

Erzsebet Szabo

Erzsebet Szabo is Medical Science (BMedSc) undergraduate at the University of Birmingham. Here, she talks about her experiences as a STEM Ambassador and why she chose to become involved.

How did you first become interested in STEM as a career?

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I've always had an enquiring mind; Maths and Science helped me to develop this at school and I realized learning about how our bodies work is fascinating. Work experience in a hospital inspired me to study Medical Science, with the hope of one day being able to in some way help those whose bodies are working as well as they could do.

What pathway did you follow to get where you are?

For my GCSE options, I chose subjects that I enjoyed such as Music and P.E., and took double award science.

I went to Sixth Form and did the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma (an equivalent to A levels). Within this I took a range of subjects: Maths, Chemistry and Biology at higher level and English, Psychology and French at standard level.

As well as having some work experience in fields related to medical science, such as volunteering in an nursing home for people with dementia and a week on a hospital ward, I also got involved with activities at school such as 'pathology week'.

What inspires you about your work and/or about STEM?

To me the human body is an incredible machine, I love learning something new about how it functions in health or disease everyday.

Why did you decide to become an Ambassador?

I became an ambassador because I know it can be hard choosing what you want to do as a career, for GCSEs or A-levels or equivalent and whether to go to university or not. Often science subjects can seem daunting, but I think my subject is fun and I'd like others to know a bit more about it, so that they can make informed decisions about their future and appreciate what scientists do and the different stages it takes to meet various goals.

On average, how much time do you comitt to STEM Ambassador Activities?

Each activity I have done has taken a few hours of my time. As a full time student, getting involved can be a challenge; a lot of the activities require someone with more experience who has built up their career. I try and get involved in activities that aim to inform students about the content of my course or studying STEM subjects at university.

Describe the latest activity you were involved in: What do you feel were the positive outcomes for the pupils?

The latest activity I did was an assembly for a Girls' school in Birmingham. The assembly was about applying to university, studying/living at university and specifically what my course involves on a day-to-day basis. Many pupils came up to me afterwards asking how to start looking into studying particular subjects at university and what experience and qualifications they would need. A lot of the students seemed really inspired to consider university and start researching what it's all about. I think they gained insight into options that may be ahead of them.

What do you feel were the positive outcomes for yourself?

Standing up in front of a whole school talking about my passion was daunting but ultimately a confidence boost, the amount of students asking questions afterwards was a clear sign that I had facilitated some considering STEM subjects and university as a whole.

Do you have any tips for future STEM Ambassadors?

Be realistic about what you do on a daily basis and why you are involved in STEM subjects – the good and the not-so-good side. I spoke about how lab practicals don't always go to plan. I think this allows students to gain insight into what you REALLY do and make balanced decisions about whether they would like to try it too for the benefits and the challenges.