Benefits
Being located on the campus means that there are no travel or accommodation expenses for students, few general logistical complications and natural complexities than in remote fieldwork locations. In addition, students benefit from receiving instant on-site feedback from staff on the challenges, problems and pedagogic issues that they encounter.

RAU allows us to introduce rigorous field-based teaching at an early stage in geoscience courses and to stimulate and encourage reflective learning. Students locate, analyse and synthesise information in the field to provide effective solutions to problems and use RAU as a self-directed learning experience where they build confidence while working independently in a familiar environment. Hence the students reinforce their field skills before experiencing independent work in remote areas. In effect RAU uses the campus as a sustainable geoscience teaching resource, which has all the advantages of a real fieldwork experience with minimal logistical complications and costs for students.

Students are much better prepared for their first major residential fieldwork having completed the RAU programme, and are much more confident in their field skills. RAU has allowed us to address more effectively the disconnect between laboratory and fieldwork skills, and remote fieldwork classes are now more focussed on the application, rather than the development, of field skills. Although applicable to all stages of the geoscience curriculum, RAU has been particularly useful in developing and re-enforcing fundamental field skills in early year students, prior to their first residential field class away from the University. Many time-scheduled sessions which were previously held in indoor laboratories, are now entirely or partially conducted in much more realistic outdoor settings, which has proved to be extremely effective and popular among both students and staff.

Use of Rock around the University
RAU allows progressive, reflective, and effective on-campus outdoor training of a wide range of geological field skills and concepts, including: geological mapping; the use of structure contours to predict geological boundaries in terrains lacking abundant exposures; calculating the thicknesses of stratigraphic units; construction of cross-sections; note book entries (the description, analysis and measurements of rock features and structures); and, the interpretation and reconstruction of 3D structure and geological history.

Students visit the RAU, which has been developed during timetabled supervised ‘lab’ sessions and in their own time, providing an authentic fieldwork experience in a controlled environment where the key geological skills can be developed at the optimal rate for individual students.

Assessments
A wide range of assessments options were included in the original design of RAU, and have been successfully utilised over the last eight years with classes of over 100 students. The assessments can be used with large classes as there are a variety of internal checks on a student’s attainment of intended learning outcomes (for example, the relationships between dip measurements, stratigraphic thickness estimates, the spacing of structure contours, and the inferred positions of geological boundaries).

Accessibility
RAU exposures are all situated close to level, paved pedestrian pathways, and are all at readily accessible locations.

More Information
Rock Around the University is also used in recruitment and outreach, and is open to schools, amateur geoscientists, and anyone interested in Earth history. Printed leaflets are available describing Rock Around the University, and more information is available at: https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/ges/community/rockaround/.