

## Submitted Abstract

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## Abstract

The University Centre in Svalbard (UNIS) is a small research university located in the town of Longyearbyen, the main settlement on Svalbard, an archipelago in the arctic ocean, 78° North. UNIS is part of the Norwegian state-run university system. On a typical year UNIS can host over one thousand students and researchers for both courses and research with fieldwork being a compulsory component. The student body is made up of roughly 50% Norwegian students and 50% international students, representing 43 different countries in 2019. Fieldwork can range from simple operations such as a few students counting birds on the side of the road outside of the university building, to complicated operations such as running radar lines on remote crevassed glaciers. The section for operations and field safety employs eleven full time staff to carry out the safety training, quality assurance and safe operations of all fieldwork.

As UNIS enters its 30th year of operation in 2023, three decades of experience of leading fieldwork in a high arctic environment, has led to many best practices and UNIS being recognized as a leading institution in performing fieldwork in the arctic. However, with such large numbers of people going out into the field under various circumstances, challenges will always be a factor. Common hazards encountered during fieldwork in Svalbard include weather; avalanches; glaciers; wildlife; sea ice; mountainous terrain; among others, with the human factor affecting all operations.

Both best practices and challenges experienced over seven years as an employee in the section for operations and field safety will be the main contribution for the International Mountain Conference 2022. UNIS can facilitate safe practices in the field for thousands of field days each year based on the following pillars: a wide offering of safety courses both generic for normal university courses and ‘catered’ to the individual scientist; the ‘HSE brief’, a compulsory meeting before all fieldwork; and the expertise and experience of its staff using ‘experience feedback’.

Naturally, even with a comprehensive safety system, incidents and accidents in the field do occur every field season. While UNIS can be a leading example of how to successfully carry out fieldwork in harsh environments, UNIS can also benefit from developing an even more robust safety system. Examples of both successes and failures in the field are used as examples.