

Marine Programme
South African National Biodiversity Institute
Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden
Rhodes Drive
Newlands
7708
9 January 2015

Letter of Reference: Kirsty McQuaid

To whom it may concern

I, Dr Kerry Sink, highly recommend Kirsty McQuaid in support of her application for Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute's Summer Internship Program in June-August 2015. Kirsty came to the SANBI Marine Programme in April 2013, and I have worked with her closely in the last two years.

South Africa has limited offshore research expertise and biological expertise lags behind oceanographic expertise in the offshore environment. South Africa is currently experiencing a rapid expansion of offshore activities and thus it is a critical time to strengthen the knowledge base for the offshore environment. Kirsty has expressed an interest in deep sea ecology and has been working on the development of a new co-operative research project with the South African offshore petroleum sector aimed at increasing the detection, monitoring and management of marine invasive species. She has been actively increasing her experience in the field of deep sea ecology through participation in international research expeditions and Friday Harbor Laboratories' Deep Sea Biodiversity, Connectivity and Ecosystem Function summer course in July/August 2014. Participation in the MBARI Summer Internship Program will not only benefit Kirsty on a personal level, but will help to catalyse the development of expertise in this field in South Africa. Furthermore, South Africa plays a key role in developing regional expertise and as such, any investment in South African researchers is an investment in the region.

Kirsty is a strong student with excellent academic potential and a high level of technical and analytical competence. She has proven academic ability and has already published both her Honour's project and MSc dissertation. Kirsty quickly and easily grasps new concepts, is insightful and readily solves problems, willingly contributing independent ideas. She has a good capacity for original thought and her ideas are always well considered. Kirsty is logical and methodical in her approach and has shown that she is capable of completing complex, scientific work. She has a good grasp of statistical techniques and is an excellent writer, clearly communicating research objectives, methods and results. She has a sound understanding of the science-policy continuum and is also able to translate scientific outputs to support decision making.

Kirsty is a hard working individual and is highly motivated in achieving goals she sets herself. She perseveres and has a high level of commitment. Kirsty is solution-orientated and is capable of overcoming challenges through determination, innovation and sheer hard work. She is a conscientious team member and is more than capable of working independently. She requires very little supervision, is timeous and able to complete tasks within set deadlines, and has also shown capacity to produce under pressure.

I highly recommend Kirsty for this Program. It is a great opportunity for her and could lay a solid foundation for deep sea research that will benefit her in terms of her career goals. This is also an important opportunity for South Africa and the region and Kirsty is a suitable investment in this regard. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kerry Sink

Marine Programme Manager
South African National Biodiversity Institute
Private Bag X7, Claremont, 7735
Tel 0217998855 or 0828310536
k.sink@sanbi.org.za