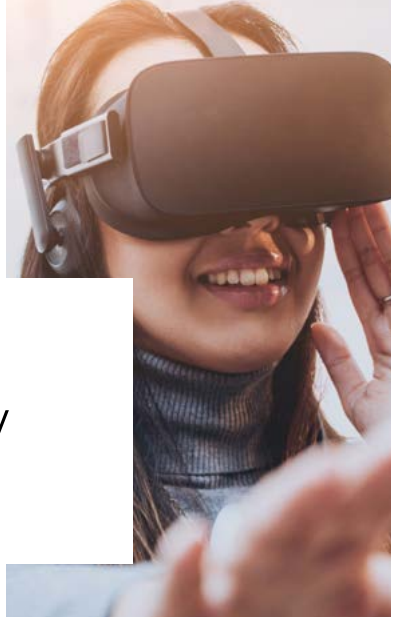
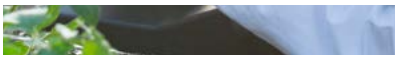
Pearson BTEC





Celebrating women who work and study in **STEM** sectors

As part of International Women's Day, we spoke to BTEC IT and Computing Learner of the Year 2021, Rey Poh, about studying a BTEC in a STEM subject and encouraging more girls to get into the sector.

Can you tell us a bit about the BTEC you studied, which course and which college?

I studied Level 1/Level 2 BTEC Digital Information Technology in Years 10 and 11 at Sandbach High School and Sixth Form College. The course had 3 components: Component 1 explores user interface design principles and project planning techniques, Component 2 focuses on collecting, presenting and interpreting data, and finally, Component 3 teaches you about effective digital working practices.

Essentially, **BTEC DIT teaches you extremely useful computer-illiteracy skills which will positively impact any job you apply for, as well as open your eyes to the often-overlooked but customary aspects of modern technology** - for example how important icon and text placement is on a user interface.

What did you enjoy most about studying your BTEC course?

I particularly enjoyed Component 2 the most, which focused on utilizing Microsoft Excel for data presentation and manipulation. Being able to learn to use such an important and powerful tool in school was such a privilege and so much fun. **This will help me in the future regardless of the career path I choose to go into because data presentation is a vital skill needed in all professions** which wouldn't be as good without Microsoft Excel!

Why did you want to study a BTEC in IT?

I think both my parents' and my interest in technology pushed me to choose BTEC IT as one of my 3 subject options in Year 10 and I do not regret it! Both my parents work in the IT industry, my Mum being a Cyber Security Analyst and my Dad being the Head of Digital in Asia. Therefore, you could say I was literally raised in the digital age. Being presented the opportunity to take an unconventionally academic, career-focused subject in school is something I would never have imagined being given in Singapore so **I took this opportunity to pick up a subject I enjoy that will not only hone my IT skills but teach me valuable knowledge that applies to the world we live in today**.

Living in a digital world is both a convenience and an inconvenience. With new, cutting-edge technology comes more vulnerabilities; so, I think it is extremely important to educate ourselves and others on how to keep ourselves safe online while enjoying the perks that technology has given us. **Through BTEC IT, I have gained a deeper understanding of the different cyber threats that exist within our daily lives and how to protect ourselves against them**.

We are encouraging more girls to take up STEM subjects across the UK, what advice would you give to girls interested in studying a STEM subject?

Famous historical feminists like the suffragettes and modern-day feminists like ourselves have worked hard to fight for women's rights striving for equality between men and women, and I hope to do my part by encouraging young and educated women across the world to take up STEM subjects.

I'm not saying that taking up one or multiple STEM subjects should solely be used to prove women's place in society; all I'm saying is to see this inequality as an extra fuel of motivation to take up STEM subjects if you are interested in them. Hopefully, this has given you sparks of courage and confidence that we, **women, are more than capable of flourishing and thriving in the STEM industry.** Because of courageous people like you and me, there might be an equal number or even more women working in this industry than men in the near future.

Are there any women in STEM that you look up to? If so, who and why?

This is not a typical answer but truthfully, I look up to all my friends as they are all intelligent and educated young women in STEM who are pursuing a career they love in this industry. I especially admire my friends who are studying computer science and physics as these are not only notoriously tough and stimulating subjects but subjects that are stereotypically ruled by men; so the fact that they are willing to take on these subjects of interest to them, shows how valiant and powerful they are. I am privileged to be directly surrounded by these women in STEM who constantly inspire me and push me to excel in these subjects.

A prominent figure in the STEM industry I am also inspired by is Rosalind Elsie Franklin, who was an English chemist and X-ray crystallographer who made a crucial contribution to the discovery and understanding of the DNA double helix. Although her works on coal and viruses were appreciated in her lifetime, her contributions to the discovery of the structure of DNA were largely unrecognized during her life, for which she has been variously referred to as the "wronged heroine", the "dark lady of DNA", the "forgotten heroine" and a "feminist icon".

I look up to Rosalind Franklin because of her intelligence and extraordinary contribution to biological science despite not being fully recognised for it as she deserved. I am inspired by her passion for science, and she gives me hope in this world of patriarchy that I am, too, able to succeed in STEM like she did.

Rey Poh

Find out more about Girls in STEM at **go.pearson/BTECinSTEM**