

Undergraduate Masters: proving their employability credentials



The continued success of the SOES' 4-year undergraduate Masters programmes has been further highlighted by the achievements of our 2005 graduates from these schemes.

Above: Master of Geology graduates of 2005

Left: Terhi Salo drilling for minerals in Namibia.

Of 24 Master of Geology students being awarded their degrees in July 2005, 20 of them are now employed across the wide spectrum of geological industries: from mineral and hydrocarbon exploration to environmental geology, the geotechnical sector and museum work. In 2006 the SOES has continued its unparalleled record of securing the rare and competitive industrial placements in the mineral exploration industry, as to date, 5 of our students have been awarded places with Anglo American and Rio Tinto – a record even for us!



This newsletter is published by the School of Ocean and Earth Science at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton (NOCS). The School offers undergraduate and post graduate training across the full range of Ocean and Earth sciences with an Excellent grading for teaching quality and a grade 5A in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise.

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soes news

News from the
School of Ocean and Earth Science
at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton



Top-up fees, fieldwork and..... Bermuda?

From September 2006 we will be utilising some of the newly introduced top-up fee funds to pay for travel and accommodation expenses for compulsory residential field courses (the 5-week geological mapping project excepted: for this, students will receive a standard contribution towards travel and accommodation, regardless of their destination). We hope this will demonstrate our constructive use of top-up fees to improve the student learning experience - in future, students will only need to cover their own eating (and drinking?) requirements when undertaking fieldwork.

Alongside this development, in September our incoming 4th year Master of Marine Biology students will participate in the first running of an exciting new 10-day field course that will see them heading out to the Bermuda Biological Station for Research, Inc., in the Caribbean. Here our students will gain hands-on knowledge of tropical ecology, especially relating to coral reefs, seagrass and mangrove ecosystems. This 4th year module will specifically enable students to study marine taxa not found at the UK's

high latitudes, concentrating on such organisms as cnidarians (the group which includes corals and soft corals). This is the second new residential field course we have added to our curriculum in as many years – our geologists now being able to choose to undertake a 7-day fieldcourse in the Easter vacation to study the rocks produced by Tenerife's El Tiede volcano.



SOES student achievements recognised nationally

SOES students have received national recognition for outstanding achievements in their studies by the Geological Society of London and the Society for Underwater Technology (SUT). At the end of 2005, the UK national society for geoscience – the Geological Society – awarded the following prizes to Southampton students: Robert Thorne (Master of Geology) received the Tectonic Studies Group Dave Johnson Prize for Undergraduate Mapping for his 3rd year independent mapping project in the Cantabrian Mountains of Spain. This is the second time a Southampton student has received this award, as Robert Randell (B.Sc. Geology) won it in 2001. In the same competition in 2004, Alex Neufeld (Master of Geology) placed 2nd - by half a mark! Alex went one better in the 2005 awards, winning the Mineral Deposits Studies Group Award for the best undergraduate research project on mineral resources: Rio Tinto Exploration presented him with a cheque for his work involving geological mapping and a structural reinterpretation of a mine region in Namibia. Alex's

discoveries have resulted in new exploration initiatives in the region, which have led to new mineral discoveries: he's now an Exploration Geologist with Anglo American, and currently working in South Africa. Luke Gaches (Master of Geophysics) received the Environmental and Industrial Geophysics Group Award for his project examining high-resolution seismic data, and is now employed running geophysical surveys for EMU Ltd.

Bringing together organisations and individuals with a common interest in underwater technology, ocean science and offshore engineering, the SUT presented its Fugro-GEOS Ltd. award for the best project work in applied marine science/technology to Luke Pinson (Master of Geophysics). Luke hopes to continue his success as an undergraduate at NOC, as he has just started a PhD here!

(Top photo: Rob Thorne, left, Luke Pinson, right; Rebecca Bell, centre, won best post-graduate poster prize from the Tectonic Studies Group).



New Student Centre open for business (and pleasure!)

The first phase of the new Student Centre was opened by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Caroline Thomas, on 8th February 2006. The centre has been designed to provide SOES students with their own space and additional support, in the forms of rooms set aside for study, meetings and socialising, including a new office for the Student Union Representatives.

Facilities include a workstation and plasma screen in the meeting room and an additional six station I-café in the study area: the second phase of this ~£250k project will be completed in October 2006, extending the space further with a modern conservatory-type extension. Student Union representative, Robert Grafton, said: "This is a fantastic new development that will really help students feel that they have their own space."



Industrial sponsorship of the student NOCSoc

The student society encompassing the interests of all students based at the National Oceanography Centre Southampton, NOCSoc, has just received substantial sponsorship from RWE, the German company which owns Thames Water and npower and have major involvements in hydrocarbon exploration. The funding is the direct result of the students on the NOCSoc committee actively seeking sponsorship from industry and will allow the society to expand the activities and events that they are able to organise for their members, and perhaps more importantly has already initiated potential link-ups with RWE at the level of academic research and collaboration – who says that student initiatives don't have

a major role to play in academic institutions?



Students cruise the high seas!

Five SOES undergraduate students have recently had the fortune to be able to participate in cruises as fully fledged members of the scientific community... Master of Oceanography students Alistair McVicar, Amelie Meyer, Sara De La Rosa and Jonathan Lauderdale participated in the Greenland Cruise to Cape Farewell aboard the RRS Discovery looking at freshwater fluxes off Greenland. Alistair recounts how the experience was "definitely hard to beat", even after his work experience with the Institute of Ocean Science in Canada, in the summer of 2004! He continues: "the cruise was an excellent opportunity to put what I had learnt from the lectures into practice. The range of people that I met was fantastic, from engineers, PhD students and moreover experienced scientists (from both Woods Hole in the US and Brest, France). For John, "the hands-on training provided by SOES in the lab and on the School's research vessels provided the skills I needed. My amazing experience must be attributed to studying at NOCS in such close proximity to world-leading research groups, without which this opportunity may never have presented itself in the first place."

The fifth intrepid scientist was Emily Venables, who secured the Neil Macdougall Bursary for Practical Oceanography from the Scottish Association for Marine Science. Emily recounts how she was told that she "would be able to go to sea on any available cruises", but had no idea she would be treated to an Arctic adventure! Emily spent 4 of the 9 weeks of her placement on a cruise from Scotland into the high Arctic sea ice on board the RRS James Clark Ross, collecting data that she is using for her 4th year research project. The students' experiences of large waves, stunning views and being "thrown around the cabin" went alongside those of coring sediment, deploying moorings and collecting water samples, and has confirmed for all three that their future careers will be related to oceanography.



Broadening career opportunities: AAPG Student Chapter @ Southampton

The new Southampton Waterfront Campus Student Chapter of the Association of American Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) was launched at the opening of the new Student Centre facilities (see above). The Chapter has been heartily endorsed by the NOCS academic staff, and the enthusiastic student committee aim to make the Chapter one of the most dynamic student-centred organisations at the university. We are already very fortunate to have John Brooks, European President of the AAPG, currently residing on the 6th floor of NOCS!

Affiliation to the international geological expertise of the AAPG will open up broad industrial linkages of interest to ALL the students studying at the NOCS.

Employment opportunities in the hydrocarbons industry are increasing dramatically and graduating geophysicists, geologists, oceanographers and marine biologists (a fortune is now spent on monitoring environmental impacts of offshore construction) will benefit enormously from the link-up with the AAPG's professional expertise.

It is the intention of the student-run Chapter to attract all the major players to the NOCS, so they can see the high quality of scientists produced here – and membership of the Chapter is free!



The Committee of the new AAPG Student Chapter: Left to right: Mark Vardy, Suzie Austin, Alistair McVicar and Luke Pinson.