

Scientific Outreach Grant Report

We are delighted that this project ran very successfully, and there is on-going interest in this work from the FUTURES festival and the WP Team, who continue to offer these sessions and resources as part of their events. Within the first year, this project has engaged with 1433 pupils from Year 1 – Year 13, via a mix of virtual and in-person events, and over 5500 virtual engagements with members of the general public. The mixture of virtual and in person events was an excellent way of engaging with a broad audience. As the University of Bristol collects data on participants from Y7 upwards, eligible participants in this project will be tracked to see if they continue into Higher Education, and particularly STEM subjects.

One aim of this project was to engage with pupils from groups that are under-represented within STEM. By targeted our audience to pupils from WP backgrounds, we were able to exceed these aims, particularly with regards to diversity of ethnicity and low socio-economic backgrounds. We were mindful that these events needed to be treated with sensitivity as, although we wanted to highlight the importance of HeLa cells, we were aware that the story of racial and low socio-economic exploitation would be likely to resonate with many of our audience members. The feedback showed that we managed this successfully, particularly by discussions surrounding ethical and unethical practices with older students, as observed in the examples of feedback below:

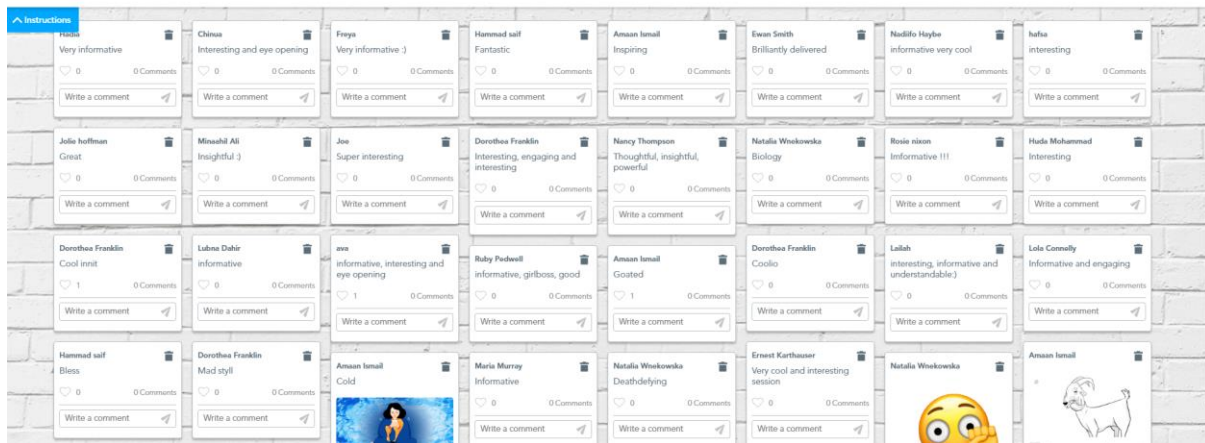
“After speaking with the students after the session ended, I know that they found the story of Henrietta Lacks fascinating and thought provoking. They were particularly engaged when discussing the ethics surrounding the acquisition of Hela cells and I know that this is something that they will go home and discuss with friends and family, so thank you for sharing that story so sensitively.”

“Thank you so much for this morning, there was a palpable buzz of excitement and curiosity around the room afterwards. Attached are the pieces of work the class completed in the rest of the lesson (50 minutes or so) as a result, feel free to read or not! You might have inspired some young people!”

With the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was unclear if in person visits would be able to occur. Thankfully, we were able to host visits for pupils into the University’s lecture theatres and teaching laboratories, to undertake some hands-on cell biology immunofluorescence experiments and view, and take images of, cells using fluorescent microscopy. Experiences such as this are essential to encourage pupils into Higher Education and show them that University is a place where they can go to and belong. It also gives us an opportunity to draw attention to some of the funding that is available for pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds. Some feedback from in person attendees is included below (please do not publish, as they include the names of individuals):

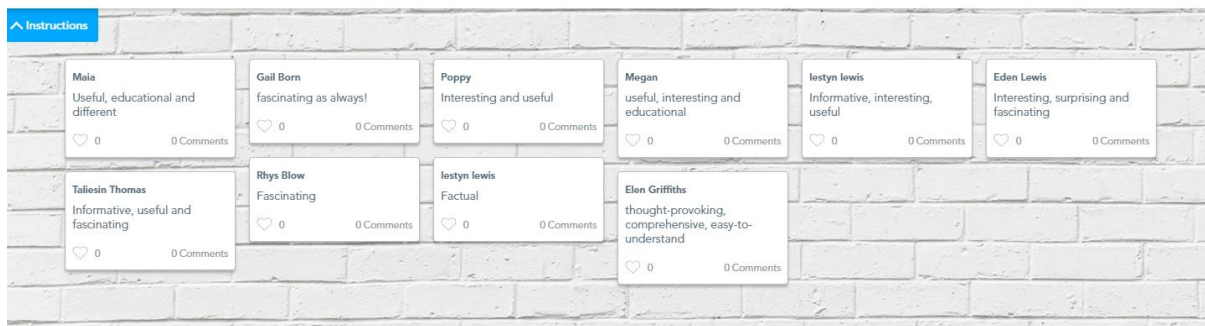
You thoughts on this session

What 3 words would you use to describe this session?



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The benefit of receiving this grant is that we now have a sustainable project that can continue for several years to come. The “FUTURES - A Festival of Discovery” event is organised by the UoB Public Engagement Team, in collaboration with colleagues in the Universities of Bath, Bath Spa, Exeter and Plymouth. It is aimed at engaging families with research and innovation and is a free to attend event. It is excellent news that this project has been included again in this year's event. The University's Widening Participation Team are also in the process of receiving further requests for events for academic year 2022 / 2023. Over the coming year, we will continue delivering these events and refine and update the resources to reflect on the wonderful news of the Lacks family being named as WHO Goodwill Ambassadors for cervical cancer elimination. The project is also feeding into the work being undertaken at the University of Bristol to decolonise and diversify our Biomedical Science curriculum, highlighting overlooked individuals in science and society and providing more diverse teaching content. The result of this work is such that it has led to the production of a “3R's Framework”, which we hope to publish, and the impact on our undergraduate students and staff will be measured in this coming academic year.

We thank The Biochemical Society for their generous support of this important project.