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‘Cascade’ Outreach Competitions for schools – an efficient way to introduce Particle Physics to many students

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The Particle Physics group at the University of Birmingham has tried many different formats for Outreach competitions over recent years. We have found that a ‘Cascade’ competition is a very efficient way to introduce Particle Physics concepts and experiments to a wide range of students. Small groups of students research, prepare and deliver a short presentation to other students.

We will describe variations on the format of this type of competition and include some examples from our winning entries. All the material that we have used for these competitions is freely available on the web which we hope will make it easier for more groups to try similar competitions in the future.

The name Cascade emphasises that the competition aims to introduce and inform many students about Particle Physics. However relatively limited time is required from researchers and teachers to enable this. The students research the material themselves and give their presentations, which often include novel demonstrations well matched to the target age group, to younger students or students of their own age. The participants also gain valuable experience in teamwork from the challenge of producing and delivering a clear and interesting talk by all members of the team, as well as improving their own understanding of the subject during the process.

Summary

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