Dark matter is focus of global contest

November 1 2012

University astronomers are inviting people around the world to help solve one of science's enduring mysteries.

Researchers have launched a public competition to help them learn more about dark matter.

The material accounts for 95 per cent of the mass of the universe, but cannot be seen and is little understood.

Astronomers from the University have joined forces with crowdsourcing data science website Kaggle and Winton Capital Management to find people who are interested in taking up the challenge.

Cash prizes

The scientists behind the contest hope that it will inspire thousands of people to tackle the problem, using a variety of techniques.

Researchers expect the competition to attract people who solve numerical problems for a living, such as scientists, statisticians and data engineers.

They hope that a solution may be found by adapting an existing problem-solving tool from a field of expertise outside astronomy.

Prizes of US$12,000, US$5,000 and US$3,000 are being provided by Winton, which uses similar data science techniques to build automated

trading systems for financial markets.

Hubble images

Scientists want to develop ways to analyse images of these [galaxy clusters](), taken by the [Hubble telescope]().

This will enable them to better understand how the clusters have been formed, and create a map of dark matter, giving insight into its make-up.

The competition, Observing Dark Worlds, can be found at [www.kaggle.com]() and entrants have until 16 December to submit their ideas.

Provided by University of Edinburgh