



FIELD RESEARCH ARUBA

Engaging students
in sustainable development
through community-based research

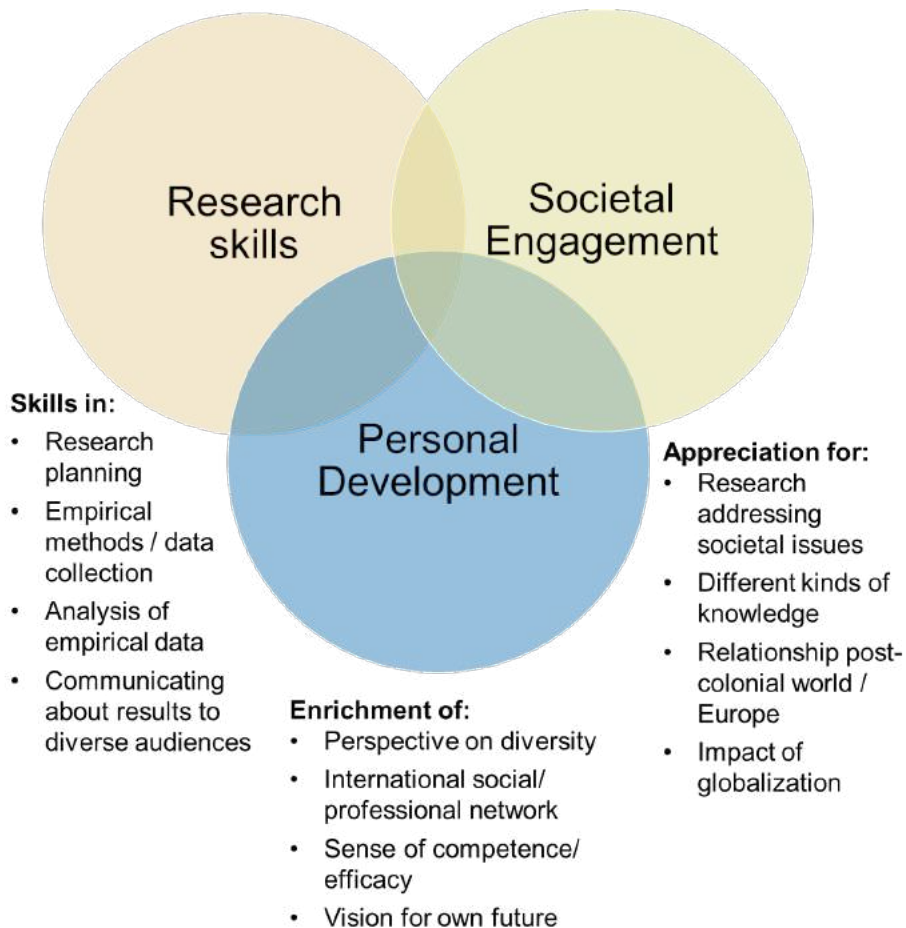


Utrecht University

University College Utrecht

What does Field Research Aruba offer?

This programme offers a unique opportunity to spend 10 - 11 weeks doing field research in Aruba as part of a research thesis or research internship. You learn about the cultural, social, economic and environmental challenges facing small island states of the Caribbean and get hands-on experience with empirical research that addresses one or more of the UN **Sustainable Development Goals**. (SDGs). No matter what your academic direction, your knowledge and skills can be applied to addressing global challenges in a local context.



Before going to the field, a 5-week preparatory module gives you guidance in using **community-based research** to design a project connected to your own field of interest that considers the needs of stakeholders. Your success during the field period is supported by participation in a course at the University of Aruba and in a peer coaching programme including students from UU and UA. You join, and sometimes organize, community activities like beach cleanups, arts projects, educational information sessions, public debate nights and other events connected to the topics of your project and those of your peers. You can also opt to work with a research partner from UA's Academic Foundation Year to support you in your project.

The programme allows you to apply your knowledge and skills to a societally meaningful project in an area of your interest, to engage in cultural and intellectual exchange with members of the diverse Aruban community, and to learn to communicate about societal value of research. Taking part enhances your understanding of other cultures, of the relationship of your own society to others, and of your own role in the world. You make the transition from student to independent researcher.



Learn to communicate about the societal value of research and transition from student to independent researcher while doing a project in the Aruban community.

What makes Aruba special?

Aruba's natural and human history make it a compelling site for field work that addresses sustainable development goals, in disciplines across the academic spectrum. Aruba's political status as a country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands creates a paradoxical situation for its citizens, who are both of Europe and clearly outside of it. It is a country where the complexities of decolonization become concrete. A small island developing state, Aruba is roughly the size of the Waddenzee island Texel, and has a population around 120,000. Aruba's economy, dominated through much of the 20th century by the operations of an oil refinery, is now largely dependent on tourism. The place of these two industries in the island's history is inherent to the sustainable development challenges Aruba is facing today. These industries have deeply impacted the island, altering its ecosystems, driving population growth and shaping contemporary Aruban society. Complex patterns of human migration have resulted in a Caribbean creole culture in which questions of identity, inclusion and equality are continually re-framed. English, Spanish and the official languages, Papiamentu and Dutch, are all evident in the linguistic landscape, each with a different role in Aruban civil society.



Beyond the *palapas*, the remains of the oil refinery and the of ESSO club are visible .

Past projects examples (2015-2020)

The assessment of Aruba's shoreline pollution

Employee perceptions of internal communication within the health sector

Diabetes management in a changing society

The role of English in Aruba's linguistic landscape

Calypso and cultural commodification in Aruba

Assessment of endemic fauna in key biodiversity areas

Emotional impact in people with disabilities striving to be independent in Aruba

Policy for energy system innovation: multi-actor policy-making of the Aruba energy transition

The impact of illegal dumpsites on the environment

Oil contamination on the mangrove ecosystems of Aruba

Sharing stories *baõ palo*: the making of heritage in a Caribbean oil town

Off-road driving and the ecosystem: impacts on landscape functionality

Import costs of fruits and vegetables on Aruba: mitigating the volatility of prices to ensure sustainable supply

Beyond opinion polls: multiple voices of (non-)sovereignty from Aruban people

Leadership and good governance in public organizations in Aruba

The condition of 'illegality': deconstructing the 'illegalization' of undocumented Venezuelans on Aruba.

For more , see links in More Information on UCU student site <https://students.uu.nl/en/university-college-utrecht/academics/curriculum-enrichment/field-research-aruba>

Programme foundations

This undergraduate research programme is founded on the conviction that the best education encourages students to take responsibility for engaging actively and responsibly not only with the content of their studies, but also with society at large. It came into being as a collaboration between UU's University College Utrecht (UCU) and the University of Aruba during a site visit in 2014 aimed at finding ways for UCU students to make better use of an existing exchange agreement. Since 2015, the programme has brought students from Utrecht to Aruba to conduct empirical research projects in a peer-to-peer learning context with Aruban students.



UCU representatives with UA's Eric Mijts (C) during 2014 site visit

Student experience (2015-2020)

Engaging actively and responsibly with society at large as well as with the content of your research-oriented academic education brings personal and professional growth. Alumni of the programme experience a transformation in their appreciation of research, deeper awareness of their own academic and personal competence, and clearer focus on who they can become in the world.

Quotations here come from what alumni from UU and UA have written in anonymous evaluations they completed at the end of the field period. For additional personal reflections, see texts that previous participants wrote to accompany the research reports published in earlier annual volumes. These can be downloaded under *More Information* on the on the UCU Student Site. <https://students.uu.nl/en/university-college-utrecht/academics/curriculum-enrichment/field-research-aruba>

A life changing experience ... it opened a window into the future to give me a glimpse and first-hand experience of ...my passions.

My thesis results ... could really make a difference and benefit Aruba.

The best experience in my academic career. I learned a lot from the Aruban community ... also about myself and what I want to do in life



This program ... boosts students' confidence in their own abilities and knowledge.

We learned to cope with difficulties ... encountered in the field ... with the support of the group.

Through the high independence ... we were given a true occasion to develop ourselves

Getting a chance to go public with what I've researched was a new and unique experience for me.



Getting to know so many students with different backgrounds [was rewarding]. Their drive motivated me to do better ...

I learned a lot from others. I also increased my own knowledge and grew as a person

I also learned to work together in a group [and] be open to different perspectives and ... new topics that are not ... in my degree program

Working with] students of other disciplines ... made me think ... [beyond] what I've learned in my study.



Speaking with people after the public presentation... makes you feel like your research is truly valued

It was confronting to see the state of some things on the island I am glad that this program made me aware of these problems in general.

Seeing everything come together was really great ... I realized how connected all our research was.

A bachelor's thesis turned from an annoying requirement into an opportunity to make a difference :)

Overview Programme Planning

May 1 & September 30	<u>Application and selection</u> : Early application round (1 May)) and regular application round (September 30); eligibility / place confirmed 15 June / 21 October .
November -December (SEM1/ UU block 2)	<u>Preparation (Utrecht)</u> : UCACCMET2L Community engaged research in the Caribbean (2.5 EC)
January-April (UCU SEM2/ UU block 3)	<u>Field research period (Aruba)</u> UA Interdisciplinary & Multidisciplinary Approaches to Sustainable Development (6 EC) Field research for individual projects Peer-to-peer programme

Eligibility / Application

Participation in the field research programme is open to advanced bachelor students who plan to complete a thesis or research internship in the spring semester. You must submit a complete application by one of the deadlines to be eligible for selection. Complete applications include the following supporting materials:

- Study progress overview (Studievoortgangsoverzicht) from Osiris
- Course plan for the academic year approved by tutor or other representative of your degree programme
- Motivation pitch presented as video (3min30sec) or as text (750 words) optionally supported by images

Appropriate candidates are motivated by interests that align with the community-based nature of the field programme and its focus on aspects of sustainable development in a small island state. For ideas about student projects completed previously, see p. 7 and materials available under More Information on the UCU Student Site. The application form can also be downloaded from that page: <https://students.uu.nl/en/university-college-utrecht/academics/curriculum-enrichment/field-research-aruba>

Further Practicalities

Academic supervision. The programme provides coaching for the community-based dimensions of your project, alongside the disciplinary-related guidance you receive from an academic supervisor from your degree program. You do not need an academic supervisor in place before applying, but you will need one before starting the preparatory course in November.

Degree planning considerations. During the field period, students from Utrecht remain registered at UU and are guests at UA. The field period runs concurrent with UU / UA block 3, so you cannot be enrolled in courses in Utrecht for UCU SEM1 / UU block 3, but should be enrolled for a research thesis or internship to ensure appropriate academic supervision and credit from your degree programme. You can enrol in UU courses in block 4 to complete degree requirements as needed.

Costs. Cost for the academic dimensions of the programme are fully covered by UU tuition and the exchange agreement with UA. Participating students are responsible, however, for airfare and for living costs in Aruba, including accommodation and ground transportation. Note that all food and other necessities are imported to Aruba, impacting average costs.

Accommodation. Shared apartments are contracted by UCU for participants. Participants pay a non-refundable deposit to secure their place, and pay remaining housing costs in installments. Note: UCU students are outgoing exchange students and will not have housing or costs on the UCU campus.

Anticipated costs 2023

Flights from AMS-AUA start around EUR 800.

Housing, full duration of field period (per student): ~ EUR 1650

Ground transportation Aruba: ~EUR 30/ week

Food / incidentals: count on costs 10-15% higher than in Utrecht



University of Aruba



Utrecht University

University College Utrecht



*A life changing
experience ...*