

BIOLOGY

QUB School of Biological Sciences hosts Banbridge Academy A-level pupils



On Wednesday 13th November, Dr Colin McClure, a lecturer in Biological Sciences in QUB, hosted a practical outreach lab for 80 pupils from Banbridge Academy.

Once upon a time, many, many years ago most of the Biology teaching staff studied Biology at QUB. Back in the day, Chlorine Gardens was known to us as the gloomy Science Library. It hosted a few computers, a couple of photocopiers and miles and miles of Scientific Journals. In those days you could spend hours searching for one elusive article amongst the thousands of journals. Happily, for the Gen Zs and Alphas, that experience is merely an anecdote to be irritatingly inflicted upon you by your parents and teachers. The Science Library in Chlorine Gardens has recently undergone a makeover being refurbished, extended and rebranded into the state-of-the-art teaching and learning facility 'School of Biological Sciences'.

Dr McClure invited the A-level pupils of Banbridge Academy for a tour of the new facilities and arranged a practical in DNA extraction and gel electrophoresis. We spent the afternoon with the friendly teaching staff and post-graduate demonstrators who took our pupils through the theory and practice of cutting up viral bacteriophage DNA using restriction endonuclease enzymes and then separating the DNA fragments using the technique of gel electrophoresis to produce a genetic fingerprint. The bright and airy lab comfortably accommodated all 80 pupils in the same space and the combination of practical resources, display screens placed throughout, and helpful teaching assistants and technical staff meant our pupils had a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding experience. At the end of the session we were provided with free water bottles, badges and refreshments. This is definitely a trip we will repeat if the invitation still stands!



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British Biology Olympiad



The Biology Challenge and British Biology Olympiad are annual competitions for secondary and post-16 students. The Biology Challenge is an online competition for secondary pupils that aims to encourage an interest in biology beyond the school curriculum and stimulate curiosity in the natural world. The British Biology Olympiad tries to challenge and stimulate gifted students with an interest in biology to expand and extend their talents.

In February 2020, pupils in the Biology department under the guidance of Mrs Li competed in both the Biology challenge and the Biology Olympiad with the following results:

Biology Olympiad Year 13 and 14

Silver Award
Amy Hampton
Emma Telford

Highly Commended
Elisabeth Moore
Julia Knox
Ellen Nicholl
Leah Donnelly
Jamie McArdle

Commended
Bethany Nixon

Participation
Pearl Sibanda
Kathryn McGrath

Biology Challenge Year 11

Gold
Pushti Patel

Silver
Pippa Wilson

Bronze
Simon Fang Tom Hamilton
Tom King Ashton Crossley
Jenson Li Erin Martin
Katie Wright Rebekah McFarland

Highly Commended
Olivia Wright James Dixon
Conor McKee Sarah Williamson

Commended
Adam Trimble Jake Beattie
Isaac Tugwell