

title: Programme Overview date: 2015-01-10 10:40 category: curriculum, info, faq tags: curriculum, about, faq slug: concept icon: folder-open summary: Want to read everything about the Berkshire Fieldwork Bootcamp on one page? [Here it is.](#)

The Berkshire Fieldwork Bootcamp provides a short-term (summer) curriculum to early-career social development practitioners as well as graduate students of development studies, anthropology, and other disciplines that emphasise experience in the field.

BFB provides an experiential (hands-on) learning environment and uniquely-tailored [curriculum](#) to challenge resident students to think critically and to work effectively in times of stress and periods of adjustment. We accomplish this through a series of ‘problem scenarios’ and critical, self-reflective dialogue about how each student approached a challenge and created solutions.

## Our Raison d’Être

Based on our own experience (and some horror stories of our colleagues), [... elaborate.]

Many programmes teach about theoretical aspects of development—from ways of measuring of community well-being to analysing how human livelihoods are supported by ecosystem services to engineering solutions for minor infrastructure works. Few programmes, however, offer students ‘practical’ insights into what’s life can be like when working in the field.

The Berkshire Fieldwork Bootcamp helps to bridge this gap by providing an opportunity for experiential learning about common challenges that development practitioners experience in the field. In rural New England, USA, we offer students a comfortable and “risk free” setting to make mistakes and to “learn by doing”. We expose students to a variety of difficult (yet practical) challenges in simulated but controlled environments. We monitor how the students interact with the challenges, and then hold post-challenge debriefings.

## Geographic and Socio-Economic Context

BFB is situated among small-scale agriculturalists and near to a small town hosting a small private college and comprised of an array of small businesses.

The economy of the area is [add characterization of local economy (and economic history) of the area].

The natural environment is rugged. The area is characterized by rather steep hills, small cliff, and very fertile by rocky sediments. Most of the valley lands in the area were long-ago cleared of their rocks by pioneers and subsequent

generations of farmers. Area of undisturbed lands may contain archaeological traces of the past cultural groups who once inhabited the area.

Today's generation of farmers here produce and preserve their own food and with it sustain themselves, their nearby communities, as well as larger markets.

## **Curriculum Design**

We design our curriculum specifically to expose students to new, difficult, and troubling situations in order to engage their capacities for problem-solving and critical thinking.

Our experienced staff and trainers watch as students make mistakes, and then ask students to critically evaluate what they did “wrong” or what they might have done differently to solve a problem in a more expedient or efficient manner.

## **Two-Week Residency**

### **Rapid Language Acquisition**

All students of BFB are given a ‘crash course’ in the principles of rapid language acquisition. We engage language facilitators to provide module lessons in a language that is foreign to each resident group. Residents are led by these facilitators through a series of tasks and work chores to simulate an immersion environment. At the end of each day, students review theoretical approaches to rapid language acquisition discuss their findings.

### **Daily Challenges**

BFB schedules daily challenges to simulate problem settings that one may encounter when working in a developing country.

In the beginning, things will be tough. The setting and set-up at the camp is semi-rugged (and we actually go to lengths to make it more difficult for you at times). Over the 15-day course, student will come to be highly appreciative of the overall experience—having solved a variety of daily problems and thought, shared, and learned about larger-scale problem of community and sustainable living.

### **Sustainability Theory**

Helping to re-enforce the lessons learned in the daily challenge sessions, BFB leads discussion seminars with students on topics of sustainability theory.

Our repertoire of sustainability theory modules includes:

- Water systems
- Agricultural Practices Globally

- Principles of Basic Sanitary Systems
- Principles of Basic Shelters
- Principles of Food Conservation

### **Life Skills**

The Berkshire Fieldwork Bootcamp also avails of its environs to expose students to a variety of life skills for living outdoors. In the area are many natural sites for rock climbing and camping.

We teach students life skills like:

- How to set up a tent?
- How to cook food outdoors.
- Practice in eating from the land.

### **Stand-Alone Modules**

- Agricultural Practices Globally
  - Small-Farm Permaculture
  - Forest-Systems Permaculture
- Sustainable Construction Practices
  - Principles of Basic Shelters
  - Principles of Basic Sanitary Systems
- Water systems
  - Low-Consumption Water Systems and Sanitation Practices
  - Low-Consumption Irrigation Systems
- Principles of Food Conservation
- Wilderness Survival
- Emergency Preparedness
  - Want to get certified in CPR / first response? BFB can help!

### **Summer Amenities**

Walking / Hiking Rock climbing Canoeing / Kayaking Camping - How to set up a tent? - How to cook food outdoors. - Practice in eating from the land. Day Trips