

BIOLOGY STUDENTS WIN CREST AWARDS



Varndean College is celebrating the success of four of its recently qualified A Level Biology students; Sona Raju, Keni Patel, Ella Newmarch and Sophie Baker who have all been awarded CREST Awards by the British Science Association.

CREST is a national scheme to help inspire young people to become independent and reflective learners, in which an award is given in recognition of them meeting the assessment criteria for an individualised science project they have led and carried out. In the 16+ age category, the project must take a minimum of 70 hours, contribute to a STEM field of study, whilst working with an external mentor from their chosen field of study.

We are delighted to learn that Sona, Keni and Ella were all awarded Gold Awards.

Projects conducted by both Keni and Sona involved investigations into gene/chromosome stability by examining the role of a specific protein that has been previously altered by mutations and by using yeast cells as a model. Having stable genes and chromosomes is critical to whether our DNA is replicated correctly and where errors can lead to cancerous change; an area of great interest and a current research focus in the scientific and medical community. Their projects were conducted under the mentorship of Dr Jon Baxter who oversees the Baxter Lab with the Genome Damage and Stability Centre at the University of Sussex.

Ella Newmarch was also awarded Gold for her investigation into the effect of age on the foraging behaviour in herring gulls in an urban environment. Ella was mentored by

Prof Paul Graham, also based at the University of Sussex.

Sophie Baker was awarded a Silver Award for her project, which involved creating an infectious pseudotype of the rabies Pasteur virus using its glycoprotein with a view to testing existing vaccines or synthesising new ones, so they are vital in vaccine research and development. Sophie was mentored by Dr Edward Wright, Senior Lecturer in Microbiology at University of Sussex.

Yaso Shan, Biology Tutor at Varndean College who organised and administrated the Awards commented: "This is a particularly noteworthy achievement as students were able to experience scientific research and investigations under the guidance and expertise of university professors which represents a fantastic opportunity for A Level students. It is remarkable that our students have been able to undertake, complete and succeed on a project of this scale in such unprecedented circumstances in addition to securing A Level success and university places."

Keni, Ella and Sophie are all now studying at university; Keni, Biomedical Science at University of Brighton; Ella, Biology at University of Bristol and Sophie, Biochemistry at University of Sussex.



ELLA NEWMARCH

SOPHIE BAKER

SONA RAJU

KENI PATEL