. Student Teaching Assistants can deliver the forms to the office on your behalf but in the 'duty' created with student privacy would ask you to please submit in a sealed envelope if not personally delivered by you.

## **Pre-Trip Checklist for Instructor/Staff-in-Charge**

**(do these items and then submit this form as part of the packet of forms that go to the outdoor coordinator)**

- ☐ **Weather report verified (NOAA or other)**
- ☐ **Student Forms Collected** (Duplicates in Instructor Packet/ Originals at Office)
  - ☐ **Health Statement/ Waiver**
  - ☐ **Transportation Forms (if student drivers)**
- ☐ **Review first aid knowledge and skills**
- ☐ **Check the contents of the First Aid and Emergency Field Kit against list of contents.**
- ☐ **Check for additional emergency forms in the kit and/or instructor packet.**
  - ☐ **Emergency Call Guide**
  - ☐ **Lost Student Checklist**
  - ☐ **Field Incident Commander Checklist**
  - ☐ **Runner's Checklist**
  - ☐ **Vehicle Accident Checklist**
  - ☐ **Accident/Incident Report Form**

- ☐ **Check with students regarding special medication, allergies, special limitations**
- ☐ **Trip Planning Sheet Filed with Outdoor Coordinator**
- ☐ **Trip Gear Lists Completed**

### **3 Other RTM FORMS for Outdoor Field Trips**

The forms listed below are regularly used in your role as a course instructor. These forms are available from the Outdoor Coordinator; both at the department office and electronically.

- **Academic Field Trip Participant List**

To be completed by faculty to have a record all student participants' emergency contact information before departing on a University sponsored field trip. The existing class roster combined with the Health Statement and Waiver form satisfies this requirement.

- **Accident/Incident Report (RTM)**

The Professor-in-Charge files this report as soon as possible after a field trip accident or injury.

- **Accident/Injury Follow-up Form (RTM)**

This Department Chair Report of an accident follow-up meeting should be held within one week of any field trip or outdoor experience accident/injury. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the action taken prior to, during and after a field trip incident and to determine if changes in procedures are required to assure students' safety and well-being. Not all accident/incident reports will require a follow-up form. Outdoor Coordinator discretion based on the characteristics of the incident.

- **Authorization to Operate Privately Owned Vehicle - Student**

To be completed when a student will operate a private vehicle on a university sponsored trip/activity.

- **Authorization to Use Privately Owned Vehicle on State Business (STD 261)**

This certification verifies the employee's private vehicle has the minimum amounts of liability insurance coverage, is in safe mechanical condition, and is adequate for use in accordance with

California State University, Northridge  
College of Health & Human Development  
Department of Recreation & Tourism Management  
Orientation Manual for Faculty and Staff in Outdoor Recreation

the State Administrative Manual (SAM) section 0753. This form advises the State employee that adequate vehicle insurance coverage must be provided by the employee's personal insurance and that personal vehicle insurance is primary coverage in case of vehicle accident.

The supervisor authorized to approve travel shall retain the STD 261 completed authorization form in the employee's personnel file. The authorization form is valid for a period not to exceed one year. Once the STD form 261 is completed, it may be initialed and dated annually by the employee to certify adequate personal auto insurance is current and that the private vehicle is safe for state business use.

- **Challenge Course Release Form (Adult)**  
This releases the University from liability associated with the challenge courses and is used for student and community patrons at the ropes course.
- **Challenge Course Release Form (Youth/Minor)**  
This releases the University from liability associated with the challenge courses, for minors and is used for student and community patrons at the ropes course who are under 18 years of age.
- **Emergency Call Guide**  
This is the listing of emergency service providers and RTM contacts. Insure that the copy in your field trip first aid kit or instructor packet is current version. Update your list prior to each outing.
- **Field Trip Itinerary Form**  
File this form with the Outdoor Coordinator at least three days prior to any outing.
- **RTM Health Statement (Adult)**  
This form provides the Department with student medical information and advises the adult student of the field trip risks and the need for medical insurance. This form is used for all students over 18 years of age and is combined with the Informed Consent form.
- **RTM Health Statement (Minor)**  
This form provides the Department with student medical information and advises the minor student's guardian/parent of the field trip risks and the need for medical insurance. This form is used for all minor students and is combined with the Informed Consent form
- **RTM Informed Consent, Waiver of Liability and Hold Harmless Agreement (Adult)**  
To be completed by all adult student participants before departing on a University sponsored field trip or in-class

California State University, Northridge  
College of Health & Human Development  
Department of Recreation & Tourism Management  
Orientation Manual for Faculty and Staff in Outdoor Recreation

adventure activity. This form is used for all students over 18 years of age and is combined with the Health Statement as page 2.

- **RTM Informed Consent, Waiver of Liability and Hold Harmless Agreement (Minor)**

To be completed by the parent/guardian of all minor student participants before departing on a University sponsored field trip or in-class adventure activity. This form is used for all minor students and is combined with the Health Statement as page 2.

- **Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report for Employee Injury**

The supervisor completes this form [[Form 620 \(Rev 2-07\)](#)] for every reported employee accident. Instructions on what to do for an employee injury see "[What to do after a work injury occurs](#)" for supervisors at the HR website.

#### **4. General Faculty Guidelines -**

As part of the faculty role you will be provided with university level 'orientation' material by the Chair of the Department or the Outdoor Coordinator. This will include information about collective bargaining, human resources, background checks as well as important details like class rosters, grade entry, Learning Management System (i.e. Canvas), faculty meetings, and so forth. Contact the Chair or Coordinator if you have any questions.