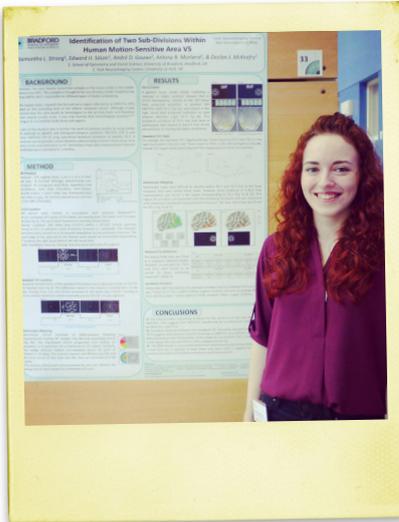




SAMANTHA STRONG PHD RESEARCHER, OPTOMETRY



? What do you do?

“ I'm a PhD Student in an Optometry Department studying 'Visual Neuroscience'. My area of interest is visual motion perception - I am really interested in how we are able to see and perceive moving objects, and I am lucky enough to be working in a lab that allows me to explore this by using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). The TMS allows a safe level of magnetic field be applied to the brain which is known to temporarily disrupt normal brain activity.



? How did you get where you are?

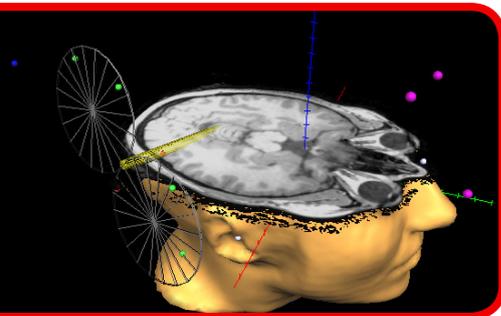
“ I took Art, Graphic Design, Religious Studies and Psychology at A-level and then went on to do a BSc in Psychology at the University of York. I didn't have a particular career plan in mind though until I was lucky enough to be inspired by one of my lecturers, Prof. Peter Thompson. He taught a module called 'Perception' and we learnt all about how we are able to understand and interpret the things we see in everyday life... But I had a lot of leftover questions about the topic so I made sure to pick vision-related modules in my third year and picked a relevant final year project. I was then lucky enough to get a job as a Research Assistant in an Action Perception Lab before even graduating! This was very valuable experience and contributed to me being able to go straight from my BSc into a PhD studying Visual Neuroscience at the University of Bradford Optometry Department. I am still pursuing artistic activities in my spare time, but nowadays they are often more revolved around histological features of the eye and brain!

? What's your advice to students thinking of taking STEM subjects?

“ I think my best advice is "don't knock it 'till you've tried it"! Being open-minded is so important when you're young and don't have a career path in mind yet. When I was 16 I was adamant that Maths and Science were not for me and now my job revolves around both of them and I love it! It's always important to find a topic that you have a genuine interest in because it makes life much easier and more enjoyable for you whilst you're progressing up the ladder. Also speak to people in jobs that interest you and find out as much as you can about what it involves and how to get where they are now. I got my PhD by doing a lot of research about it and by working out exactly what I wanted and how to achieve it.

? What kind of activities would you like to support in future?

“ I would like to support general awareness regarding job opportunities in STEM fields by attending and presenting at careers talks and sessions. I'm also happy to be a mentor and would love to get students interested in the science-based aspect of Psychology through simple demonstrations such as the motion-after effect.



How your school can access STEM Ambassadors

We work with schools so that you can access our database of **FREE** STEM Ambassador volunteers, enabling you to incorporate exemplary links to the world of work within your teaching. Each STEM Ambassador has a STEM background - they are usually experts or professionals in their field.

All of our STEM Ambassadors have also undergone an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check to enable them to work with young people in school; and they have also attended an induction session with West Yorkshire STEM staff on how to approach classroom and school-based teaching sessions. To request a STEM Ambassador, email us: ambassadors@wystem.co.uk.

