

Associate Professor Kevin Norton – Victoria University of Wellington

Semester 2 2021



Associate Professor Kevin Norton is being hosted by Professor Jamie Shulmeister in the School of Earth and Environment. Kevin's area of expertise is geomorphology, and geochronology.

1. Where have you come from and what do you teach?

I have come from Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington where I teach Geomorphology in the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Science. Prior to arriving at VUW, I studied and taught in the USA, Germany, and Switzerland. Mountain growth and erosion has always fascinated me (perhaps because I grew up in central Ohio where the highest point on the landscape was the corn silo). I approach this topic from a chemical and physical perspective, to study how rocks weather into soils and how landscape evolve through time. I try to combine my fascination for the Earth with a sound fundamental science approach in my teaching.

2. What interested you in the Erskine Programme/Why did you want to come to UC?

I have been particularly appreciative of the Erskine Programme ever since I coordinated the seminar series for our school in Wellington. In addition to bringing exceptional teachers and researchers to UC, the programme provides a source for high calibre research talks at other universities. In this sense, the programme has benefits science across the country. I agree with Jack Erskine's view of cross-pollination as a means to improve our teaching and research. After 10 years at VUW, I was ready for a new scene and some new ideas. So, I was excited about the possibility for national Erskine Fellowships. I was also keen to make connections with colleagues in the School of Earth and Environment. As a laboratory person myself, I have always been impressed with the quality and dedication of the technical team here but have not had much chance to interact with the academic staff previously. The Erskine Fellowship has given me that chance, and hopefully some new collaborative projects will be launched in the near future!

3. What have you been doing at UC?

My main role while here has been helping teach GEOL246. The course includes lectures, labs, and tutorials, providing a lot of contact time for the students. The course coordinator and tutors have done an excellent job of organising the course keeping it on track during the lockdown. Other than teaching, I have been able to help out with a couple postgraduate student projects, hang out in various laboratories, and converse with colleagues.

I am also grateful to UC, and the technical team at SEE in particular, for providing access to the microscopy labs for my wife, Jenny Dahl. She can be found in the lab most days looking at plant remains from lake cores.

4. What have you most enjoyed about your time here at UC/Christchurch?

Spring has been wonderful! The daffodils, cherry trees, tulips, and azaleas have all put on a wonderful show. My wife and I have also been enjoying exploring the city and surrounds on our bicycles (as you can probably guess, cycling in Wellington can be a rather harrowing affair). We have been impressed with the bicycle lane network and the ease with which you can get around the entire city (perhaps with a few detours for construction). Our cats have loved the extra sun, they can be found lounging in windows most days. We have also enjoyed stopping in to say hello to the eel down past the forestry building. We will definitely be adding Christchurch as a springtime trip in the future!