

STEM updates: IAAC and Professional Partners

Meriden students reach for the stars in the International Astronomy and Astrophysics Competition

This year, Meriden students bravely stepped up to explore a new and unknown frontier as exciting as space: the International Astronomy and Astrophysics Competition (IAAC)!

The IAAC is an international competition that enables high-school and university students from all countries on our planet to prove their skills and to unleash their creativity in the fields of astronomy and astrophysics. IAAC gives students the unique opportunity to apply their skills to challenging problems. Participants can receive certificates, awards, cash prizes, and global recognition. With more than 14,500+ participants since 2019, IAAC challenges them with creative astronomy and astrophysics problems. The competition comprises a qualification round, a pre-final and final round.

We would like to congratulate our seven students who competed in the final and achieved Bronze Honours, placing them in the top 35% of students that participated across high-schools and universities around the world: Kate Nguyen (Year 8), Michelle Lu (Year 10), Mia Pertsinidis (Year 10), Anjali Popuri (Year 10), Reshmi Ramana (Year 10), Leah Har (Year 11), and Aiyang Wu (Year 11).

Ella Zhang (Year 7) showed her passion for astronomy and astrophysics by achieving Silver Honours and being placed in the top 15% of high-school and university students worldwide.

With so many students interested in space, students are encouraged to consider becoming an official IAAC Ambassador and inspire other students for astronomy!

Activities of an ambassador can include:

- ❖ Promoting astronomy and IAAC in your local community
- ❖ Starting a local astronomy or science club
- ❖ Spreading information about IAAC in your school
- ❖ Organizing astronomy workshops or stargazing events

Please contact Mrs Phillips if you would like to apply to be an IAAC ambassador for 2025.

Updates from Meriden's STEM Professional Partners

Meriden is proud to partner with several STEM Professionals around the world. Our partners provide students with opportunities to engage with STEM outside of the classroom and begin to think about the potential of their own careers in STEM.

Meriden recently received some updates from two of our current partners, Ms Belinda Zhang and Dr Emma Harding, and looks forward to a new connection with Ms Marilyn Pan, Senior Economist at the ACCC.



IAAC Bronze Honours Winners



Ella Zhang, Silver Honours Winner

Ms Pan is involved in inquiries into social media platform. She is planning to come to Meriden to run a workshop with Year 11 Economics students later this term, exploring the use of competition policy as a microeconomic policy to regulate business behaviours.

In anticipation of STEM Week in Week 4, Ms Zhang and Dr Harding shared some messages with the Meriden community:

Hi Meriden,

Happy STEM week! Hope you are all thinking of cool ideas to make the world a better place - I look forward to hearing all of them.

Here's a little tip for coming up with ideas: what is something you care about? It could be a species, disease treatment, or even the climate crisis. Once you've identified something you care about, look into what problems current species, treatments, and methods have! Compare this to what your ideal situation would be, and then start building a path towards that.

I'm confident that the world is in better hands once Meriden students get the chance to improve it!

Ms Belinda Zhang

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Hi Meriden,

Very exciting that STEM week is here. I have a few things I can share:

Research at Oxford is incredible; it brings together people from all over the world with a focus on learning, understanding and progressing. Couple that with the extensive history of the town and you've got a great environment for science.

I've personally found it fascinating to meet so many people from so many backgrounds that all bring new perspectives to both science but also life in general.

To aspiring STEM students: don't be discouraged if you can't decide exactly what you want. Follow your passion, be open to opportunities and you will often find a good path.

One example of great recent research is the release of the bilby genome - sequencing a genome is a huge amount of work but once it is done, we can understand so much about the animal. For example, we can see the diversity of genes (important to avoid inbreeding in small populations), get a record of previous viral infections (and see what they are susceptible to) and look at other important health biomarkers. In the same study, the researchers also recreated the genome of an extinct bilby so we can learn more about why it went extinct and how we can protect our current fauna.

In summary, molecular biology and genetics are going to be extremely important moving forward with species survival and it's a field that is really gaining traction.

Dr Emma Harding

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We are very much looking forward to sharing updates from STEM Week with the Meriden community. Keep an eye out for posts on social media and in the Meriden Newsletter to see how students can have fun, engage with STEM, and learn new ideas!

Mrs Alexandra Phillips

Science Teacher

Coordinator of Learning Link – Innovation

