Testimonial

I am Upasana Das, currently a final-year Integrated M.Sc. student majoring in Physics from the School of Physical Sciences at the National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER), India. I worked with Maria from Jan 2023 to May 2024 on the paper "An Optical Gamma-Ray Burst Catalogue with Measured Redshift PART I: Data Release of 535 Gamma-Ray Bursts and Colour Evolution". It's my first paper where I was featured as a co-author, and it feels so rewarding to have been part of such a collaboration and contributed to something significant. I owe all of it to Maria and can't thank her enough for all her guidance.

Interestingly, I had reached out to Maria about a year earlier when I found a position she posted on LinkedIn. Although that opportunity didn't materialize, Maria remembered me and reached out when another project opened up—a gesture that speaks volumes about her thoughtfulness and dedication to mentorship. Working alongside her has been truly inspiring; Maria's meticulous attention to detail and high standards for work motivated us all, and she was always there to encourage and uplift us, even during the quieter moments.

I learned important skills throughout this project, from advanced programming and data analysis techniques to structuring and managing extensive datasets. But just as impactful were the soft skills I developed—collaborating with an international team of passionate researchers and adopting a mindset of analytical, clear thinking. Being part of Maria's group also gave me the opportunity to connect with students and researchers from diverse backgrounds from all around the world, an experience that has broadened my perspectives.

I'd also like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Biagio, who was a constant source of support. His patience and willingness to guide us through each step was invaluable, and both he and Maria were always just a 'huddle' call away whenever we needed help.

In every way, working with Maria and her team has been one of the most instrumental experiences of my early research career. I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity and will carry the lessons I've learned with me always.

Best,

Upasana Das