

# How professional bodies engage with the STEM Ambassadors programme



## Background: Institute of Physics: Toby Shannon-Smith – Public Engagement Manager

The Institute of Physics (IOP) is the professional body and learned society for physics in the UK and Ireland, with an active role in promoting co-operation in physics around the world. They strive to make physics accessible to people from all backgrounds.

## The STEM Ambassador relationship

One of our strategic priorities for our current 'Limit Less' campaign at the IOP is to encourage more young people who are underrepresented in the physics community to do physics beyond the age of 16. I work with businesses and community groups to develop a coherent, positive voice for physics for these underrepresented young people.

The IOP's partnership with the STEM Ambassadors programme is key to the delivery of our campaign. It is a well-known volunteering infrastructure that we can point physics employers to. When we were considering creating a volunteering system within Limit Less, it became clear that **we would need something substantial to bring employers, volunteers, schools and community organisations together.** It just didn't make sense to reinvent the wheel when STEM Ambassadors is so well-established as a programme. So, we have created a Limit Less Ambassadors programme within the STEM Ambassador system instead.

When we talk to employers about joining our campaign, we want to be able to give them a simple, functional way to give them what they need to get started. The STEM Ambassadors programme does this. They get a DBS check; they can access a platform for learning and development; and they get connected with relevant local opportunities. **The training element is important for us: we can access the platform and share our own training and development materials so that our volunteers are as confident as possible about delivering our campaign messages through their activities.**

Something else about the STEM Ambassadors programme that appeals to the IOP and aligns with our values is the way that it is so inclusive. **It doesn't matter whether you are a CEO, a technician or an apprentice sharing your story – you can all be role models.** It's also important to us that we can reach beyond schools into the community. A major part of our community engagement work requires us to reach the non-educational settings where young people access support and guidance, which is particularly important for those groups traditionally underrepresented in physics, such as disabled or LGBTQ+ young people. The STEM Ambassadors programme gives us the vehicle to do that.



# What do the STEM Ambassadors do for you?

Our STEM Ambassadors volunteer with pupils from early years through to age 16. They support all our activities, from our storytelling programme in libraries for parents and carers and their young children, to exhibitions for primary schools, and careers and teaching activities for secondary schools.

**We've had a lot of success talking to 12 to 14 year olds about career pathways to physics by framing our discussions in terms of the global issues that young people care about, like climate change, artificial intelligence, robotics and healthcare.**

We encourage them not to exclude physics from their options and to look at the amazing jobs that they could have that involve physics and that can make a difference to the things that matter to them. When we work with 15- and 16-year-olds, our discussions are more functional, and we talk to them about the choices they can make and the pathways they can follow, such as apprenticeships and academic routes such as A levels, Highers and other qualifications.

STEM Ambassadors is a brilliant scheme – we are delighted to be involved in it and to promote it to our campaign supporters!

## 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)

 @STEMAmbassadors  /STEMAmbassadors