



BLOOMING
Inclusion and Diversity in STEAM

Interview Questions

STEAM Journey: "Can you share your journey and what inspired you to pursue a career in STEAM? Were there any key moments or influential figures that directed you towards this path?"

I loved maths and physics in school. I was also good at languages, but found maths to be a really satisfying subject. I liked the way you could think about a problem and structure it in such a way as to find a useful solution. I initially studied electrical engineering, but after a career break to have my children I moved sideways taking a Masters in computer science and operations research (OR). I've worked in this area ever since and find it stimulating. The key to this move was interesting and engaging conversations with the (male) OR lecturer.

STEAM Achievement: "What do you consider your most significant achievement or contribution to your field? How do you hope your work will impact the future of STEAM?"

I'm very proud of my PhD thesis, it helped me develop a deep understanding of OR optimisation techniques. I completed my PhD while working full time and raising three children. Since then, I apply these OR techniques to solve problems that arise in the clean energy transition. It's very fulfilling to feel that I am contributing to addressing this real-world challenge.

I also founded and chair an initiative to support the participation of all genders in OR. I believe it is very important to help develop the next generation of OR researchers.



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Challenges and Overcoming Them: "Throughout your career in STEAM, what were some of the significant challenges you faced both in your personal and professional life? How did you overcome them? How did these challenges shape your professional journey?"

I found the return from career break very challenging, and was not able to get back into electrical engineering directly. I completed a Masters and worked in a telecommunications company but in a management systems information role. This sideways step opened up a whole new set of opportunities. Companies nowadays are much more aware of the benefits of employing people with broad life experience.

Advice for Young Women: "What advice would you give to young girls who are interested in STEAM but might be hesitant to pursue it due to stereotypes or the fear of failure?"

I thoroughly enjoyed my studies in engineering and computer science. Completing these courses gave me knowledge of the subject matter, and helped me to develop multiple skills. I still approach many problems with an engineering problem structuring approach, which coupled with my life experiences allows me to bring a different perspective to solving problems such as the clean energy transition. I encourage all young girls to give STEAM subjects a go, you will find it very rewarding and it is a great start to any career.

Future of Women in STEAM: "Looking towards the future, how do you see the role of women evolving in STEAM fields? What changes do you think are necessary to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in STEAM?"

I see more and more awareness of the need for gender balance in research and project teams in my OR discipline. However, there is still a lot of work to be done. The requirement by funding agencies to consider gender in the project team and in the research will act as an incentive and may open new avenues of STEAM research.



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