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StudentShapers Recruitment: Calling all students with an interest in Fieldwork Mental and Physical Health

Supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of students on geoscience field courses

Bursary: £365/week (4 full time weeks)

Who should apply:

Students with a strong desire to critically evaluate and improve the current mental and physical health of student who undertake geoscience fieldwork – focussing on the 1st year field teaching. We anticipate that students enrolled on programmes in the Department of Earth Science and Engineering who have undertaken one or more field course (ideally including the residential 1st year course) will be best placed to meet these criteria. Preference will be given to students who are not in their final year.

Campus/Location:

South Kensington; some work can be done remotely, but on campus in-person attendance will normally be expected for the staff-student project meetings.

Project details:

This project aims to look in depth at the first-year geoscience field module, a 2-week summer residential course in South Spain run by Department of Earth Science and Engineering, from a mental and physical health perspective. The fieldwork, which introduce students to fieldwork for the first time, combines previously classroom taught concepts with real-life geological settings, focusing on data collection, problem solving, the development of core geological skills and independence of learning. In addition, as a residential course, it places students together for a prolonged period in shared spaces allowing the development of key social skills and cooperation within the student body. However, from feedback, we know the student experience, for both neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals, it can be daunting in the lead-up and overwhelming and/or exhausting while in the field.

Figure 1 – 1st Year ESE students undertaking field observation work in sunny and very warm Southern Spain.

Students (up to 3 in number) partaking in this project will in the first 2-weeks undertake research on current best practice (i.e., inclusivity, mental and physical health) and how these map to the current field course. During this initial period the students will identify areas of research that they can take ownership of. The results of this will inform the latter half of the project, the remaining 2 weeks, which will involve synthesising the information and producing a detailed group led report. The report will breakdown the issues identified and ascertaining what (if any) others may exist, detail what processes and procedures are already in place (if applicable), and finally consider what modifications to the module are recommended following the identified best practice. Staff will support the students during the project with regular progress meetings and group sessions. The collaboration will also be very insightful for both staff and the students involved. As throughout the project's duration all parties will gain novel insight and construct bespoke solutions, that balances the needs and requirements of the course, with the welfare and experience of the students.

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The outcomes from this project will help give a foundation for future students to have an improved physical and mental health experience during the fieldtrip. These are both prerequisites for good learning and will help increase the number of students that will see their first fieldtrip experience as a memorable and happy. Moreover, the impacts of the project are longer-term as any recommendations and modifications made, unless very negatively viewed by students or staff, are likely to carry through over multiple trip iterations. Additionally, as these will be derived from current best practice, as identified from the projects research phase, these recommendations have a wider scope to improve the higher-level field courses run in the Department of Earth Science and Engineering.

The projected 4 weeks (full time) schedule for this project will start on 3rd July 2023 and end on 28th July 2023.

How to apply:

This links to an 'expression of interest' - 300-500 words on why a student wishes to engage with the project. Informal interviews or meetings can be used for selection if appropriate. (Delete this text, or add to the text below if you wish)

Applications (300-500 words) should be made via the 'Student Expression of Interest' form on the StudentShapers website (here) or accessed using the above QR code. This will then be distributed directly to the appropriate staff partner.

Deadline: *31st March 2023*

Contact details: *Dr Alan Spencer (Earth Science & Engineering), alan.spencer@ic.ac.uk, for further information.*