

GUIDE ON FIELDWORK PROJECT - CORONA

FACULTY OF SCIENCE

10 July 2020

The current measures relating to the coronavirus and the resulting restrictions on the education sector also entail far-reaching consequences for the fieldwork of the EEE domain. Fieldwork is a prime example of an educational activity that cannot continue – or that can only continue on a very small scale – as a result of the current restrictive measures, but which is nonetheless essential for students seeking to reach the final attainment levels of their degree programme.

This is a particularly awkward situation for the degree programmes in question, of which the Faculty of Science is keenly aware, not least because there is no end in sight to the restrictions.

1.1. THINKTANK FIELDWORK

A thinktank session has been held at which the options for organizing fieldwork in periods 5 and 6 were discussed. Those taking part in the session were representatives from the Earth Sciences (B), Earth, Economics, and Sustainability (B), Earth Sciences (M), and Hydrology (M) programmes. Since the rules and guidelines in place to combat the spread of Covid-19 have only been partially relaxed, we will continue to apply the insights of the think tank in Semester 1 of the coming academic year.

The current situation may mean that our students fall behind schedule with their studies.

In order to limit this delay as much as possible, we are looking at ways of reshaping the curriculum so that the fieldwork can be carried out once the restrictive measures have been lifted, and in the meantime of enabling students to pursue a curriculum that can be taken using remote online teaching. Below are the points that were raised during the session, as well as several ways of looking for options for temporarily restructuring the curriculum.

We realize this will require a considerable effort from everyone involved. Your hard work and involvement are therefore very much appreciated.

1.2. WHAT ARE THE AREAS OF DIFFICULTY?

It was mentioned during the thinktank session that a distinction should be made between field trips and conducting research independently. Much of the fieldwork takes place abroad and cannot be transferred to the Netherlands. We are therefore bound to a significant degree by the restrictions and measures imposed by foreign governments. There is no indication as to when they might be lifted and when travel will again be possible. Ten Bachelor's and five Master's fieldwork projects will be affected in the near future. Given that every fieldwork project is unique, individual options should be explored for each, based on the particular context.

1.3. MOVING THE CURRICULUM AROUND

One of the options for limiting as much as possible the impact on students' progress is to temporarily alter the curriculum by adjusting the learning objectives. For example, fieldwork from years 1 and 2 could be combined (the fieldwork would have to be postponed until it can be done again), while the rest of the subject could be completed. This would require a change to the learning objectives (or some of them) in the curriculum. This measure would also require modified testing methods in order get part of the course completed and out of the way. Such action would have to be taken in conjunction with the Programme Committee; despite the crisis, this does concern the programme curriculum. Starting the course, but not concluding it until the fieldwork can be carried out, is another option. It would mean that the relevant credits could only be awarded later on in the curriculum. However, now that the BSA standard has been

deferred by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), this would not be a problem for students.

1.4. PRACTICALS

It emerged during the thinktank session that there are fieldwork projects (Earth Sciences (M)) that involve bringing stones from the field that are subsequently examined in the lab. One possibility is that this type of fieldwork could be split into two sections. The second part would then be regarded as a practical, for which a separate guide would be drawn up (see BETA information page). An alternative for the first part could be conceived whereby the final attainment levels could be achieved without having to actually travel (abroad), if not possible.

1.5. FINALLY

We realize that fieldwork is an aspect of learning in the Faculty of Sciences that has major consequences on scheduling the curriculum in these uncertain times. The numbers of fieldwork projects and their individual specific features means that we have to look at the options on a subject-by-subject basis, rather than have a fixed set of parameters to be applied across the faculty.