

# How higher education institutions engage with the STEM Ambassadors programme



## Background: Beverly McCormick – STEM Ambassador and Primary PGCE Lecturer, Ulster University

### The STEM Ambassador journey

I spent much of my career as a primary school teacher with my undergraduate degree specialising in Education with Geography. However, while I was teaching, I developed a real passion for STEM subjects.



Beverly McCormick

**I saw that STEM always engaged all my learners regardless of their ability;** it raised their aspirations, and it created opportunities to get the children involved in extra-curricular activities and attending out of school competitions, having fun as they were learning!

Towards the end of my time as a teacher, I signed up as a STEM Ambassador. I have to admit to having had a little bit of imposter syndrome. I wasn't a scientist or engineer or working in a STEM-related industry, but I felt that I could be a STEM Ambassador in my school, by raising the profile of science and STEM in education.

Since leaving teaching, I have worked in EdTech as a global educator creating curriculum materials for a maths company, followed by a short time with an educational video company (ClickView) where I trained teachers in good pedagogical practices when using video in their lessons. I am now employed by Ulster University as a Primary PGCE lecturer focusing on literature and language, personal development and mutual understanding and ICT.

**When I became a STEM Ambassador, I wanted to prove that teachers can be an excellent Ambassador from within their own classroom.** All they need is a spark of passion for developing scientific thinking and enquiry in their lessons. By telling my students that I was a STEM Ambassador and that I volunteered my time outside of the school, I wanted to raise their aspirations and show them that there were exciting career opportunities for them when they are older, along with the importance of valuing their education. It also gave me another edge to me as a teacher – I was more than just classroom-facing.

I set up a coding club in my school, which allowed me to fulfil some of my role as a STEM Ambassador, but I did other things elsewhere: hosting webinars helping teachers and parents increase their understanding of the digital world for children; volunteering for Barefoot Computing in schools; and volunteering in my local library where I've run sessions looking at the wider engineering landscape. I've talked about things like building structures, planes and electricity, and the children always have fun completing the hands-on experiments.



# The STEM Ambassador journey

I work very closely with the Northern Ireland STEM Ambassador Hub. They got in touch with me and offered me advice and opportunities to talk to different people. At their suggestion I went to the National STEM Centre in York to do a three-day training course, and in 2022 I was awarded the Outstanding STEM Ambassador Award for Northern Ireland, which meant I went to the House of Commons to receive the award!

I find the support of the local STEM Ambassador Hub to be fundamentally important – I felt like we were a bit lost within the UK until that was established. The team there are so supportive, and **the resources they provide to us as STEM Ambassadors are a huge benefit and there are resources for every topic!**

I see great value in the role of a teacher who has a passion for developing STEM within their school, so the partnership between teachers and STEM Ambassadors within industry is an important one to build.

I am currently working with my local STEM Ambassador Hub to co-deliver training for teachers in Northern Ireland on STEM through 'The World Around Us' element of our curriculum. While The World Around Us is a blend of science, history and geography, often taught through a thematic approach, it's a lovely way to deliver STEM education. We have planned to use Ulster University where I work as a hub to train teachers. Interest is already high, and we look forward to welcoming the teachers on campus soon. None of this would have been possible without the help and support of my local STEM Ambassador Hub here in Northern Ireland.

## 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](mailto:employersupport@stem.org.uk) or visit [stem.org.uk/stem-ambassadors/partner-info](https://stem.org.uk/stem-ambassadors/partner-info)

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