

Biology Week 2017

Event guide for
university biosciences
societies

This pack includes:

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Introduction to Biology Week

Biology Week is an annual celebration of biology with events all over the UK and beyond for everyone, regardless of background in biology. The week is a great opportunity to share a passion for biology and the natural world.

The week celebrates the whole of biosciences and encompasses events and activities that appeal to all audiences.

Topics covered in the past have included citizen science projects, conservation, dinosaurs, drug development, mental health, biochemistry, physiology, fungi and more.

Around 100 events and activities take place during the week. These include:

- A debate on the implications of using DNA to predict cancer
- A nationwide poll to find the UK's Favourite Mammal
- UK Fungus Day
- Bioscience Careers Day
- School quizzes
- Starling murmuration survey
- Bioblitzes
- BioBakes competition

This year's Biology Week calendar can be found on the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) website: www.rsb.org.uk

Why take part in Biology Week?

Biology Week is a great way to showcase your society's enthusiasm for biology and gain more members. You can reach out to new audiences at your university and beyond by taking part in Biology Week and celebrating the diversity and breadth of the biosciences.

Your society can run an event or activity for Biology Week or contribute to an existing event featured on our online calendar: www.rsb.org.uk/2017calendar

We can help to advertise your event, allowing you and your society to reach a wider audience.

Throughout the week, we aim to share your passion for biology with as many people as possible. Your support will allow us to maximise the impact and coverage of events and activities to give people of all ages and backgrounds the chance to learn about the biosciences.

Help us achieve our vision of a world that understands the true value of biology and how it can contribute to improving life for all.



Event ideas

Your event will aim to simultaneously attract the desired audience, engage them with the subject, and also inform or educate them.

There are many event formats and ideas, and if you find one that works well, it is certainly worth using it again. However, do not be afraid to take a creative and innovative approach, as these are often very likely to generate new interest and attract a more diverse and inclusive audience.

Below are some ideas for events you could run during Biology Week:

Biology Quiz

Running a biology quiz is a simple and effective means of engaging an audience with whatever biological topics you want to tackle, and the difficulty of the quiz can easily be tailored to your audience.

Quizzes are suitable for a lecture theatre, seminar room, pub, or any other place where people can be organised into separate teams. You do not need to adopt a standard quiz format either, instead you could try incorporating problem solving or simple experiments into the quiz to make it more stimulating and challenging.

Workshops or training events

Training events or workshops are a good way of passing on core and specialised biology skills. You could run a training event at your university, but other great venues include local museums, science centres and potentially larger organisations that may be able to provide the training too.

Biology career 'speed dating'

This event is appropriate for students seeking to learn more about a career in the life sciences. By inviting a number of professional representatives to meet students in a speed dating format, it allows them to talk one on one with people working in a biological field.

The relaxed, informal setting makes the experience less intimidating and allows students to pose their questions to those with relevant experience. Get in touch with your local STEM Learning regional coordinator who can help find STEM ambassadors to attend such an event: www.stem.org.uk/stem-ambassador-hub-contacts

Lectures

Scientists from your department, other universities, charities or companies make ideal speakers. They can give talks or even take part with others in a panel discussion on a broad and relevant topic.

'Meet the scientist' careers event

Similar to a career 'speed dating' event but with a more formal format, you can invite students to ask lecturers/researchers or invite other professional representatives from the life sciences to your university to talk about their careers, experiences and how they got involved in their profession and meet current or prospective bioscience students.

Big Biology Day

There are numerous science festivals in the UK that occur throughout the year. These are a perfect opportunity to talk to and engage with large numbers of people in a very short period of time.

As well as attending someone else's science festival, there is always the option of running your own. It needn't be on a large scale, and could just involve a handful of exhibitors (unless of course you have greater ambitions!).

Local schools, professional biology related organisations, STEM ambassadors, natural history societies / community groups might all be suitable exhibitors.

This sort of event can be a large undertaking, but is a superb opportunity for collaboration and can have a high impact in the local area as well as numerous beneficiaries.

For more information on how to run your own mini-festival, check out our Big Biology Day page on our website: www.rsb.org.uk/big-biology-day

Grad scheme recruitment networking

Typically, graduates who have gone on to work at companies that run graduate schemes are more than happy to come back to talk to students about their application and recruitment process, and answer questions about their career since leaving. If you are looking for sponsorship opportunities, offering relevant companies the opportunity to talk to potential applicants is also a good way to secure funding for your society.

Debates or discussions

Both panel debates and facilitated discussions are easy to set up and run. Many areas of

opinion in biology either leave scientists divided or are accompanied by ethical issues which make them ideal debate topics.

By organising an event you can give members of the public the chance to develop and express their opinions.

Science busking

This is the art of using simple science tricks to entertain and educate people and can be performed anywhere, from the corner of a street, in a school classroom, or at a science festival. These are more likely to add to an event rather than serve as a standalone event, but can be fun to do in public locations with high footfall, for example on the high street or at train stations – just make sure you get the correct permissions.

Theatre production

Theatre can be a powerful and effective means of engaging with a new audience. Although the time and effort involved is significant in such a project, it can have a high impact. Joining forces with your university's Dramatic Society is a great way to share resources and skills, and also tap into a wide audience.

Hands-on activities at other events

Setting up stands and running simple but exciting demonstrations at larger events such as fairs, festivals or fetes is a great way to reach an audience that you may not normally meet and interact with. These events are a great way for students to get a taste for outreach and public engagement work, something highly valued by lots of future employers.

If you need some more ideas for activities, check out our downloadable Gopher Science Labs and 21st Century BioChallenges resources at: www.rsb.org.uk/activity-kits

Funding your event

There are a number of ways to ensure you can afford to run your event, with many grants and schemes available that offer financial support.

Public engagement grants and bursaries

There are a number of public engagement grant schemes run by organisations including the RSB. Some grants have annual deadlines, whilst others offer money on a rolling basis.

The RSB regional grant scheme is available to any member around the world that wishes to run a Biology Week event. Grants are available for up to £500, and the grants go towards a large range of activities and events.

You can apply for the scheme online: www.rsb.org.uk/regional-grant-scheme

A list of public engagement grants offered by other organisations can also be found online: www.rsb.org.uk/public-engagement-grants

Sponsorship

Some businesses and companies are often willing to sponsor an event. Depending on their size and budgets they may be willing to cover some of the costs, help with resources, or both, potentially in return for often logos on communications, banners or more.

When obtaining sponsorship, it is important to consider:

- What sort of companies you would like to be associated with and why
- Whether you will offer exclusive sponsorship for your event or activity – companies may agree to pay more if they are the sole sponsor of an event
- What you can provide in return for sponsorship, such as logos or artwork on banners, posters, email footers, a speaker slot etc
- How much you are willing to allow sponsors to get involved with planning your event

Put a sponsorship package together, detailing different levels of funding companies, other organisations or individuals could offer you in return for different benefits. Offering variable packages with bespoke options means you can be flexible in what you offer to meet a sponsor's budget.

If you are able to secure sponsorship, draw up a contract that details the exact agreement to ensure there are no misaligned expectations on either side.

Choosing an event venue

Finding an appropriate venue for an event can sometimes be a challenge, and room and facility hire can be very costly. It is always worth shopping around for venues, making use of contacts you might have or approaching potential new venues.

The following are good starting points:

Lecture theatres, seminar rooms and other meeting spaces

Many universities allow students and student groups to book out spaces for use out of hours. Ask your department or visit your student union to see if they can help you find a suitable space for your activity.

Campus lawns, walkways, cafes and squares

If you want to bring your activity to the wider student community, set up (with permission, if needed) in spaces on campus with lots of footfall.

You can interact with students who may not have ordinarily come along to a biology event, and raise awareness of your society as a result too.

Local science centres or museums

These are often able to provide an event for free or at a discounted rate. The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement has advice online on working with museums and science centres: www.publicengagement.ac.uk

Find your nearest centre on the UK Association for Science and Discovery Centre's online map: www.sciencecentres.org.uk/centres

Village halls and community centres

These have the benefit of offering very cheap hire rates and also serve as a natural hub for the local community. They often have more than enough space and basic facilities available as well.

Find details of your nearest village hall or community centre online: www.hallshire.com

Local parks or communal green space

If the weather permits, take your event outside, where you can engage with the local community too. Contact the local authority for more information on organising an event in a local park or other public space.

Schools / sixth form colleges

Local schools or sixth form colleges often have suitable facilities for events and are worth approaching to hire a space for an evening or weekend event. If your audience is school children or young people, these venues may also be made available to you for free.

Somewhere completely different!

Anywhere with high footfall will ensure you have a large potential audience, so think about setting up a science busking point or carrying out demonstrations in shopping centres, train stations, the high street or outside of sporting events.



Accessibility and Inclusion

To ensure that as many people as possible can get involved in Biology Week, so it is important that the events organised are accessible and inclusive.

Arrangements should be made in order to make events accessible so that everyone, regardless of their ability, is able to attend and enjoy the event.

When deciding on a venue or location for your event, consider

- Does the venue have an accessible entrance or is the entrance step-free? If not, do the steps have handrails and ramps?
- If there are stairs inside the venue, is there a lift?
- Are there accessible toilets in the venue?
- Is there disabled parking at the venue? Is this located close to the entrance of the venue?
- Are there appropriate evacuation methods in place for disabled attendees?
- Is catering provided? Ensure that dietary and cultural requirements are catered to and ensure there are options that are vegan, vegetarian, halal, kosher and all have potential allergen content clearly marked.
- External environments may be overwhelming and stressful for those with autism or other developmental or learning disabilities, so make sure environments are suitable if you know those who are vulnerable may be attending.

If you are producing resources for your event, also consider:

- If audio-visual materials are used, do they contain subtitles or is there a transcript available?
- Is the font easy to read? Sans serif fonts are easier for people with dyslexia to read, and a minimum of 12 point font should be used if you are producing literature around your event.

Representation is also important, so consider:

- If you are inviting external speakers, do they represent the diversity of the community? Consider characteristics such as age, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and ability.
- In imagery used, are all members of the community represented clearly where possible?

Pub quizzes are a great way of engaging an audience with biology in a fun and interactive way. However do ensure that you are not excluding people who don't drink for personal, religious or health reasons. Ensure if you are using drinks vouchers, for example, that they can be used to purchase soft drinks as well as alcoholic ones.

Student parents and mature students often have family responsibilities in the evenings. In

order to make events inclusive to student parents and mature students, you could organise events during the working day, instead of in the evening.

Is there a charge for the event? Expensive events can exclude people with lower incomes. Consider subsidising ticket prices if the cost is quite high, or look to see if you can get student discounts, or discounts for purchasing many tickets all in one go.



Joining forces and forming partnerships

Collaborative projects enable the sharing of ideas, resources, efforts and funds.

When organising an event, establishing links early on will increase the chances of your society's event being a success. It is important however to agree at the start of the process what is expected from the various groups involved.

It might be possible to seek collaborations with the following:

Other student societies

Joining with other student societies is a great way to meet new people, expand your event's audience and potentially access resources or society funding.

Joint career fairs and graduate networking events with other science subject societies is ideal for career development, whilst working with arts, faith or sporting societies could help to bring alive a more creative and interactive event that more students can get involved with.

Local schools and neighbouring universities

Schools are often very happy to have students visit to run activities and events for their pupils, or come in to talk to them about studying biosciences at university and beyond. Local authorities will often have a means of contacting local schools in the area to promote an event or to send out a request for collaboration.

STEM Learning

STEM Learning is an educational charity in the UK that seeks to encourage participation at school and college into science and engineering-related subjects and work. Their STEM Ambassadors connect with schools to engage and inspire potential young scientists.

If you want to run an event that you think would benefit from the involvement of STEM Ambassadors, then contact the relevant regional coordinator online:

www.stem.org.uk/stem-ambassador-hub-contacts

Natural History Societies and Wildlife Trusts

The UK has a rich tradition of amateur biologists and natural history organisations, within which an impressive array of specialist skills and knowledge exists.

Natural history groups are a source of potential speakers for events and they often have extensive knowledge on local biology so can lead guided walks and visits to sites of interest.

The Natural History Museum has an online database of many UK natural history groups:
www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part/nature-groups-near-you

Local businesses

Commercial organisations in the area may be able to offer skills, resources, advice, or sponsorship for an event if it is relevant and beneficial for them.

Those with a link to the life sciences are the most obvious option; however, other organisations may also consider supporting your event, and may donate food or other resources if your budget is tight.

Local community groups

If you are looking to put on an event open to the local community, then it would be worth seeking to collaborate with other local community groups. Local authority websites should have details of the community groups and organisations that exist in your area.

These can include community centres, religious groups, Scouting or Girl Guide patrols, or residential homes, foster housing or nurseries and playgroups.

Work with us or one of our member societies

The Royal Society of Biology has many organisations with which it is closely affiliated. Many of these have a presence throughout the UK, and would be suitable to approach to collaborate on an event (dependent of course on the location or subject matter proposed).

If you would like to get involved with some of the events we are already volunteering at, you can find out more online: www.rsb.org.uk/volunteer-with-us



Event checklist

The following list includes a number of key considerations to take into account when organising and delivering a successful event:

Why are you holding the event?

- What purposes are you trying to fulfill with your event?
- What audience do you want to reach with your event?
- What do you consider to be a successful event, and how are you going to measure whether the event is a success?

Who is involved in organising and delivering the event?

- What funding do you have available for the event?
- How are you going to delegate essential tasks to those running the event?
- Are there any other useful partners or collaborators you can or should approach?
- What skills would you need to run your event: do you need students who can help with publicity, ticket sales, or even know first aid or how to manage crowds?

What resources and funding can you access?

- Are these resources available and where are they coming from?
- What are the costs of the resources, and can they be reused or returned after the event?
- How are you going to budget your event, and what is your expenditure, when considering other events you may want to run?
- Are you going to seek sponsorship for your event?
- Could your department or student union help with funding?
- How are you going to sell tickets, collect money, and ensure money collected is secure and safe?
- Can you sell food and drink at the event in locations that may already sell their own?

When should you hold the event?

- Will it clash with any other similar events, end of term celebrations or exams taking place?
- Are students more likely to attend a weekday or weeknight event, and should it be in term time?
- Is the weather, and therefore where you hold your event, a factor?

Where should you hold the event?

- What locations are easily accessible by your target audience?
- How big does the space need to be?
- Do you require specific technical or practical equipment?
- Will it require adding a price or entry fee for people attending?
- Will noise be an issue? For example, would it be disruptive in certain places, like the library?
- Do you have funds to pay for a venue?

How will you reach your audience?

- What audience do you want to engage with, and why?
- What audience is most suitable for your event?
- What communication channels does your target audience favour? For students, it may be easy enough to publicise through social media channels.
- Does your university, department or student union have mailing lists to whom you can send out event invites or details?
- Is it worth making posters, flyers or doing lecture shoutouts to let students know about your event?

How will you evaluate your event?

- What would make your event a success and how can you measure this?
- How do you plan to collect feedback from your event?

Safety, security and back-up plans

- Do you need to complete a risk assessment for your event? Your student union or department should be able to help you with this.
- Do you have relevant insurance for your event if it is required?
- Will you be taking photos or video on the day, and are children involved?
- Will you need DBS checks for those involved? If the event involves working with children, young people or vulnerable adults, have you taken all the reasonable steps needed to ensure their safety?
- Do you have a contingency plan in place in case the weather isn't ideal?

Publicising your event

We are hoping to have as many people as possible involved in Biology Week, and we are able to help advertise your events where possible to reach out to your chosen audience.

You can let us know if you are running an event by completing a form online on our calendar page: www.rsb.org.uk/2017calendar

We will then advertise your event through our own channels, including:

- On our online Biology Week events calendar: www.rsb.org.uk/2017calendar
- In our monthly e-newsletters which goes out to our members and Member Organisations
- On our social media platforms using the hashtag #BiologyWeek

You can download a digital media pack from our website, which includes:

- High resolution files of the Biology Week logo
- Sample posters to display at your organisation / event

Find more logo variations and branding material online: www.rsb.org.uk/biology-week-branding

A press and communications pack can also be downloaded from our website, which includes:

- Advice on contacting local press, radio, and television outlets
- Sample press releases
- Sample press invites

Find more social media and communications advice online: www.rsb.org.uk/biology-week-comms

Evaluating your event

There are a number of ways to evaluate the success of your event, especially if this is something funders or sponsors would like to know for their own records. Evaluating events means that future committees know what events worked well and should be repeated, or what didn't work and why.

Evaluation forms can be distributed after an event for people to fill in as they leave, or online surveys can always be emailed or shared on social media pages for people to fill in when they have the chance.

Adding incentives, such as the chance of winning a voucher or a free ticket to a future event can encourage event attendees to return their responses.

Questions to ask will change depending on the event, but things to consider include:

- How they heard about the event
- What year group they are in or whether they are undergraduate or postgraduate level students
- Are they a biology student
- Whether the cost was too much or acceptable if the event was ticketed
- What they did and did not enjoy about the event
- What events they would like to see run in the future
- Whether they would like to take part or get involved with the running of a future event

You may wish to use the simple form (see next page) at your event to record attendee feedback.

Event feedback form

Please tell us what you thought about today's event.

1. How did you hear about the event?

2. What year are you in at university?

First year | Second year | Third year | Fourth year | postgraduate student

3. Are you a biology student?

Yes

No

4. Did you think the entry price for the event was reasonable?

Yes

No, it was too expensive

5. What did you like most about the event?

6. What could have made the event better?

10. What events would you like BioSoc to run in the future?

11. If you would like to be involved or help plan future BioSoc events, please leave your name and email address below:

Contact us

You can find further information on our website about running Biology Week events:

More about Biology Week	www.rsb.org.uk/biologyweek
Our 2017 Events Calendar	www.rsb.org.uk/2017calendar
Guidance on how to run a Biology Week event	www.rsb.org.uk/organise-an-event
Biology Week logos and branding	www.rsb.org.uk/biology-week-branding
Press and communications help	www.rsb.org.uk/biology-week-comms

You can also contact the RSB via our social media channels if you need help promoting or sharing your content:

Twitter	@RoyalSocBio
Instagram	@RoyalSocBio
Facebook	facebook.com/RoyalSocBio
Flickr	flickr.com/RoyalSocBio

For further information on Biology Week or advice on running an event please contact:

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We can offer advice and guidance from our public engagement team via email, over the phone, or in person if you are in London.



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