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STUDENTS' VIEWS OF SCIENCE SUBJECTS ARE HOLDING BACK THEIR CAREER, WARNS SCIENCE COUNCIL

- Future Morph launched to help address problem and redefine perceptions of career opportunities from science -

- Only one third of students aged 16 – 18 believe science qualifications will help them later on in life
- Only one quarter of students see the sciences as relevant

A negative view of science subjects is preventing huge numbers of British students from having fulfilling and potentially more lucrative careers, a study by the Science Council has concluded.

According to research published today⁽¹⁾, only one third (35%) of students aged 16 – 18 believe that qualifications in science subjects will help them later on in life and only one quarter (28%) of students see the sciences as relevant.

The Science Council is warning that today's students are unaware of the range of career options – including sectors such as fashion and sport - that studying sciences opens up for them. Many young people still have preconceived ideas about science subjects leading solely to laboratory jobs and wearing a white coat

The publication of the research coincides with today's launch of Future Morph (www.futuremorph.org) – a new web-based resource for students, teachers and parents which aims to redefine perceptions of the careers arising from studying science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

Future Morph targets students from 11-19 which is vital given the life-changing decisions that students make at that age.

The most likely reasons for avoiding a STEM discipline were “they are too difficult” (30%), “they are not interesting or enjoyable enough” (27%) and “they will limit my career options” (23%).

However, the Science Council argues that it is important to target younger children and harness their enthusiasm early on. A recent study found that young children show an initial enthusiasm for science which tapers off by the time they reach secondary school⁽²⁾.

As well as being valuable to the individual, increasing the number of students studying STEM and going into related careers is important for the UK economy. The CBI has warned that the UK needs to double the number of new science graduates over seven years or see skilled jobs disappear.

Diana Garnham, Chief Executive of the Science Council, said:

“This research highlights the huge misperception about what studying the sciences can lead to. Scientists work everywhere in the economy making use of their science skills - in industries such as finance, fashion, art and design, and sport. It's important we explain these options to students so they can make an informed choice about their career.

“Future Morph will show students that science and maths can be valuable for their future, whatever that might be.

“The message we need to be telling teachers, parents and students is that studying STEM leads to a wider range of interesting and satisfying jobs.”

Future Morph brings together a wealth of newly created content including videos, interactive elements and quizzes to attract all ages and audiences. The new website is central to the Government's new campaign to promote the study of STEM subjects.

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Notes to editors:

1. Survey conducted by Onepoll. 1,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 18 were interviewed in October 2008.
2. Learning to love science: Harnessing children's scientific imagination. A report from the Chemical Industry Education Centre, University of York
3. Case studies are available on request

About the Science Council

The Science Council was established by Royal Charter in 2003 with the objects to advance science and its applications for public benefit.

It is a membership organisation for learned and professional bodies across science and its applications and works with them to represent this sector to government and others.

The Science Council promotes the profession of scientist through the Chartered Scientist designation and the development of codes of practice; it promotes awareness of the contribution of professional scientists to science and society and advances science education and increased understanding of the benefits of science.

The Science Council provides a forum for discussion and exchange of views and works to foster collaboration between member organisations and the wider science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medical communities to enable inter-disciplinary contributions to science policy and the application of science.