



The NUSTEM team: Dr Antonio Portas, Professor Carol Davenport, Jonathan Sanderson, Annie Padwick, Mel Horan and Joe Shimwell.

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Northumbria University STEM outreach project wins Institute of Physics award

Researchers from an outreach group at Northumbria University are celebrating after winning a prestigious 2025 Institute of Physics (IOP) award recognising their work with children and young people across the North East and beyond.

NUSTEM works closely with schools to develop and provide activities and opportunities for children from all backgrounds to engage with the subjects

of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). They have been awarded the William Thomson, Lord Kelvin Medal and Prize for public engagement in physics.

The [Institute of Physics](#) (IOP) is the professional body and learned society for physics, and the leading body for practising physicists in the UK and Ireland. Its annual awards reflect the wide variety of people, places, organisations and achievements that contribute to physics as a discipline.

The recognition for Northumbria's NUSTEM team, made up of experienced teachers, researchers and outreach specialists, comes as they recently celebrated the milestone of 10 years of STEM engagement with children, families and teachers which has already won [regional](#) and [national acclaim](#).

The citation from the IOP Awards Committee says the NUSTEM team have been recognised: "For pioneering new methodologies and pedagogies in physical sciences outreach and engagement, taking a nuanced, long-term approach to supporting children's physics and career identity across the North-East England and beyond."

The [Sir William Thomson, Lord Kelvin Medal and Prize](#) honours the Scottish-Irish mathematician and physicist, best known for his work on thermodynamics. This included work on the absolute temperature scale. The unit of absolute temperature, the kelvin, is named after him.

Since NUSTEM's launch over 10 years ago, [Professor Carol Davenport](#) and [her team](#) have undertaken thousands of hours of work with children from pre-school age through to those leaving secondary school. They have shared the benefits and opportunities that working in science-related subjects can bring to inspire future generations of scientists and engineers and support efforts to diversify the sector.

Award-winning initiatives such as [STEM Person of the Week](#), which involves the introduction of classroom materials to familiarise children with the personal attributes of people working in STEM careers such as marine biologists, satellite engineers and polar geologists, are used to make STEM careers more relatable for young people. [Research has shown](#) that through the intervention, children develop a much less stereotyped view of people who work in STEM, and are often inspired to further their own knowledge as a result.

Professor Davenport, Director of NUSTEM, said: “It’s fantastic to see NUSTEM’s work to support even the youngest learners to explore possible future careers through educational experiences recognised by such a prestigious organisation as the Institute of Physics.

“The Institute of Physics was one of the partners of NUSTEM when we began in 2014. Their ethos very much matches our own that STEM subjects should be accessible to all. We believe that by supporting children, families and their teachers to identify how their personal attributes align with the attributes of people that work in STEM, children and those around them will feel more confident that a career in STEM is attainable.”

The IOP Awards celebrate physicists at every stage of their career; from those just starting out through to physicists at the peak of their careers, as well as those with distinguished achievements behind them. They also recognise and celebrate companies that are successful in the application of physics and innovation, as well as employers who demonstrate their commitment and contribution to scientific and engineering apprenticeship schemes.

Congratulating this year’s Award winners, the Institute of Physics President Professor Michele Dougherty CBE, said: “On behalf of the Institute of Physics, I want to congratulate all of this year’s award winners on the significant and positive impact they have made in their profession, be it as a researcher, teacher, industrialist, technician or apprentice, and I hope they are incredibly proud of their achievements.

“It is becoming more obvious that the opportunities generated by a career in physics are many and varied – and the potential our science has to transform our society and economy in the modern world is huge. I hope our winners appreciate they are playing an important role in this community and know how proud we are to celebrate their successes – I hope their stories will help to inspire current and future generations of scientists.”

Discover more about the work of NUSTEM at www.nustem.uk

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk

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