



A Geograns update. New experiences to teach earth sciences to students older than 55

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How to teach earth science to students that have access to the university after the age of 55 is a challenge due to the different background of the students. They ranged from those with only basic education (sometimes they finished school at the age of 9) to well educate students such as university professors, physicians or engineers. Students older than 55 are enrolled in what is called the university programme NauGran project at the University of Valencia. They follow diverse topics, from health science to Arts. Since 2006 the Department of Geography and the NauGran project developed the Club for Geographers and Walkers called Geograns. The objective is to teach Earth Science in the field as a strategy to improve the knowledge of the students with a direct contact with the territory. This initiative reached a successful contribution by the students, with 70 students registered. The successful strategy we have developed since then is to base our teaching on field work. Every lecture is related to some visits to the field. A pre-excursion lecture introduces the key questions of the study site (hydrology, geology, botany, geomorphology...). During the field work we review all the topics and the students are encouraged to ask and discuss any of the topics studied. Finally, a post-excursion lecture is given to review the acquired knowledge. During the last academic year 2007-2008 the excursion focussed on: (i) energy sources: problems and solutions, with visit to nuclear, wind and hydraulic power stations; (i) human disturbances and humankind as landscaper, with visits to wetlands, river gorges and Iberian settlements; and (iii) human activities and economical resources, with visits to vineyards and wineries and orange fields devoted to organic farming. This is being a positive strategy to teach Earth Science to a wide and heterogeneous group of students, as they improve their knowledge with a direct contact with the landscape, other colleagues and teachers in the field. Key Words: Teaching, Earth Science, Field work, Earth Science, Environment.