

## **Meet the Academic – Dr Magdalena Cieslak**

### **Introduction**

My name is Magdalena Cieslak and I am currently a lecturer at the University of Warwick and I teach mostly subjects related to computer edit design and manufacturing.

### **What route did you take into your current role?**

I'm from Poland, so I received my education there. When I had to take the exams which are equivalent to A levels, I took maths and geography because originally I wanted to study finances. But then I changed my mind and I decided to go into engineering and then I did my bachelors, my masters and my PhD in biomedical engineering at the University of Wroclaw in Poland.

### **Did you enjoy studying science subjects at school?**

Yes, my favourite subjects were maths and biology. I always loved maths because for me it was just very simple, very logical. I also loved biology, especially aspects which were related to human anatomy and human physiology. When I was in the last year of my secondary school, I went to an open day at the Technical University in Wroclaw and during this open day, I discovered that there is a course which is called biomedical engineering and biomedical engineering. It basically focuses on how we can use engineering in order to help or produce new medical devices. Immediately I knew that this is something for me. I knew that this is the course that I should take.

### **Did you have any role models that inspired you to become a scientist?**

I had plenty of people who inspired me and encouraged me to pursue a career in sciences. I have to start with my parents, from my early childhood they taught me the importance of education and hard work.

### **What challenges have you faced over the course of STEM career?**

So the biggest challenge for me was to overcome my insecurities. Because there were two things that I was always worried about: I'm not good enough and that I don't know enough. I felt I'm not good enough because I entered at mostly male dominated field and I felt that because I'm a woman I might not be an appropriate person to actually be in this field. The other feeling was that I don't know enough. So I always thought that if you're a scientist, it means that you have to know everything in the specific area. And it took me a while to actually understand that you will never reach a point when you can say I know everything now and there is nothing else for me to learn.

**What advice would you give for someone aspiring to go into a STEM Career?**

So the advice I would give is believe in yourself because no matter of your gender, nationality or any other characteristic, you can work in STEM and you can achieve whatever you want. Find out what really drives you and focus on that.

**What would be your dream research project, if you had unlimited funds?**

If I had unlimited funding, my dream project would be to find a technology that would allow us to fix and severe injuries of the spine.