

How professional bodies engage with the STEM Ambassadors programme



Background: Ken Mollison – Institution of Engineering and Technology

I have been retired for ten years after a long career as a controls engineer. I am a physics graduate, which links me to the Institute of Physics, but through my career choices I have ended up having a much stronger link to the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET).

The STEM Ambassador journey

I started out doing volunteer outreach work informally in schools after my wife, who was a teacher, asked me to come and run some activities for her class in 2000. At the time I was working for General Electric, who I then discovered had their own engagement programme using STEM Ambassadors, so I signed up with them too.



What I do as a STEM Ambassador

The focus of the activities that I do for schools is generally programming and understanding the design cycle or demonstrating the tools that engineers use in ways that the pupils can understand. I **also do a lot of talks where I share stories about my own education, my career and the opportunities provided by the IET.**

The IET sends me requests to run specific outreach activities and sometimes I need to recruit additional STEM Ambassador colleagues from within IET to deliver them with me. Recently, we had an all-day event at a high school where we presented to every year group throughout the day, helping the students to understand about the options they have in the future in terms of education pathways, professional qualifications and careers.

I am often asked to run activities with the Lego League too – it is an IET scheme that helps young people to develop life skills through robotics-based challenges – and I've been a judge or a referee at First Lego League in Scotland many times over the last 12 years. A local school contacted me asking for help to get started with their Lego League journey, so I got them the kits that they needed, organised them into four teams and now I spend a day a week with them helping them.

The impact of being a STEM Ambassador

After I took early retirement in 2012, I spent the next 18 months doing almost continuous volunteering as a STEM Ambassador. The system says that I delivered around 600 events but there may have been even more than that! I did everything and anything – I thoroughly enjoyed it. **Running the activities gave me a focus, it let me explore and investigate topics that had always been on the periphery of my consciousness, and I was able to just do lots of enjoyable things!** I really like finding good ways to explain things to young people so that they can understand elements of engineering. Now I get requests for me to go and deliver activities all over the place.

I went back to work just before the pandemic and I work three days a week now, so I use the other two days to be available for schools that need help. COVID did make it harder to get out and support schools, but I became part of one particular school in Ayr for essential workers' children and I went in regularly during lockdowns. They let me freestyle – so I would ask the children what they would like to do that day – it was good fun for everyone!

I get a huge kick out of volunteering as a STEM Ambassador – I feel like I am paying back to society for the career that the education system and my employers have given me. It makes me feel good!

About STEM Ambassadors

STEM Ambassadors is a fantastic volunteer programme that has been running for over 20 years.

Our volunteers offer their time, passion and energy to visit schools, colleges and youth group organisations to deliver requests from teachers and youth group leaders who want to link STEM subjects to the real world of work.

Find out more at our [information session](#).



Become a partner

Our STEM Ambassadors programme inspires the next generation and helps young people to develop the skills, confidence and mindset to build successful futures in STEM.

By running a STEM volunteer cohort we provide even more opportunities to connect young people to real-life STEM careers, prioritising support for those who need it most.

Find out more at our [information session](#).



How to get involved

If you have been inspired by how STEM Ambassadors support the learning and development of young people across the UK and you'd like to know more, please contact us at employersupport@stem.org.uk or visit stem.org.uk/stem-ambassadors/partner-info

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