Open Door Teacher

Dr Robert Madden
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Robert joined Curtin in 2009 to complete his PhD and accepted a Teaching and Research position in Applied Geology in 2013. Robert has a passion for fundamental science and aims to cultivate an educational environment where engagement and exploration of geological concepts can take place, especially in large first year classes. His passion for geology transfers into active learning classes with a non-hierarchical scaffolded and engaged environment. Robert’s overall aim is to improve upon students applied geology skills whilst stimulating a wider interest and enjoyment for science that leads students to go beyond classroom activities. In his role as unit coordinator of Applied Geology’s largest unit (Fundamentals of Geology 1), and an online postgraduate unit (Energy Resources), Robert has been awarded an excellence in teaching award (undergraduate) and an honourable mention for postgraduate teaching in 2014 by the Curtin Student Guild.

Specialty areas of teaching

Cultivation of engaged learning environments through non-hierarchical small group teaching

Development of ‘challenge tasks’ to stimulate learning and application of skills

Description of teaching to showcase to others

Robert invites you to observe high-energy student engagement strategies in a structured lab session. The session begins with a short, guided revision of previously studied topics; supported by striking teaching materials. Students then work in randomly assigned small groups to complete a mock exam question under exam-like conditions. Performance in this challenge task is tracked on a weekly leader-board, creating excitement and competition amongst students to win the weekly reward (recognition on announcement board postings and selection of customised learning resources). Following this activity, students work independently and collaboratively to hone their field geology skills of observation and documentation, facilitated by Robert’s highly personalised learning strategies (modelling, explaining, questioning). The learning design challenges students to reach their personal targets in a supportive environment. Robert deploys highly focussed lesson planning and integrative curriculum design. He expects high student engagement and interaction, whilst supporting learning through an open dialogue and use of encouragement and praise to motivate students. Support from Robert’s hand selected demonstrators allows him to distribute his time evenly across a large class to foster personal connections across student confidence and skill levels.

Open Door availability

Unit: Fundamentals of Geology 1
Times Available: Semester 1, TBA
Dates Available: TBA
Location of Session: 312.101
Maximum available visitor number: 4
Available for consultation: Directly after this session and can also be negotiated

Learn more about Robert’s research interests and publications at:

Please contact Robert at robert.madden@curtin.edu.au to request an Open Door session.