

A day in the life of a Science Centre Explainer



Myfanwy-Cerys Williams is a Science Centre Explainer, currently working at Centre of the Cell, a science education centre based at Queen Mary University of London. Myfi graduated from Queen Mary University of London in 2016 with a Biomedical Sciences degree. She juggled studying and working as an Explainer at the Science Museum until graduation, and then took on a full-time role at the Science Museum. She returned to Queen Mary in 2018 to work at Centre of the Cell. Lorenza Giannella (Training Manager, Biochemical Society) spoke with her about her work.

How did you get into science?

I've always loved science – even when I was younger! I was that child who collected all the *Horrible Science* magazines and went to all the science clubs. I chose science for a career as I wasn't entirely sure what I wanted to do, so I went with what I enjoyed the most. It turns out that I also love to present, making science communication the perfect career for me. I started my career at the Science Museum. It's where I discovered my love for informal education, which I have carried with me since.

What's the most interesting project you've worked on?

So far, it has been our 'Invasion! Infection and Immunity' workshop for KS4 and KS5. I developed table top activities to aid in the students' understanding of some basic immunological concepts such as the basis for herd immunity. We also have a 'Meet an Immunologist' table and it's amazing listening to the students interact with the scientist as their conversations are so varied.

What do most people not realize about your job?

Most people don't realize how varied my job is. One of my main duties is delivering school sessions, but there's a lot that goes on behind the scenes too. I spend more time than an

adult ever should making fake poo or snot (that's not to say I don't enjoy it – its great fun!). This career path has also left me with a bizarre set of skills, such as having a whole arsenal of bubble tricks up my sleeve.

What inspires you about your job?

I love seeing that 'lightbulb' moment happen to someone, when their understanding clicks into place. It's even more satisfying when they have been struggling and I'm challenged with finding appropriate analogies for the science which they can relate to. I can always see whether I have been successful if I hear them explaining the concept to someone else later. A lot of younger children will get really excited if they remember it correctly, so it's great to see the enthusiasm transfer through the group.

What's been the greatest challenge in your career so far?

My greatest challenge is attempting to engage adults. In my experience, it's much easier to coax engagement out of a disinterested child than an adult. This is still something that I struggle with at times, but in 2019 I became a faculty trainer at Queen Mary. This means I am pushing myself out of my comfort zone by running training for my peers, giving me more confidence when engaging varied audiences. ■

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Job profile – Science Centre Explainer

Science Centre Explainers work in science centres and museums. They engage different populations with scientific topics (e.g., school students, family groups or adult audiences) and promote discussion on collections or exhibitions.

Responsibilities

A Science Centre Explainer works with varied publics, either running group sessions or engaging with individuals, interfacing between an audience and a science exhibition, installation or activity. They may also run training sessions for the university or research staff on how to engage with different audiences, training them on public engagement and science communication skills.

Qualifications and key skills

A science degree is usually required for the role. Additional training may include further specialization in science communication and/or public engagement. General key skills include an ability to communicate complex scientific topics clearly, an adaptable attitude and an ability to engage calmly and openly with varied publics over potentially polemical and difficult topics.

Salary and career development

Salaries for Science Centre Explainers can depend heavily on qualifications, experience and location, ranging from £17,000 to £23,000. Career progression can be towards Science Centre Coordinator or, for example, Visitor Experience Manager.

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