

Is field work good? An analysis of the student view.

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This project used paired questionnaires with closed and open response questions before and after a residential field class to ask ~360 geography, earth & environmental science students at 8 UK universities about (amongst other things):

1. their feelings towards their course
2. their feelings towards study
3. their feelings towards field work
4. their feelings towards fellow students and staff
5. their feelings about the places visited and the local people .

Overall, the research indicates field work has a positive effect on students' feelings about the above (except for 5), though we were surprised at the level of pre-field class anxiety (30% of the 360 surveyed expressed anxiety as one of their top 3 pre-field class feelings). Post field class responses demonstrate the positive effect of field work on students, supporting anecdotal views that field work is indeed good!

Look at <http://www.gees.ac.uk/projtheme/pedres/pedresfw/pedrfig.htm> for more information, and look out for a publication in Journal of Geographical Education later this year.

'Worst - having to go along with group decisions I would sooner have submitted individual report. Best - just learning so many different things and experiencing them.'

'Fun and interesting. Everyone (class and lecturers) became closer. Enjoyed all the activities provided for us.'

'Mainly the social side but also I did enjoy the work we had to do. Felt I learnt a lot'.

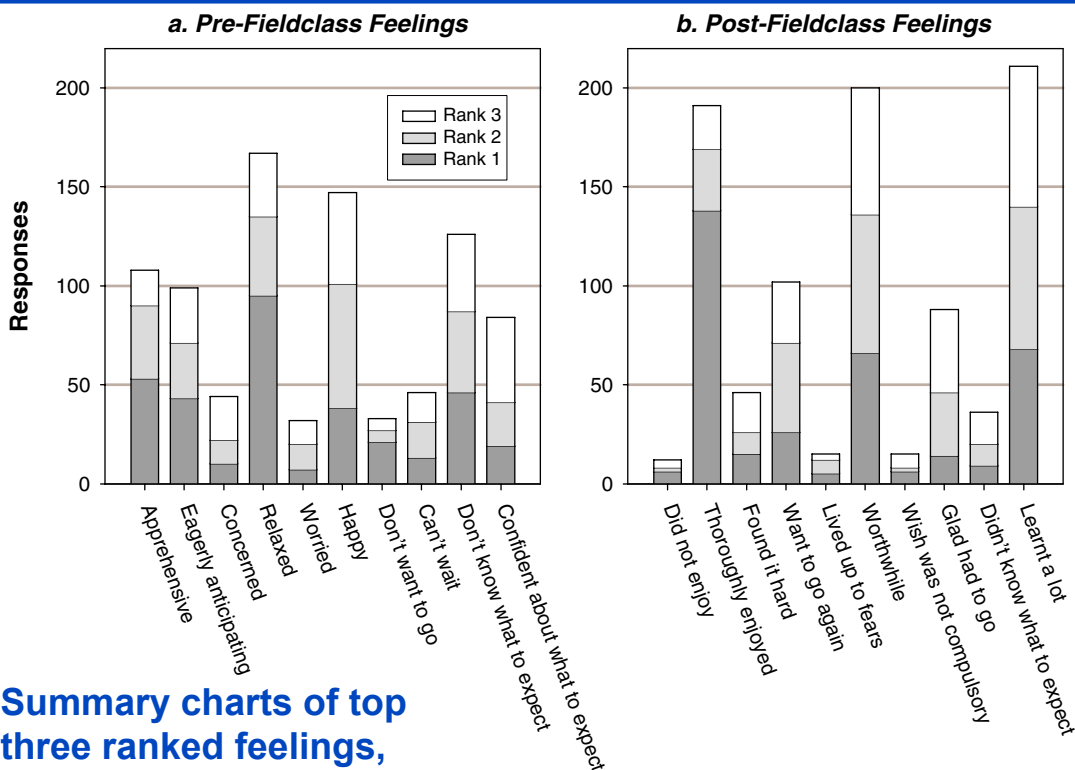
'Learning a new and different way of life, and different communities, meeting new people (including Enza the super model drag queen).'

'It was very educational and of far more benefit than studying in the library. I got to know the other students and staff better.'

'The volume of information that we were expected to absorb. Getting to know fellow students and lecturers better. Seeing reality rather than textbooks.'

'Having an enjoyable two weeks while getting better at practical environmental science skills and presentations, meeting deadlines, but I think more of this type of practical work should be done at least once a month outdoors near our university area'.

'Finally being able to visualise my theoretical work in the field. This has helped me to understand the work much more'.



Summary charts of top three ranked feelings, before and after field

'Found it really hard - although not totally happy in the field I believe it is important.'

'Being able to learn about geology and physical aspects of the subject. Making good friends and getting to know fun and interesting people. To enjoy a challenge.'

'Understanding the importance of keeping a good notebook'.

'All the students getting to know each other through group work and socialising in the evening.'

'Using what was learned in class to perform fieldwork as a team'.

'Getting hands on experience instead of text book learning.'

'The outdoor work made the topics we studied interesting and easy to understand.'