

K-12 Science Outreach: Open Positions for 2026–27



Position Summary

Sky School is recruiting several **Graduate Student Instructors** (fellowships) for the 2026–27 academic year and beyond! These **paid** fellowships connect UA graduate students with K-12 youth as mentors and educators during daytime, overnight, and semester-long science programs. The fellowships are a unique opportunity to gain experience with science education and communication as well as youth mentorship.

Sky School programs cover a range of scientific themes relevant to the Sky Island region: astronomy, ecology, geosciences, environmental sciences, dendrochronology, natural resources management, cultural history, and more. Instructors mentor students on 1-4 day programs throughout the year at our Mt. Lemmon Campus, field sites in the Santa Catalina Mountains and the Sonoran Desert, as well as visits to local schoolyards. We also offer intensive mentoring experience in the Tucson area through partnerships with organizations serving at-risk and historically marginalized youth. Sky School leadership will provide training and feedback to Instructors on improving their facilitation and teaching skills.

In addition to instruction, there are opportunities for professional development “behind the scenes” with curriculum development, community outreach, program coordination, and more. Sky School leadership will provide training and mentorship to Instructors seeking professional development in these areas.

Time Commitment

Flexible time commitments are possible, enabling Instructors to balance Sky School with other obligations. Individual commitments typically range from **10-20+ program days per academic year**, and a minimum of two program days per semester is expected.

Programs range from single-day field trips lasting a few hours, to overnight science camps lasting 2-4 days consecutively. During overnight camps, Instructors stay in staff housing at the Mt. Lemmon SkyCenter Observatory (our campus) and meals are provided. Instructors can sign up for as many programs as they'd like, the expectation is simply that they participate for the duration of the program.

Training

Sky School Instructors receive extensive training in developing and delivering place-based and inquiry-driven science instruction. This includes facilitation skills, working with diverse youth, experiential learning, as well as safety training in risk management and Wilderness First Aid. **A 4-day staff training retreat takes place on Mt. Lemmon each August** (typically the week before Fall classes begin) and a 1-day staff training takes place on campus at the beginning of Spring semester.

Sky School Instructors represent over a dozen different departments at UA. This variety of backgrounds offers a unique opportunity for team members to learn about a broad range of sciences beyond their area of expertise - a favorite part of the experience for many!



Compensation

Instructors are provided a stipend for all Sky School activities they participate in: programs, professional development workshops, staff training, open houses, special outreach events, etc. Standard stipend amounts are set for each program length as well as staff training, and hourly pay is available for non-program or training work. Individual commitments typically range from 10-20+ days per academic year and stipends range **up to \$5,000/year** depending on level of commitment.

Role

Sky School Instructors facilitate hands-on activities that engage participants with place-based sciences in the Sky Islands. For younger participants (grades K-8), this often includes building observation skills, developing a sense of place, and nature exploration. For older learners (grades 9-12), this often includes developing participants' hard science skills, and mentoring them as they design and carry out their own research projects.

Additionally, Instructors may be asked to support Sky School outreach and development opportunities throughout the year. This may include working in teams to develop curricula for new programs, or representing Sky School at school STEM nights and other community outreach events.

We make strong efforts to build an inclusive and supportive social and professional community among our Instructor team. Many of our past instructors have highlighted the strength of our community as one of the main benefits of joining the Sky School team. We hold regular social events and do our best to schedule them so that staff can intermingle and build relationships.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be primarily evaluated for the **ability to communicate with and relate to participants**. Also important is the ability to explain your own research to young people, from elementary to high school ages. A research connection to resources unique to the Sky Islands, specifically Mt. Lemmon or the Sonoran Desert is helpful, but not necessary. Applicants in non-science majors are welcome if they can show significant experience with scientific inquiry and/or experiential education. Experience teaching or mentoring youth, as well as experience in the outdoors are helpful, but not required.



We strive to have our staff represent diverse backgrounds and research areas. We encourage applicants of all backgrounds, abilities, and parental statuses. Applicants early in their graduate programs are especially encouraged to apply to facilitate holding a multi-year fellowship with the Sky School. We also typically carpool to schools or Mt. Lemmon, so applicants do not need access to a private car to work with us.

Successful applicants will also:

- Pass background check and register fingerprints with UA Police Department
- Commit to keeping First Aid/CPR training current
- Attend mandatory training events on the UA campus as well as on Mt. Lemmon
- Obtain HOV certification from UA Risk Management Services (if licensed)

Application Process

Applications for Fall 2026 should be submitted **ideally no later than June 30th** for priority consideration, but will be accepted on a rolling basis as space allows. Please email your application materials to skyschool@arizona.edu. Interviews and hiring will be ongoing until all positions are filled. Interviews will be conducted over Zoom.

Application Materials:

1. **Brief statement of interest**, explaining your prior experience and qualifications, your desired personal outcomes for the fellowship, and your general availability (one page limit)
2. **Brief description of your research interests** written at a level appropriate to generate understanding and curiosity for a typical 8th grade student (one page limit)
3. **Curriculum vitae**, including any past educational, outdoor, or outreach activities relevant to this fellowship (two page limit)
4. **Letter of support from your advisor** (following successful interview) *



* It is encouraged that you at least speak to your advisor and confirm their support prior to submitting your application. Following a successful interview, a written letter of support from your advisor will be required in order to be eligible for a position.