

Destination: Geology?

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“While we teach, we learn” (Roman philosopher Seneca)

One of the most beneficial ways to remember a theory or concept is to explain it to someone else. The offer of fieldwork and visits to exciting destinations is arguably the easiest way to spark a students’ interest in any subject. Geology at A-Level (age 16-18) in the United Kingdom incorporates significant elements of field studies into the curriculum with many students choosing the subject on this basis and it being a key factor in consolidating student knowledge and understanding.

Geology maintains a healthy annual enrollment with interest in the subject increasing in recent years. However, it is important for educators not to loose sight of the importance of recruitment and retention of students. Recent flexibility in the subject content of the UK curriculum in secondary schools has provided an opportunity to teach the basic principles of the subject to our younger students and fieldwork provides a valuable opportunity to engage with these students in the promotion of the subject.

Promotion of the subject is typically devolved to senior students at Hessle High School and Sixth Form College, drawing on their personal experiences to engage younger students. Prospective students are excited to learn from a guest speaker, so why not use our most senior students to engage and promote the subject rather than their normal subject teacher?

A-Level geology students embarking on fieldwork abroad, understand their additional responsibility to promote the subject and share their understanding of the field visit. They will typically produce a series of lessons and activities for younger students using their newly acquired knowledge. Senior students also present to whole year groups in seminars, sharing knowledge of the location’s geology and raising awareness of the exciting destinations offered by geology.

Geology fieldwork is always planned, organised and led by the member of staff to keep costs low, with recent visits to the Canary Islands and Japan. The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, provided additional funding to support the recent visit to Japan, which enabled visits to Mount Fuji as well as investigating structural geology in Kobe and Tokyo.

“The opportunity to visit Japan really broadened my understanding of geology and sharing that experience with fellow students helped me to reinforce my knowledge of the subject.” Jack, geology student, Age 18.