

THE JOURNEY THROUGH CREST AWARDS AND THE STEM NEXT ESSAY COMPETITION

In 2023, Jihoo Kim, a South Korean student, participated in TechFest's STEM NEXT Essay Competition, showcasing a remarkable journey.

Explore Jihoo's captivating narrative, chronicling their experience in this prestigious competition, culminating in the attainment of a coveted gold CREST Award.

My name is Jihoo Kim and I am from South Korea, currently attending Dwight School Seoul. I am a senior studying math, biology, and chemistry at higher level, and Korean, English, and business management at standard level. I plan on attending a UK institution after matriculating from high school for a degree in biochemistry. I found out about STEM Next through my research into science competitions I was able to participate in to boost my resume and personal statement that is part of the UCAS application process.



The reason why I pulled through was because of the research question in the field of biochemistry regarding microplastics - it caught my attention immediately, as it was a topic that I have been following up on for years and have taken an interest in since I was a little kid. Just as important as my involvement and enthusiasm for the topic, I was also genuinely curious about the science underlying the topic, and this presented an opportunity to resolve my insatiable desire to expand my knowledge on how the world works. I reflected on these exact motivations and personal connections with the topic in an authentic way that stays true to who I am after I had completed the essay, and I was able to achieve the CREST gold award (meeting 15/15 criteria!).

I wanted to apply for my CREST Award due to my desire to enhance my personal statement and my resume for UK institutions. However, this was not my only reason for applying - when I did similar research projects during the IB MYP programme, all I got in return for the time and hard work I invested into the assignment was a numerical grade and some feedback, which felt very underwhelming. The CREST award was an opportunity for me to delve into a topic that I am genuinely intrigued by and feel passionate about, but also get recognition for it.

I first heard about CREST Awards a few years back from personal research, but I did not have the motivation back then nor the interest in the sciences to pursue it. After deepening my interest in the natural sciences and joining the STEM Next competition to write an essay about microplastics hurting our environment, I was able to hear about it again through the managers of the competition. This time, I had the motivation and interest to invest lots of time and effort to pursue it.

Taking part in STEM NEXT presents a great opportunity to all high schoolers with an eye on the natural sciences, either as a hobby or an undergraduate degree, because it not only embellishes your character to highly academic universities, but also because it allows you to explore a topic you are deeply interested in at a highly intellectually stimulating level and get a taste of what higher education is like. Fear not - as it will only be a benefit to you and your reservoir of scientific knowledge!

Learn more about [STEM Next](#) and [CREST](#).

