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A RESOURCE DESIGNED TO INCREASE STUDENT AWARENESS OF SAFETY ISSUES IN LABORATORY AND FIELDWORK SETTINGS.

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Poster summary

Ensuring that students have a good understanding, and realise the importance of the key safety issues surrounding them when they are in the laboratory or field settings is not an easy task. Often students who come straight from high school do not have much, if any, laboratory experience, and need to be treated as if they are working in this type of setting for the first time. With more experienced mature working students, there are problems where the practices in the workplace differ from what is expected in a teaching environment. The resource presented here is aimed at making students aware of the safety regulations that they are expected to abide by during their studies, as well as to make them familiar with the safety features and their usage before they come to their first class.

The resource is divided into five sections that together would engage the students in about 20 - 30 minutes interactive online activity.

The five main sections are as follows:

1. What to wear?
2. Where are the safety features and fire exits located?
3. How and when are the safety features used?
4. What can go wrong and what action should be taken?
5. Review of the above content in the form of a quiz.

It is intended that the students will be provided access to the resource at the same time as receiving their programme timetables. They will be expected to undergo the activities before they come to their first practical session, and the teaching staff will check that they have done so. Its completion will be made a requirement of the course. In total, 3 different resources are planned depending on the type of practical work involvement in the course. One will be aimed at chemistry students, one at biology/medical science students and the third for students who are expected to go off campus.

Sections 1 and 2 comprise of interactive activities based on computer animations. Section 3 comprises of short video clips or photographs as appropriate for the safety feature being demonstrated. Section 4 consists of scenarios of incidents that have actually occurred, both avoidable and unavoidable, to help the students appreciate the importance of good practice and the consequences if it is not adhered to. These will be randomly generated so that should a student be enrolled in more than one chemistry module, for example, which is highly likely, they will not come across the same set of scenarios. The last section is a review quiz to assess student learning. The questions will again be randomly generated and students will be allowed multiple attempts. A sample of the range of activities that are developed in this resource will be presented.

The aim of the resource is to cover the general aspects of safety when working in the laboratory or field setting, leaving more time for the teaching staff to cover the specifics related to their discipline. It will also provide a more consistent approach towards safety across a very diverse range of practical classes. It is envisaged that by increasing the students' awareness in this way, they will develop a more responsible attitude towards their own safety in the workplace.

Keywords

Safety, laboratory, fieldwork, online resource

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