

# Enhancing the transition from school to university through an active learning induction

**Jim Andrews<sup>(1)</sup> and Joy Maloney<sup>(2)</sup>**

<sup>(1)</sup> School of Ocean and Earth Science, <sup>(2)</sup> School of Civil Engineering and the Environment, University of Southampton

# Why bother with induction?

A number of studies suggest good induction assists student outcomes

- Transition from school to university
- Retention
- Socialisation
- Progress

# Induction for Ocean and Earth Science (SOES) students at the University of Southampton

- Since 2006/7 all of the first teaching week in the semester 1 used for a broad range of active learning experiences.
- Prior to 2006-2007, SOES offered a small scale week zero induction for first year students, -a welcome from the Head of School, an introduction to tutors and the completion of some key administrative tasks. At the beginning of the following week, students started modules and began their studies.

# Drivers for change

- Extend a very clear welcome to students
- Prepare students for different ways of learning
- Respond to increased student fees
- Ensure students become more familiar with key people and geography
- Enable students to get an immediate taste of the core discipline specific skills, through field work and boat work
- Ensure that all students had an appropriate level of relevant first aid skills

Aims: To enable all students to feel welcomed, supported and informed by

- Introducing students to their tutor, shadow tutor (who supports students in the absence of their main tutor) and peer group
- Enabling effective networking with a wider range of their peers
- Ensuring that all students begin their studies equipped with an understanding of studying at SOES and at the University generally

# Outcomes: Students to be able to

- Describe the roles of key members of staff
- Identify some key available resources, both physical and electronic
- Describe their own role in different first aid situations (on field and boat work especially)
- Produce some initial reflections on their strengths, weaknesses and areas for development (PDP)
- Identify some first thoughts on the graduate jobs market and how they can use University for preparation (Career orientation)

# Key elements of induction

- A short introduction from the School's Employability Coordinator, emphasising the opportunities for development of individual student's skills, followed by a short session from the School's Careers Service Adviser
- A review of the of the aims and outcomes for the week - expectations and feedback from previous year(s)

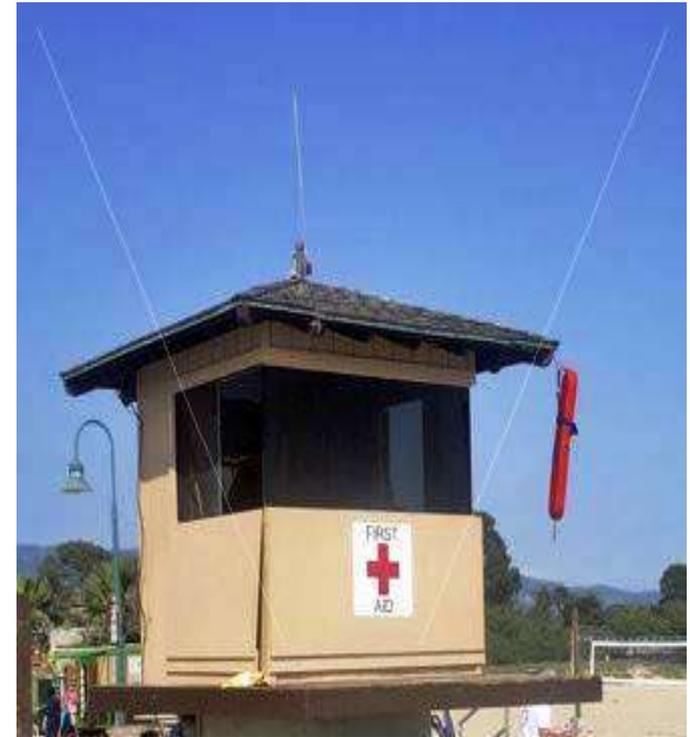
# Key elements: Field work at Lulworth Cove

- Appreciation of safety in the field
- Ability to locate, observe & record information
- Familiarity with School protocols for completion of field maps ("field slips") and field notebooks
- Ability to construct a simple geological field map
- Competency in the use of compass-clinometer



# Key Elements: First aid training - A four hour certificated course

- Recovery position
- Major bleeding
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) including drowning
- Hypothermia
- Sunstroke and heatstroke
- Head injuries and concussion
- Lower limb injuries



# Key elements: teambuilding

- Three and a half hours with a warm up activity composed of:
  - Agreement on how the group will work (ground rules);
  - Three outdoor activities with student reflection recorded in student pack;
  - Completion and discussion of learning styles questionnaire
  - A card sort exercise to encourage discussion and reflection on the skills and attributes needed for effective learning at University.



**Marble run**

# Key elements: teambuilding

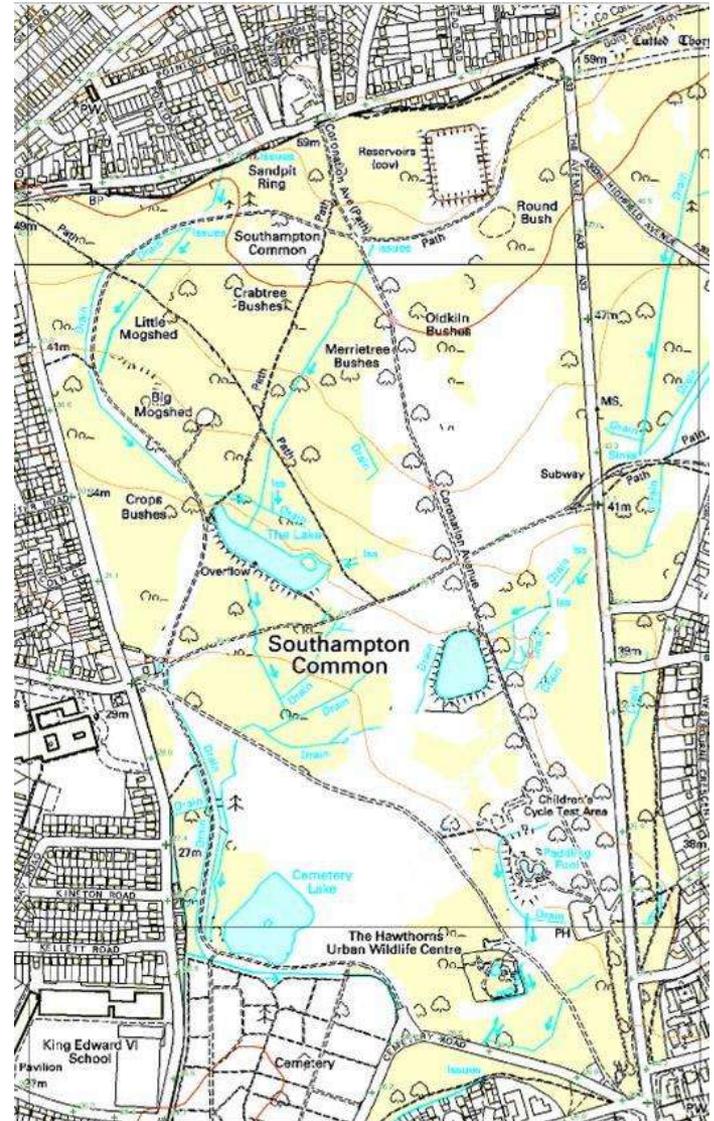
- Students are allocated to new (non tutor) groups to meet a wider range of peers. Group size is about 8-10
- Learning groups are facilitated by a trained tutor who has attended a University “working with groups” training day. About 60% of the School’s academic staff have attended this day
- A tutor pack is provided to support all activities



**Blindfold square**

# Key Elements: Navigation skills

- A three hour set of activities on Southampton Common, led by a member of academic staff and supported by Post Graduate demonstrators. Exercises develop the following:
- Pace & compass, closed compass traversing, and resection
- Height estimation
- Navigation and measuring plunge and bearing
- Health and safety and navigation



# Key elements: other



- **Library**
- **Health and safety:** *A one hour session covering the usual areas of legislation and responsibility, supported by discipline specific examples*
- **Online quiz:** *on academic protocols and procedures, with prizes for three highest scoring students. Tests knowledge/understanding of student handbook*
- **Tutorial:** *Students, in tutor groups, have a one hour tutorial at the end of the week where they:*
  - Discuss any issues arising from induction week*
  - Discuss any issues arising from card sort exercise or quiz*
  - Complete an evaluation for the week*
  - Discuss evaluation*

# Challenges

- Get the staff on board (important that induction did not impose significant new workloads for staff)
- Negotiate absences from week 1 classes with other Schools
- Timetable activities for 180 students
- Maintain a well trained pool of staff to deliver some of the teaching (especially team building)
- continued effort needed to champion soft skill development in the face of an innate conservatism amongst the academic community

# Evaluation

- Three years of evaluation data based on feedback from students. In 2006 -2007, feedback from staff was also collected.
- Feedback from students on their experiences overwhelmingly positive: all learning outcomes now considered to be met by at least 95% of the cohort
- Most popular; First aid, field work, team building; “motivating, enjoyable” (field work), “good fun”, “learnt new skills” (team building) and “excellent, a good refresher” (first aid).
- Feedback from staff also extremely positive: induction did not impose significant new workloads
- 74% of 2009 graduates said that helpfulness of induction was good or very good (Univ Soton SEQ)

# Wider context

- An increasing willingness for students to engage very early in issues of employability
- An immediate introduction to reflective practice via teambuilding and tutorial exercises



# Summary

- The School has a very successful, more positive vehicle to welcome students and to make them feel part of a wider community
- Only achieved with considerable dedication, time and effort by the core planning team and support and involvement of many academic and administrative staff
- Since 2006-2007, the timing and content of the week has evolved, based on student feedback and some realisation that some content could be reduced without diluting the quality.
- A consensus for both staff and students is that this radical introduction to study at the School has been well worth the input.