
**Monitoring change along an Atlantic coastline:
an example linking undergraduate teaching
and research in the study of a gravel shoreline**

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Significant challenges exist in monitoring change in coastal environments in response to external driving forces, such as climate change, changing wave conditions, and human intervention. This is especially so in depositional coastal environments, such as salt marshes, coastal dunes, and gravel shorelines,

which are sensitive and respond quickly to change. Capturing and monitoring rapid coastal responses often presents difficulties to researchers; however, useful data may be collected by undergraduate students undertaking fieldwork at the same site over a number of years that may supplement other data.

This study reports on a decade (1997–2007) of field data collected, under the direction of the tutor, by undergraduate geography students at Ru Vein, a gravel beach and barrier site on the Atlantic coast of Brittany, France. Geomorphological and sedimentological data were collected once or twice a year over the period that establishes a time-series of morphosedimentary change. Although data quality requires consideration, the overall dataset provides a useful adjunct to other research. These data clearly indicate landward migration and reduction of sediment volume of the gravel shoreline, which may be linked to rising sea-level and changing wave conditions, perhaps related to climate change. This exercise benefits both students and researchers, as successive students were able to compare the data they collected with previous years to gain a better understanding of spatio-temporal change at the coast and felt part of a substantial research effort. The researchers acquired useful data through their regular teaching activity.