

ID4001 – Pre-application Information

Please take a look at the module handbook that is published on this site. During the application process it will likely be the handbook for the year prior to yours, but it will give a good indication as to what will be in place for your cohort.

This 15-credit interdisciplinary science module is available for senior honours students in most science schools (as well as final year integrated masters students if they will already have 15 credits from level 5000 modules from previous years). The module is particularly relevant to students who are considering going into teaching, science communication, or any career that requires good communication skills. In this day and age the last category will cover most careers.

Students on this module have some initial training in how to work in schools, then spend the equivalent of about a morning a week in a school during first semester. The intention is that they learn from the experience in their placement school, and associated reflection. They start by observing a class teacher, progress to assisting the teacher, and by the end of the semester will be taking responsibility for leading some form of teaching session (with the teacher always present). A member of staff in each University School provides some tutorial support, liaises with the placement school, and is one of the assessment team.

The module has been running for a number of years now, and we have seen lots of students doing great things on it. Some of the students have used the experience as part of their career development towards school teaching, others have used it as a way to work “outside their comfort zone” and to develop additional subject- and career-relevant skills. This is a module where students are also making a difference in the local community. They take in to schools their knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject and can significantly enhance parts of the pupil experience while themselves learning from the classroom experience.

The module involves liaison with local schools, with each student spending a total of about 25 hours working alongside a teacher-mentor within a secondary or primary school. All students who take this module will require to be formally checked (PVG) that they are not forbidden to work with young people. We also wish to have the best chance to have on the module only students who are totally committed to the work that they will be doing. As the work on this module impacts on school teachers and school pupils, students taking part in the module have to be professional about their actions. If a student accepts any offer of a place on the module, that is a commitment, and the usual “modules can be changed in first few days of semester” does not apply. We are also able to find only a certain number of placement opportunities.

Students gain “real world” work experience, work with teachers who may be willing to write them a reference, and are able to develop confidence and competence in communication, teaching, working with others, and also in using and interpreting key ideas in science.

The module is assessed partly by the mentor teacher, and partly by written and oral work presented to the University. The split for the session previous to yours is shown in the module handbook.

Comments from previous students include:-

This module has given me invaluable experience in science communication. It not only gave me an insight into teaching various age groups but also how to go about communicating ideas to them in a relevant way. As I was mostly teaching just one class I was able to build up a relationship with the pupils in said class and I hope that I may have inspired some of them to carry on studying physics at higher levels and made them realise that physics isn't boring but can also be extremely useful and fun.

I think that this is an excellent scheme both for students like myself, for the experience it gives us in teaching, communication and interpersonal skills; and for the pupils in the schools, as it gave them someone to relate to that wasn't a teacher and was nearer their age so that they could find out what university was like.

This module has developed my confidence and my communication skills. This makes it easier for me to consider different career paths and I now believe I have the skills to go into a career where communication plays a large role.

I enjoyed this module. It was a nice change from the standard academic module and a really good opportunity to do something practical and get involved in the local community outside of the university. Many students live in a university bubble for four years while they are here and it is fun and rewarding to do something in the real world.

I think this module has a unique draw for students, being an interdisciplinary module it allows many Schools to introduce their students to the idea of teaching and still give them credit for this. I also think that the module allows students to better understand their own core knowledge of science.

Application and Selection

Applying to join the module does not commit you to taking part. Applications in the form of a CV and covering letter will be invited from relevant University Schools part way through semester two. Applicants will be invited to an interview. Each application will be evaluated through the application documents, the interview, and the record of the student. Selectors will be looking for students who already have sufficiently good communication skills and

science understanding. This is in order for students to stand a good chance of success in the module and to be able to improve on that knowledge and skill. Selectors will be looking for students who have given some thought to what is involved in this module, and who have appropriate attitudes to learning and to communication. No selection is permitted on the basis of gender, race, religion, etc. After the initial selection process, candidates must successfully pass through the PVG checks.

Each University School has a limit on the number of students that they can place, so it may be that not all suitable applicants can get the offer of a place. Offered places may initially be dependent on the University School securing a placement for the student. Those students who accept an offer of a place are asked to commit to seeing the module through.