

DAS Athena SWAN Case Studies

The following case studies provide an overview of some of the staff and students in our Department, including members of the DAS Athena SWAN SAT team. They are presented in alphabetical order.

Professor Myra Conway

I was appointed as a Senior Lecturer for DAS over 14 years ago and have since been promoted to Associate Professor and subsequently Professor in Biomedical Science. Previously, I had a lecturing position at the University of Brighton and was a Research Fellow at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, USA. I was awarded a first-class honours degree in Biochemistry and a Ph.D. in Clinical Biochemistry at the University of Galway, Ireland.



In my current role I direct a research team, which has five PhD students, two Professional Doctorate, Research Placement students, MRes students and undergraduate project students.

The research focus is on understanding fundamental pathways that are dysregulated in Alzheimer's disease (AD) and also on the development of early diagnostics to differentiate between subjects with mild-cognitive impairment and AD. My research and collaborative projects have attracted over 2 million in research funding that includes 17 Vacation Bursary Awards, which gives a unique research experience to undergraduate students. I have served as external examiner for degrees in Biomedical Science at several Universities' and also on PhD degree panels. I act as Associate Editor and reviewer for several high impact journals and also contribute to external research agendas in my field, including the Health Integrated Team on Dementia, the ARUK network and more recently as research advisor for BRACE. The department has supported me in taking on these external activities. I am also Chair of the University Human Tissue Sub-Committee, where we oversee the correct use and storage of human tissue. Over the last few years I have taken part in the Women's Research Mentoring Scheme, which has been a very positive experience.

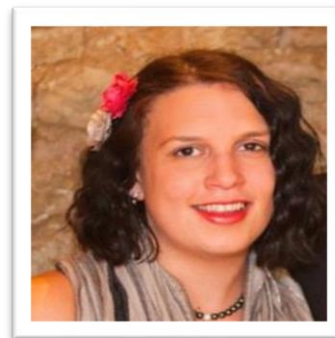
Currently, I lead Clinical Biochemistry and Blood Sciences, which are quite interactive modules. I was nominated for 6 student-led teaching awards from 2012 to 2019 and short-listed for the inspirational teaching award in 2014. I have a passion for teaching and believe in promoting opportunities that will enhance student learning and career progression. Over my years at UWE I have been very much involved in Level 1 and Level 2 teaching and have had the pleasure of mentoring many great students.

Throughout my career, I never noticed any gender bias, and feel my line managers have always supported me. My mentors in the USA were very talented, confident women and excellent role models. I have two wonderful children, one at University and one heading into GCSE years. I was primary carer during the week throughout their upbringing. Balancing

work and parental responsibilities is demanding and at times can be tough. However, the flexible working policies and trust shown by my line managers in my work ethic has enabled me to have full engagement with my children's activities, whilst still succeeding in my research direction. This is truly a superb aspect of working at UWE.

Dr Sarah Dean

I'm a senior lecturer in biomedical sciences with a specialism in cancer and cellular pathology. I've just returned from shared parental leave and using up annual leave to do a phased return before coming back full time. I started in 2005 as an undergraduate doing my degree in biomedical sciences, which I loved and was delighted to take on a studentship for my PhD straight after that degree. Nearly four years later, I left UWE Bristol very briefly to work in a scientific publishing company. Three months into that role, I came back to UWE, initially on a fixed term contract as a lecturer before taking up my senior lectureship.



My research has taken a bit of a back seat since I started my family but that's also due to the difficulty obtaining funding in my field at the moment but I have collaborating internally with Myra Conway, supervising a PhD studentship; and with Liz Anderson whose group has made a new cell line, looking at drug resistance in Leukaemia. I am also working with Claire Perks from the University of Bristol who was a member of my PhD supervisory team and we are exploring new joint projects and aim to have papers published soon on our current research. Recently, I've been given some Masters students who are based in the lab and that is helping me get back in the lab and get my research going again.

I'm involved in working towards Athena Swan here at UWE and it's not just about equality for women. It's about equality for everyone. I've never felt that my gender or anything about me has counted against me with regard to anything here at UWE Bristol. I feel really supported and I hope everyone else here feels like that too. I've certainly not felt held back because I am a woman at all. There's a lot of informal support that goes on too. I'm still breast feeding and HR have been great in making sure I have access to the facilities. My mentor always makes sure I have time and a PDR to address my concerns and help me develop.

One of the things I have done to try and keep a work/life balance is to keep my maiden name at work and use my married name outside. It's almost like having two personas – there's the work me and the other me. The university really support parents who work here. Nobody minds if you have to be somewhere for your child, so long as the work gets done well, and having shared parental leave with my husband has been really helpful. You can split your leave between each other as you see fit. HR were really supportive of that even though it was not something which is very common. We worked it through together. I feel lucky to be in this job because while it's certainly busy and can be stressful at times, it is exciting.

Alison Halliday

I graduated from UWE in 2003 with a biomedical science degree (which included a placement year). I started working at UWE straight after my degree in the September of 2003 as a full time senior technician, assisting with the Radiation Lab and a molecular biology research lab. In 2008 I took on the role of Radiation Protection Supervisor for the department and lab manager of the Radiation lab. In 2011 I also took on the responsibility of Radiation Waste adviser for the university. The research labs have grown over the years and I now help to run a large suite of labs within the department

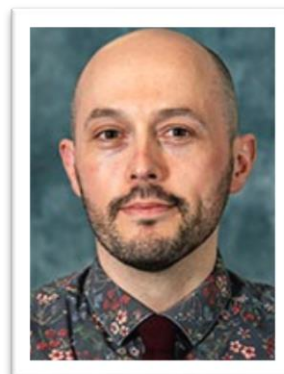


I am married with two young children. Both children have used the onsite nursery. I have been very pleased with the nursery and it is lovely to have them so local to where I work. My husband very often works away and I am the main child carer during the week. In 2012 I went on maternity leave with my first child and was able to take 9 months off. Cover was provided for my role while I was away. On my return I requested to change to shorter working week which was met very positively and I was able to drop to a 30 hour week. This was provided on a rolling year basis to trial the situation. In 2014 I went on maternity leave again this time taking the full years allowance. On my return I was asked if I wanted to stay at a 30 hour week and have changed my contract permanently.

Within my primary role as Radiation Protection Supervisor I support all work using radioactivity within the department. I am also a member of the research technical team which helps to support the wide range of research going on in the faculty. This mainly deals with health and safety issues and as well as training and technical support within a molecular field. I also support the teaching technicians and help to run a few undergraduate practical's a year. As a member of the Athena SWAN group I feel they have an active grasp of the Athena SWAN charter. Throughout my time at UWE both working and as a student I have always felt very supported in my role as well as supported in my requests for a work life balance.

Dr Antony Hill

I was appointed as Academic Director for Applied Sciences in September 2017, following my time as an Associate Head of Department for Forensic, Analytical & Chemical Sciences position (2015-2017) and a Senior Lectureship in Physical Science at the University of the West of England (2012-2015). The Department's proactive and flexible support of individual career development has allowed me to rapidly expand my expertise and leadership experience (originally within mathematical science) into multiple fields including Forensic Science and Healthcare Science.

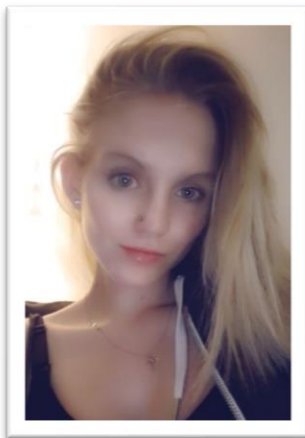


As an Academic Director I support a team of academic staff in feeling they get the most from their roles and development, as well as providing strategic leadership. I'm passionate about teaching, and continue to oversee the development and

delivery of innovative programmes designed to provide opportunities for students to engage with the applied sciences from a diverse variety of backgrounds. My research background is in the mathematical modelling of real-world problems, which has included projects from environmental & biomedical science and renewable energy. This feeds into my teaching by being able to demonstrate real-world application of theory, but also in the ability to impart enthusiasm on the topic.

In my role I interact regularly with a large number of staff throughout the Department, which has a supportive and collegiate atmosphere. As a gay man I have never encountered any form of prejudice and always felt free just to be myself. Personally, I believe this is the definition of equality. The flexible and supportive work arrangements have allowed me to successfully manage my numerous work-related responsibilities with my well-being and home life. This is realised by the autonomy, and crucially trust, I'm given in balancing my intense work-related periods with those of relaxation. The University's continued support for the blended-learning innovations I oversee (which require considerable up-front development) is a reflection on its commitment to providing real opportunities for students that need different types of work/life balances.

Roberta Johnstone



I arrived at UWE in 2016 to study for a BSc in Biomedical Science, having previously worked as a data analyst in a bank. I had originally come to Bristol as part of my rehabilitation as a recovering alcoholic, bulimic, anorexic, and drug addict.

I'm a 3rd year biomedical science student and when I have completed that, I hope to take the Physician Associate Masters here at UWE and go on to do that as a career. I love studying here. I hated school but I absolutely love it here. I am now a single parent and I've been absolutely tee total for 3 years now. Nothing at all. Not even coffee and I have also been working as a support worker in the community. I see my recovery as an opportunity to give back and help others.

The support available across Bristol is excellent and this is also true at UWE Bristol. I have had so much support from UWE. The wellbeing services have been amazing. I do still get bouts of depression and anxiety and UWE are really understanding and, if it is during exam periods, they allow me the option of applying for personal circumstances. Without that support in place, I'd just panic every day. Emmanuel Adukwu, a Senior Lecturer in the department, has been a star right from the start. He put me in touch with a number of different staff members I could talk with. Just being able to talk to staff on a one to one basis has been amazing. I have to mention my friends as well. The people I have met on my course are now friends for life.

My daughter is at the nursery here on Frenchay campus but on those days when she is not in the nursery, the staff are very happy for her to come to lectures with me. It's so lovely because otherwise, I just could not take part. In my time at UWE Bristol, I have been given so much support from so many angles and when there have been a couple of occasions when I have had to ask for help, it has always been there. That said I have not been treated differently to any other student. I'm treated as an individual, just like everybody else.

Jan Richardson



I joined the university in 1994 to work in the Business School, having had 10 years management experience in the financial sector but without any formal qualifications. During my time at UWE, I have raised two children, and had responsibility as primary carer for three elderly parents living with Alzheimer's, Dementia and Motor Neurone disease.

As a senior member of the Executive team, I am responsible for the administrative and professional service requirements for the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences. I act as the interface between the Faculty, Departments and Professional Services across the University. This includes driving change initiatives, raising quality, innovating and enhancing business processes, adding value and securing cost and efficiency savings.

I have had the opportunity to undertake part-time study based on experiential learning and gained a Postgraduate Certificate in Management Studies. This enabled me to contribute to strategic initiatives at both the Faculty and University level. The flexible working policies enable me to be responsive as a grandparent to support childcare and attend medical appointments for two lifelong health conditions. In the last year I have had the opportunity to undertake a refresh of Management and Leadership, and Coaching training, which enables me to support others as a Dignity at Work Adviser.

Dr Debbie Lewis

I have worked at UWE Bristol since 2007 but was here prior to that when I did my undergraduate degree and also, partially, my PhD, in molecular microbiology, was based here so I feel like I've never really left UWE since 1994. When I did officially come back in 2007, in a post-doc position, it was after the birth of my first child. I joined the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences in a split post with Southmead Hospital. My current role is Technical Team Leader for Molecular Biosciences, which means I support the undergraduate practical's across a number of modules and I also get involved in outreach and widening participation. In that role I support academics and researchers with their activities out in the community, at schools or other public events like the Festival of Nature.



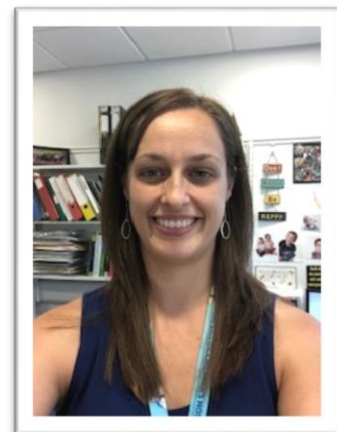
Prior to my current role, my research was looking at microbes in urine and I also spent time working with the Bristol Robotics Lab examining how we could use the microbes in urine to power fuel cells. After a year working at UWE, I had my second son and took nine months maternity leave but I didn't lose any time on my contract because UWE funded that position and my grant got extended, which was really helpful. When I came back, my two children were in the nursery here on Frenchay campus. I then had my third child whilst at UWE and, again, in terms of support, UWE have been great.

In 2013, when my research positions ended, I joined the technical team in a permanent position with more regular hours. This was a real bonus as my husband had been made redundant and it coincided with my second son being diagnosed with autism. Our caring responsibilities were increased and I have always been supported at work when I have, for example, had to leave work very quickly in order to meet his needs. I was able to use flexi-time to go on parenting courses as autism, which was a whole new thing for me to understand. That support from UWE was invaluable.

I cannot see myself leaving UWE. My line manager and team are very helpful. I feel very supported in everything and, whilst I am respectful of the needs of the university in terms of the work I'm doing, things like flexi-time really help. Other members of my team have caring responsibilities too and, between us, we juggle it really well. It does not happen often but it makes a big difference to know that when there is a problem, you have the support of your colleagues. I've never felt that, here at UWE, being a female or male staff member would be an advantage or disadvantage and there's a good mixture of people working in the technical team. There are really great, skilled people in their roles and I always feel positive that UWE is doing its best for diversity.

Dr Jennifer May

I am a Senior Lecturer in Biomedical Science and spend most of my time teaching haematology but also do some research alongside it. I did my undergraduate degree here at UWE before going to work in the NHS and returning to do my PhD and two post-docs before taking a lecturing role in 2012. Since I have been teaching, I have had two children and, after the second maternity leave, I applied to reduce my contract to part time. UWE were great about that and it has worked really well in terms of balancing work and family.



The department were also really helpful about working out my workload in terms of which things I could realistically carry on with after switching to three days a week. School holidays are really difficult with two full time parents and my husband works away a lot, so the part time contract works really well. UWE were proactive and offered me a 6-month review to see how the reduced contract was working, rather than waiting for the normal annual review to see how the change in my hours was working, both for me and from the department's point of view. Although I now work fewer hours, the department continues to be really supportive of my research too. There is a department fund for things like going to international conferences. This year, they have funded me to take one of our PhD students to the biggest haematology conference in Orlando, Florida.

I am pleased to see the university talking about maternity leave for students as well. Until recently, it was not even a discussion but the department and University is looking at these things more thoroughly and recently I did a PhD viva with someone who had a very young child and we were able to offer them feeding breaks if needed, for example. Within the team, things are great too. Recently, when my little boy was taken into hospital, there was no question. My colleagues just said, "You go. We've got this."

Dr Gareth Robinson



I came to UWE Bristol in 2001 to do a masters in medical microbiology before going on to do my PhD here looking at bioluminescent bacteria. Towards the end of that PhD I started working on wash up in the labs before joining the technical team for a short role after the research ended and taking up a post-doc position which ended up being for about six years. In 2013, I joined the academic staff as a Lecturer and have since become Programme Leader for Biomedical Sciences. I feel like I've been supported throughout my career and the leadership team in the department are supportive of people taking on new challenges.

My wife, Shona, also works in the department as a Senior Lecturer and we have two school age children so juggling things like after school clubs and holidays with both of us in academic positions can be a challenge. Things have developed quite a lot. For the first maternity cover, in 2009, Shona essentially had to organise that for herself. There was nobody appointed to cover it back then and, funnily enough, I ended up doing some of the teaching that needed covering, along with some of the other researchers at the time. For our second child, in 2013, there was none of that. Everything was sorted for us and both children were in the nursery here on campus. It's a really nice nursery and it was great to have them close by as well.

It is a given at UWE Bristol that the students are the top priority. The university and the department I am in treat people very fairly. We have a very supportive departmental leadership team and wherever people have issues or difficulties then the support is put in place. The data for student attainment relevant to demographics has been difficult to get over the years but it is coming through, and as a department we are in a stronger position to be able to see where problems lie and initiatives can be put in place. The department are proactive and ask for feedback on a monthly basis which you put in an anonymous box in the staffroom and it does appear to get acted upon which is really great.

Laura Weldon



I have been a researcher in molecular biology and microbiology for all of my career and have managed to do that without having a PhD but as I have progressed in my career, I have felt that my choices have diminished so I'm now doing a PhD developing a new molecular method for detecting critically endangered European Eels. I sift water and I can specifically detect a certain species of eel. With the ecology angle of the PhD, I am also learning new techniques too. The department has recently created this amazing area for us PhD researchers, where we each have our own desk or hot desk and there are places for us to meet and work together or there are small offices for quiet work as well as a kitchen.

I have two school-aged children and it is a juggle but I have a very supportive PhD supervisor, who encourages me in terms of the work/life balance. On top of that, I keep bees in my spare time but most of that is long periods of inactivity and short periods of panic. I'm supported to work at home and on the odd occasion when I need to, my daughter can come in with me to

the university and be here while I do some work...although she does tend to critique me, particularly when she saw me do a talk.

The gender balance in our department is very good and UWE really is a great place to work. It really shows when I go to other institutions. A lot of people only seem to play lip service to it but here, they talk about it and they do it. UWE has really good science role models for women too like Professor Dawn Arnold and Professor Myra Conway. People who seem, like all academics, to be under a lot of pressure but still have time for people.