

Using Astronomy and Space Education for National Skills Agendas

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I will describe Research Council programmes in the United Kingdom linking astronomy and space to young people, though both the formal (schools, curriculum) and informal (science centres, youth groups) education sectors. The overall aim is to use the excitement of these science areas to engage this audience, so that more take up science, maths or technology subjects beyond age 16. This is to address UK national skills agenda and the need for trained people.

PPARC needs to work with key UK education and communications partners in this programme, and to encourage astronomers and space scientists/engineers to participate. Our investments include the Faulkes Telescopes Project, 'Classroom Space', and the UK CREST Awards for young people. Challenges in evaluating the real impact on the target audiences – teachers and young people – are described. The need for international exchange of experience and best practice in such enrichment programmes is highlighted.