

SCI-FUN Roadshow 2009/10 feedback report

A background to this paper

The Roadshow visited nineteen secondary schools during the course of the 2009/10 academic year. Evaluations of the Roadshow programme during this schedule were provided by contact teachers from visited schools through an online questionnaire. Teachers could leave feedback anonymously if they wanted; those that gave their name did so to indicate their agreement for their comments to be used publicly. In total, eighteen teachers from seventeen schools responded to the questionnaire; this paper summarises the comments received.

The headings contained in this paper replicate the questions asked within the online questionnaire. A slight change to this structure occurs for question three: questions 3a and 3b (as presented here) were asked together in the original questionnaire with only a single space available for responses. The answers to question three have therefore been separated in this document to enhance clarity.

(Please note that percentages quoted below are rounded to integers and expressed as a proportion of the number of respondents for that particular question, not the entire survey.)

A summary of the feedback obtained through the questionnaire

1. How did you find out about the SCI-FUN Roadshow?

More than half (59%) of the seventeen schools that responded had been visited previously by the Roadshow scheme. Given the significant effort that was put into visiting new venues in the Highlands and Islands, this still suggests that many schools appreciate the benefits of a visit, and try to consistently use the programme to support the science curriculum in their schools.

In addition, 18% of respondents said that they first found out about the scheme through email; all of these were in the Highland region, which highlights the attempts that were made to visit new rural venues. A Science Engagement Grant was awarded by the Scottish Government in 2009/10 to support activities in these areas.

2. Using the following scale (*from 1 – Very Poor up to 5 – Excellent*), how would you assess the knowledge and professionalism of the staff that visited?

Out of a maximum score of five, the Roadshow team scored an average of 4.88 from seventeen respondents for knowledge, and 4.94 from sixteen respondents for professionalism, with no answers less than 4 for either question.

We feel this shows that schools had a very positive view of the SCI-FUN staff, which reflects well on the University of Edinburgh and its efforts to engage schools and the wider community.

3a. Which part of the experience do you think the pupils enjoyed the most and why?

From the seventeen responses that were received, it is very clear that the hands-on exhibits are a key reason why the Roadshow is well-regarded by schools; 88% of respondents explicitly stated that one of the aspects enjoyed most by the pupils was the time exploring the hands-on exhibits. The *Survival: ancient senses in a modern world* presentation (the general science talk of the 2009/10 Roadshow) was also commented favourably upon by 41% of those providing feedback. Interestingly, two respondents – both from Highland schools – commented on role of the seniors and the benefits for them within the programme of activities.

3b. How could a visit be improved for the S1/S2 cohort?

Only eleven answers were given to this question (in comparison to the seventeen comments to question 3a), of which two were to say that it would be difficult to improve the Roadshow experience. Of the nine making suggestions, not one was repeated by a large majority.

Two respondents said that pupils should have more time for the hands-on session; two said that the presentations were too long; and another two suggested that the research-based presentation should not be after the hands-on activities, due to the change in tone this creates.

4. Using the scale (*from Greatly Decreased to Greatly Increased*), in your opinion, how has the SCI-FUN Roadshow visit affected the pupils' interest in studying science subjects at Standard Grade and beyond?

Out of seventeen responses, 88% stated that the Roadshow visit would increase the interest of the pupils in studying sciences further, with four of these respondents believing that there would be a great increase in interest. The remaining 12% of respondents believed that there would be no change in interest due to the Roadshow visit.

We feel that this adds to the evidence that schools secure SCI-FUN visits to support the science curriculum, especially in relation to the subject choice process for Standard Grades. SCI-FUN has reacted to this in 2009/10 by introducing a careers talk that focuses more on the importance of subject choices and how these relate to future options.

5. What approximate figure do you believe it is reasonable for schools to pay for a SCI-FUN visit?

Nine out of sixteen respondents (56%) indicated that a figure in the region of £401-£600 would be reasonable for a school visit.

56% of respondents stated that funding visits is an ongoing challenge for schools.

We feel that, given the further comments made in response to this question, the suggested reasonable figure should be seen as a compromise between the actual value of a Roadshow visit to schools and the money that they can afford. We believe, therefore, that we have made an extremely positive decision in reducing the school visit fee to £500 for the 2010/11 academic year.

6. From your personal point of view, how could SCI-FUN improve to match schools' requirements more closely? For example, which supplementary materials would be of interest to you?

There were fifteen responses to this question in total. Of the various suggestions made, the most popular was that some preparation materials (e.g. list of activities/topics) would help to prime the pupils ahead of a visit; this was stated by 20% of teachers replying to this question.

Four respondents (27%) commented that it would be difficult to do anything to further match the requirements of schools.

7. Are there any topics that you would like to see covered in future presentations?

The answers given by fourteen respondents reveal that there is not one specific area that schools overwhelmingly require to be addressed by the SCI-FUN Roadshow. A chemistry theme (three comments) and contemporary issues/current research (two comments) were mentioned by more than one person, but not one topic was stated more often than these. Other subjects mentioned included: genetics, biotechnology,

engineering, construction, the heart, and stem cells. (The stem cell suggestion, however, seems to have been given by someone who has already witnessed the *Stem Cell Show*.)

We note that some of these areas (e.g. chemistry, genetics) are the focus of other projects within the College of Science and Engineering's Public Engagement with Science activities, and are therefore able to be explored in more depth by these projects. We shall still be thinking about how these areas may be addressed in the Roadshow, perhaps in the context of a "current research" themed presentation.

8. Would you be interested in hosting the SCI-FUN Roadshow again in 2010/11?

From sixteen responses, 69% would definitely be interested in hosting the Roadshow, with the other 31% perhaps interested. There were no definite "no" responses. The sole reason provided for the indecision by many respondents is the uncertain picture regarding finance: potential difficulties in funding a visit was specifically mentioned in eight comments.

9. Would you consider recommending the SCI-FUN Roadshow to teachers in other schools?

94% of sixteen respondents indicated that they would recommend the Roadshow, with one stating that they had already done so. The one remaining response was "perhaps" with no further comment given.

10. Finally, we greatly value and appreciate all responses evaluating any part of our visit. If you have any comments that you would allow us to quote on our website (http://www.scifun.ed.ac.uk/pages/about_us/shows.html) and elsewhere, please write these below. For us to be able to use your comments please also include your name, job title and school/council/business name. Thank you.

"Another excellent experience for our S2 pupils! SCI-FUN continues to engage, enthral, educate and entertain in equal measure. The quality of the presentations was again first-class and the opportunity to interact with the exhibits was very positively received."

Richard Ford, PT Physics, Bearsden Academy, Bearsden

"I found SCI-FUN very enjoyable...it made me change my mind about what sciences I was going to take."

S2 Pupil from Bearsden Academy, Bearsden

"The SCI-FUN Roadshow was a fantastic event at our school with inspirational young scientists presenting science in a fun and dynamic way. The quality of the exhibits was very high and cannot easily be seen by our pupils without travelling over 200 miles normally."

Stewart McPhail, Depute Head Teacher, Farr High School, Highland Council

"I've spoken to both the senior and junior pupils and had a lot of positive feedback from them. It was described as 'amazing', 'fun', 'informative', 'interesting', 'well explained', 'kept you wanting to know more'."

Liz MacRae, PT (Science), Gairloch High School, Highland

"SCI-FUN brings much of the experience of a visit to a science centre to our doorstep. Apart from cost and time saving, a greater number of pupils can attend with less impact on their learning in other subjects."

Martyn Crawshaw, Faculty Head of Sciences, Millburn Academy, Inverness

"Extremely professional, slick presentations totally matched to the S2 age group."

Liz Anne Jaffray, PT Physics, St Ninian's High School, Kirkintilloch

"As usual, the high level of professionalism makes it very difficult to see where improvements could be made."

John Meharry, Technician, Beaconhurst School, Bridge of Allan, Stirling