SCI-CAST Competition

Initiative

This project was a new initiative run with the Manchester branch of the British Science Association and led by volunteers Michael O’Toole (School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering) and Sarah Fox (formerly of Health e-Research Centre).

Over sixty students from eight different sixth-forms and colleges from across Greater Manchester were asked to create a 1-minute science video in the style of a news broadcast, featuring an interview with a researcher from The University of Manchester. Students had just under five hours to complete their video. In that time they had to plan their segment, interview the researcher, shoot as much footage as they could and edit it all together into a single polished 1-minute clip.

The students had to gain a lot of skills quickly and work in teams under high pressure. We provided support and advice throughout the day, including arranging talks from an experienced communication specialist (Stephen Melia, Communications & Public Engagement Lead, Health e-Research Centre), pairing them up with a University researcher to spend the day with, and giving quick-start tutorials on video editing software. It was an enormous challenge for the students but the quality of their videos, especially the winning entries, was extraordinary.

How Michael, Sarah and the team have made a difference

Such a high-paced day was a challenge for the volunteers especially with all the technical aspects involved. The students learned to work in teams and under pressure and they built relationships with their researchers through completing a shared goal - relationships that benefitted both parties. Overall the initiative an experiment and a risk, and it worked.

The students were able to look at science from a different perspective for a day – through the lens of a communicator, trying to turn difficult science into short and easy-to-understand explanations for a lay audience, through videos they can be proud of.