

The SEM-CAT student association: learning and communicating geology

CASADO, G.^{1*}, CALDERA, N.¹, NAVARRO-CIURANA, D.¹,
CORBELLA, M.¹

¹Departament de Geologia, Facultat de Ciències, Universitat
Autònoma de Barcelona, Edifici Cs s/n, Bellaterra 08193,
Spain (*correspondence: gerard.casado@uab.cat)

SEM-CAT is a students association in Catalonia that is part of the Sociedad Española de Mineralogía (SEM: www.ehu.eus/sem/), an organization that includes not only mineralogists but also petrologists and geochemists. SEM-CAT is a recent creation from the Geology Department of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). The group counts on two Mineralogy professors as councilors, but it acts autonomously in choosing among their members to fill the roles of president, secretary and treasurer, as well as deciding on the actions to perform.

The starting aim of SEM-CAT consisted on expanding and deepening into the geologic knowledge of both the graduate and undergraduate students by conducting conferences with invited guests, preparing and organizing workshops on themes of interest and attending on fieldtrips with specialists of the visited areas. However, the concern for poor geologic understanding among primary and secondary school students helped to diversify into a wider range of educational offerings. The main activities carried out so far have been to participate in divulgative activities organized by the UAB, such as the Geo-ginkana or the Earth Science Olympiads, as well as informative talks to Catalanian secondary and primary schools.

The benefits of creating and developing geology student organizations is quite clear for the students involved, but it is commonly undervalued for the Department, institutions or the scientific community. As SEM-CAT has been doing, they can make a good diffusion of what Mineralogy-Petrology-Geochemistry and what it is useful for, specially in countries where teachers lack a thorough knowledge of Geology or are unaware of it. The success of such associations would rely on the capability of the students to participate and get involved. If other students groups were created, exchanges of experiences and fieldtrips could be a good starting point. These would become unexpensive ways to add up to the understanding of Geology as well as motivating and empowering the students. These associations could cooperate also in organizing activities that could reach and involve further larger communities.