

## Cell EXPLORERS final year student research projects 2022

**Title:** Evaluation of the long-term impact of participation in the Cell EXPLORERS programme on alumni  
**Student:** Róisín Healy, 4<sup>th</sup> year  
**Project time:** Academic year 2021-22, semester 2

**Many students are actively involved in volunteering** in the majority of higher education institutions across Ireland. Student volunteering in conjunction with community educational programmes have become particularly popular amongst students. Cell EXPLORERS (CE) is an example of such an initiative. This programme offers students the opportunity to promote public engagement of science through the facilitation of hands-on activities with young people. The aim of this 4<sup>th</sup> year project was to **explore the overall long-term impact participation in the programme had on its alumni** volunteers.

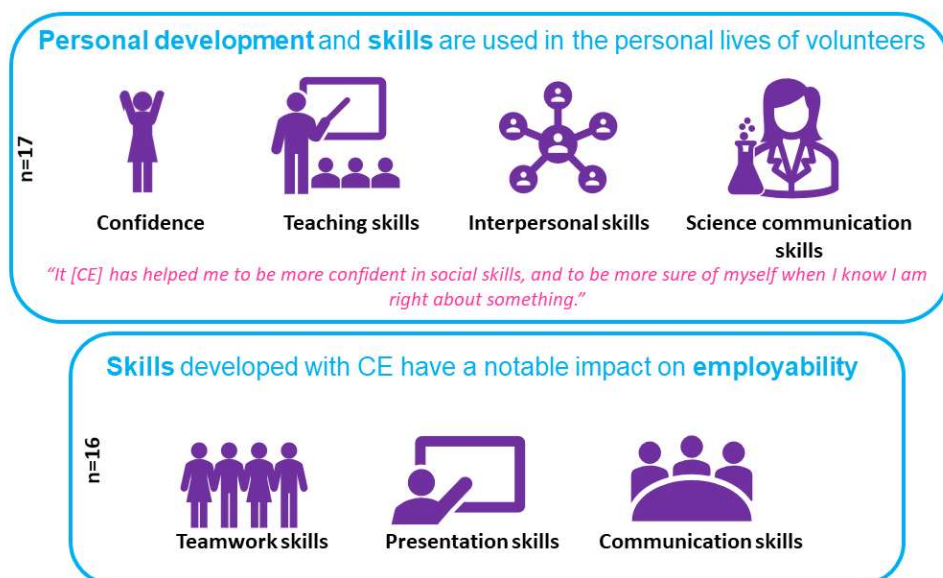
The data were collected using an online questionnaire. Analysis of feedback suggested **that alumni developed many skills and have improved personal development** that they accredit to their participation in CE. These benefits have had an impact on the employability and the career progression of employed alumni.

Additionally, benefits can also be seen in the personal lives of alumni **through the confidence they gained** and the skills they

acquired with the programme. Overall, the data suggested that participation in CE had a long-lasting impact on volunteers long after they had finished with the programme.

Completing my final year project with Cell EXPLORERS provided me with a valuable opportunity to develop and hone new skills. **For me, the biggest skill I have developed is my communication skills.** Since participation in the programme, I feel as though I have greatly improved confidence in communicating and speaking in front of others. Additionally, I have developed technical skills for using excel. Previously, I would have had very little experience with excel and would have only been aware of the basics. I learned a lot more about creating graphs, tables and using functions.

I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to complete my final year project with Cell Explorers. The Cell EXPLORERS supervisors were so helpful, providing me with guidance and support throughout the duration of the project. **I thoroughly enjoyed my experience, and I would highly recommend it to final year students.**



**Figure 1. Skills used in the professional and non-professional lives of volunteers.** List of personal gains and skills which are used in the personal lives of volunteers, as well as a list of the skills developed with CE that impact participant employability/career progression.