

Virtual Field Trip

Method	Virtual Field Trip
Introduction	
<p>A virtual field trip is generally understood to be a guided exploration through the world wide web which involves the student visiting various pre-determined and thematically based web pages selected by the teaching staff. Lots of different online tools and resources exist to support virtual field trips and although many of them exist to support primary and secondary education, there are also plenty of online resources that can be used to support a planned field trip that can be applied to higher education studies.</p>	
Aim	To provide access to resources, experiences, materials etc not easily available in the real-world environments of students.
Target group	While a virtual field trip can be planned for students in practically any student area, scientific fields are particularly suitable for this type of method as it can help students experience and gain knowledge and skills in fields to which they have little access in their daily life like Astronomy.
Intended learning outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give students a broader and more grounded understanding of the subject matter • To help better integrate students' learning into real-life context in relation, for example, to environmental or political issues 	
Description	
<p>Few academics have the resources to create their own virtual field trips or simulations although recording your own video tour and then making it available as a virtual field trip for your students is always a possibility. Mostly however academics depend on available online resources and materials, many of which, particularly in the areas of arts, culture and sciences are already available. Just type into your favourite search engine 'virtual tour' or 'virtual field trip' in the subject you are interested in and see what comes up! Virtual reality tours are also increasing in popularity.</p> <p>When depending on ready-made virtual field trips or tours, make sure as a staff member that you go on the virtual field trip yourself well beforehand so you are completely familiar with that to expect. This will also help you to prepare materials on the field trip related to your own course so that is truly embedded in your course. This can include exercises that can be used for assessment purposes like and observation quiz which has the added advantage of ensuring your students stay very focussed.</p>	
Preparation	Being 100% familiar with the online resources you make available to your students is a must in planning any virtual field trip or tour.
Required resources and equipment	Reliable internet access to the chosen materials with good audio-visual support for class viewing if relevant.

Success factors	Comprehensive knowledge of the resource beforehand on the part of the academic.
Advantages	Can introduce students to resources, experiences, materials and processes not easily accessible to them in their local environment.
Disadvantages	Can be too passive unless the academic makes sure to build in interactivity if this is not already included.
Additional information	<p>Here is a good explanation of what constitutes a virtual field trip in higher education from UF in the US and includes several different examples.</p> <p>Take a look at this virtual tour of the European Parliament to see how the parliament works and to see a typical example of a virtual tour:</p> <p>This virtual field trip from Alcoa is aimed at students interested in seeing how a manufacturer works.</p> <p>This page and video highlight how virtual field trips can and are being used in secondary education</p>