

October 2021

The FUTURES Zone (futures2021.imascientist.org.uk/) ran from 24 September to 8 October and was funded by **FUTURES2021**.

The Zone ran as part of the Futures European Researchers Night and gave students from the South West of England the chance to connect with local researchers.

Due to the Zone taking place early in the year and the continuing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was less activity than expected.

Key figures

	Zone
Schools	4
Students logged in	131
Students active	91%
Researchers	15
Questions asked	4
Questions approved	4
Answers given	14
Researcher comments ¹	1
Live chats	9
Lines of live chat	2,584
Average lines per live chat	287
Votes cast	76

Researchers

15 researchers created a profile in the Zone.

You can see who took part at futures2021.imascientist.org.uk/researchers/

The winning researcher with the most votes from students was **Jennifer Allen**, Reader and Research Director at the University of Bath.

Students

131 students from four schools across the South West logged into the Zone.

99% of active students were from target schools: 24% from underserved schools and 75% from widening participation schools.

Live chats

Nine live chats took place during the activity: seven were school classes booked by teachers and two were additional chats, open to all the students.

An additional seven live chats were booked: five were cancelled and in two the school was unable to attend without cancelling.

There was one live chat where teachers asked questions on behalf of their students. It can also be common for students to share login details or computers during live chats. Therefore the number of students reached will be higher.

¹ In addition to answers, researchers and students can add comments to student questions to encourage discussion. This count shows the number of researchers' comments to student questions.

School activity

Students from four schools across the UK participated in the Zone. In addition to live chats booked by teachers, there were two Thursday evening chats for the students and their families.

School	WP/U status	Active users	Chats attended	Chat lines (total)	Chat lines (per user)	Questions approved	Votes
Reading Girls' School, Reading	WP	90	4	1080	12	0	46
South Wilts Grammar School for Girls, Salisbury	U	29	1	127	4	1	28
Penrice Academy, St Austell	U	2	2	105	53	1	0
Exeter College, Exeter*	-	1	2	25	25	2	2

* In these chats teachers typed questions on behalf of their students, with the chat displayed on a screen.

We want to increase the participation of under-represented groups. Find out what we mean by under-served (U) and widening participation (WP) schools, and how you can support us in working with more of these: about.imascientist.org.uk/under-served-and-wp

Researcher location

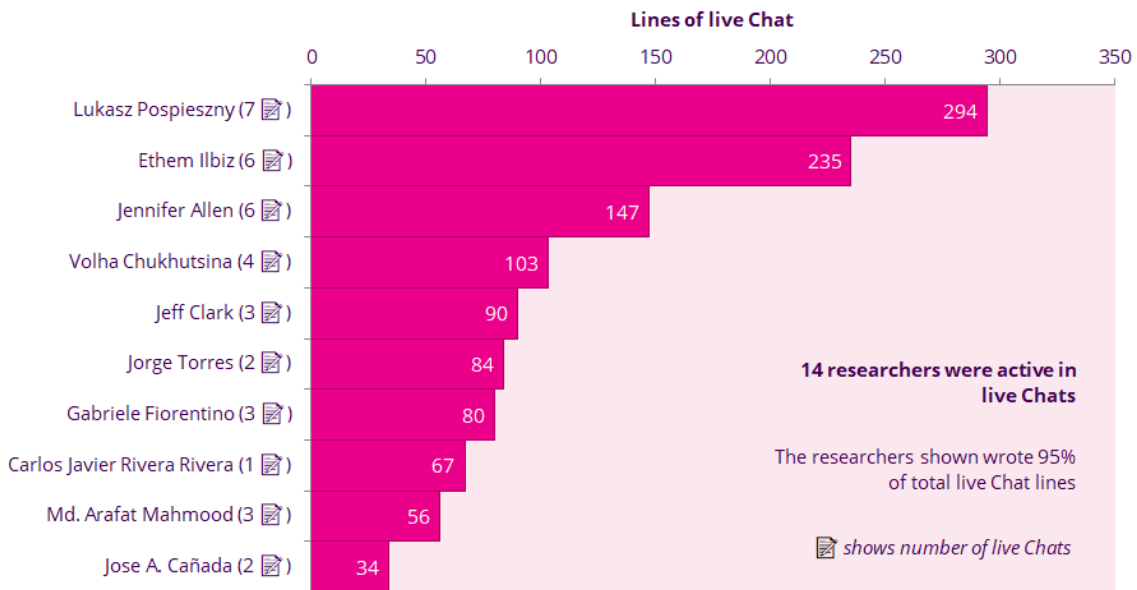


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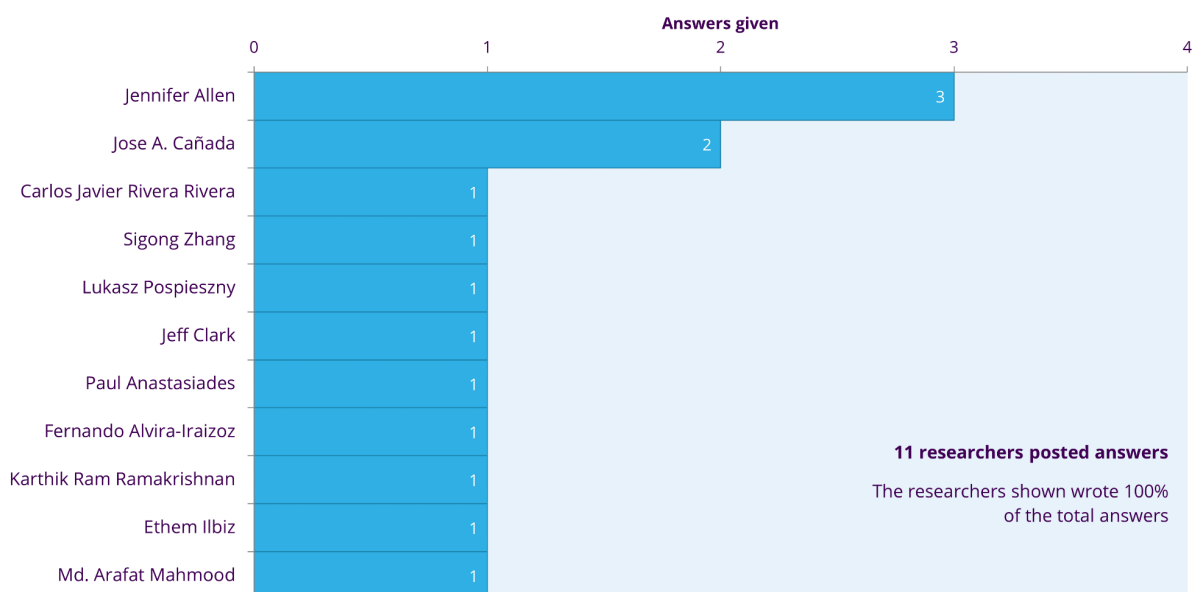
Researcher activity

During the Zone the researchers interacted with students by writing 1,247 lines of live chat, and providing 14 answers to four posted questions. On average, three researchers attended each live chat.

10 most active researchers in live Chats



10 most active researchers in posting answers



Funded by:

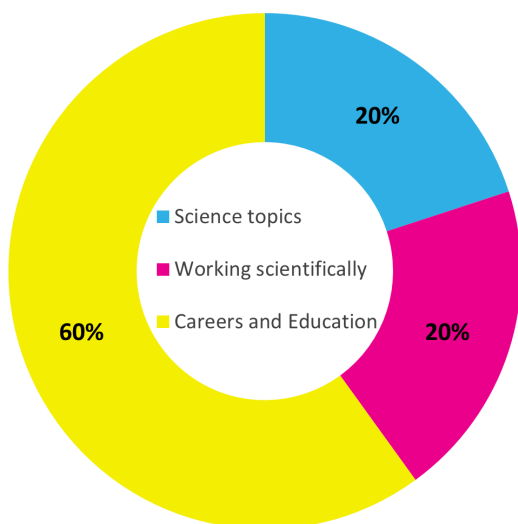
Live chats

The word cloud below demonstrates what students and scientists talked about in live chats. The bigger the word, the more frequently it was used.



Questions in Ask section

The chart below shows an analysis of questions students sent to the scientists. Questions are coded into overarching categories. The examples are coloured by category.



What is the link between acetone gas and diabetes?

How does the computer identify the diseases from the CT scan? What type of markers does it use?

Was it hard to complete your degree in Marine Biology?

What is your favourite thing about your job?

Would you recommend doing a degree in Marine Biology?

Good engagement

Live chats enable students to connect with the researchers over shared interests and can ask questions that build a rapport. Students can understand that researchers are “regular people” and can relate to them more easily. This makes it easier for them to see themselves in science related careers.

Student: What's the best part of your job?

Ethem (researcher): Meeting with new people and contributing to science.

Jeff (researcher): I love being able to contribute to improving health for the wider population and perhaps even contribute to saving some lives!

Jennifer (researcher): Lots of scope for creativity when designing studies, teaching is fun, mentoring others is also very rewarding

Student: Do you prefer Android or Apple

Ethem (researcher): Both have strengths and weaknesses.

Jeff (researcher): I use an Android phone because it is cheaper but do also have an Apple laptop which I'll soon have to replace: it is very nearly 10 years old!

Jennifer (researcher): Android, Cheaper and I'm used to it now! Can't figure apple phones out

Sigong (researcher): Apple

Subject specific questions such as these can help generate interest and knowledge about the scientific field.

Student: How do you think the disruption of being in a lab/experiment affects the data gained from brain scans?

Paul (researcher): Great question! Almost certainly, in particular brain scanners are quite enclosed spaces and very loud, this will definitely influence the activity of different parts of the brain, for example the auditory regions.

However, the way you get around this is by comparing across different conditions but in the same environment. So while the activity is not necessarily the same as if the person were sat at home watching TV, it is the same across say our healthy and patient groups.

Student: What is the main cause of mental health problems at our age?

Jennifer (researcher): There are different causes for different age groups, but poverty and stressful life experiences are common causes. Poverty also causes stressful life experiences.

Information on the researchers careers can provide insight into how variable careers can be and what students may need to do to get there.

Student: Whats useful for the future about doing a psychology degree

Jennifer (researcher): Psychology is very broad so it lends itself to many different possible careers. I'm a clinical psychologist, so work in mental health

Student: What other careers are options when taking psychology?

Jennifer (researcher): organisational psychology, forensic psychology, can work for a charity e.g., Autistica

Researcher of the Week

Students voted each week for their favourite scientist to be named Scientist of the Week.

The Researcher of the first Week was:



Jeff Clark, Postdoctoral Research Associate at the University of Bath

Researcher winner

The Researcher of the second Week was also the overall winner, with the most votes at the end of the Zone:

- **Jennifer Allen**, Reader and Research Director at the University of Bath

As Zone winner, they receive £500 to spend on further public engagement projects.



"I'm over the moon to be voted winner in the FUTURES Zone! I absolutely loved the online Chats. The questions you asked really made me think about my research as well as my career development. These reflections made me feel even more confident that I made a good choice of career pathway, and have really motivated me to continue with my research."

You can read their full statement at <https://ias.im/439.6271>

Feedback

Thank you for answering my question, it was nice to learn about your job. I think it's very interesting

Student



Jeff Clark

@savvy_scientist

I've really enjoyed answering school students' questions with @imascientist (from what my @UniofBath work involves to the name of my tortoise!) and would strongly encourage other researchers to get involved with outreach opportunities. 🧑🏫💡



Jennifer Allen

@DrJennyAllen

I'm so happy about this! I loved it, definitely recommend to other scientists! Thanks so much to the students, schools, other scientists and @imascientist team @BathPsychology

Thank you for today. You cannot overstate the impact that speaking with the Scientists and Engineers had on our girls and the board of Trustees today.

Teacher

Thank you. This has been really interesting!

Student