

DEVELOPING VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS FOR AGRICULTURE

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Field trips play an important role in teaching and learning, ranging from stimulating students' motivations to allowing students to make connections between in-class concepts and the real world. Including field trips in an agricultural-based curriculum is essential as concepts are highly interdisciplinary and application of knowledge to a range of production systems and environments is critical for graduates. Despite their importance to teaching and learning, a myriad of factors such as high enrolments and cost, present challenges for the integration of field trips into courses. This has been exacerbated by the prolonged impact of COVID-19. Virtual field trips allow universities to exploit the affordances of technology and its fail-safe environment to help students develop, practice and hone skills while also enhancing their confidence in employing those skills, in the real world. A virtual field trip application has been developed and piloted. Using a web-based interface and in collaboration with industry partners, virtual field trips were successfully integrated to incorporate and enhance experiential learning in undergraduate Horticulture in the School of Agriculture and Food Sciences. This will be expanded in future across a range of agricultural disciplines and undergraduate teaching scenarios to improve experiences and outcomes for graduates.

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