

Brain Zone, March 2013



This report has been compiled by the I'm a Scientist team as a summary, containing moderator observations and our web data, to provide some meaningful information on the zone.

The Brain Zone was busy throughout the event with lots of live chats. At the beginning there were many generic questions about the scientists' pay and their inspiration, but towards the end of the first week the students really got into it, and there was some great interaction and thought provoking questions which impressed the scientists.

Number of page views in the 3 weeks surrounding the event

Zone page	Page views
Total zone	20,297
ASK page	1,387
CHAT page	2,577
VOTE page	1,373
Susanna Martin	524
Michael Craig	516
Jen Todd Jones	709
James Stovold	561
Ben Brilot	472

Key figures from I'm a Scientist March 2013 for the zone, the average of all 11 zones, and the whole event

	Zone	Zones average	Whole event
Registered students	392	339	3,731
% of active students (used ASK, CHAT, VOTE or commented)	86%	89%	-
Questions asked	623	846	9,307
Questions approved	271	356	3,921
Answers given	496	669	7,357
Comments	59	109	1,198
Votes	329	296	3,255
Live chats	20	16	179
Lines of live chat	6,564	5,088	55,971
Schools	11	9	97

Popular topics

In the live chats common themes were consciousness and thought – where these processes happen, what they are exactly and whether animals and robots have them. There were also many 'chicken or egg' questions and, interestingly, given that the students are a generation that has grown up with technology, many questions about whether mobile phones can give you brain tumours and cancer. Generic questions about the size and colour of the brain came up repeatedly.

Students were really interested in whether animals have emotions like us, and whether they could have mental health problems such as dementia and depression. They were intrigued by memory, asking questions that included: *how can we improve memory to revise better? can you train your brain to remember? and why do some people have better memory than others?* Students also picked up on James' work on robots and asked lots of questions about this and exactly how he uses the robots. The students seemed to have a morbid interest in death and what happens to the brain: *how long does it take for the brain to decay? when you die does your life flash before your eyes? where does your consciousness go after you die?*

Sample questions

[What is the most unusual case that you have come across in psychology?](#)

[What do people that are born blind actually dream about or 'see' in their dreams?](#)

[Is it true that when you die your brain still keeps on thinking for 7 minutes and is that why they say that you life flashes before your eyes?](#)

knowledge: *jentoddjones* : @mrbrains I only discovered google glass this weekend, how clever are you to know about it already!! Not only did the students frequently interact well with the scientists, but they often read each other's questions and made comments and contributions to discussions started by other students:
sessess : Thanks, that's interesting especially re: memories changing over time. Am interested in @theexperimentalist's question about gender and brains.

Scientists Ben and Susie both stayed for every chat even after they had been evicted: *benbrilot* : Hi all, I hope it's ok if downtrodden poor evictee's carry on in chats...

Scientist winner: Jen Todd Jones

Jen's plans for the prize money: "I'm keen to get onto the projects I talked about with the money from the competition, I hope to create some posters and videos of some of the most interesting things about the brain, including some of the questions asked here so they will be made from the things you found the most interesting!"



Student winner: mrbrains

For asking lots of good questions, mrbrains will receive a £20 WHSmith voucher and a certificate.

Feedback

We're still collecting feedback from teachers, students and scientists but here are a few of the comments made during the event...

"jentoddjones you make your answers so interesting, I dont know you that much but I think you are so fun!!!!!!!!!!!" – shemz, student

"Thanks for your help, my pupils have loved the whole 'chat' experience as ever!" – Audrey Brookes-Smith, Perth Academy, teacher

"I was thrilled to read so many students were really starting to think about science as more than just a subject at school and maybe considering it as a job in the future." – Jen Todd Jones, scientist

"bye im gonna miss you this was the best day of my life" – iamameen, student

"congrats all, in the words of Vinnie Jones, it's been emotional, massive thanks to all for an ace experience" – Ben Brilot, scientist

"the Sirius Academy Dept would like to thank @jentoddjones @michaelcraig and @jamesstovold for the time and effort they have put into answer out students questions and look forward to speaking to you all again in our future discussions!!! Good luck!!" – mrclark, Sirius Academy, teacher