

# School of Physics and Astronomy Diversity Committee Newsletter

## Committee activities:

The Diversity Committee considers any matters that may directly or indirectly prevent some groups of people from fulfilling their potential or from participating fully in the life of the School. If you have any questions or ideas for this committee please use our confidential suggestions box on the website or contact [clare.burrage@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:clare.burrage@nottingham.ac.uk) (Committee Chair) or [michael.merrifield@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:michael.merrifield@nottingham.ac.uk) (Head of School). Either way we will respond directly to you or we will leave a response on the School Diversity Committee Workspace within 24 hours of the message reaching one of us.

## Research Fellowships

The deadline for Expressions of Interest for Anne McLaren and Nottingham Research Fellowships is 12<sup>th</sup> October. These fellowships provide 3 years independent research funding for early career researchers. Female applicants are strongly encouraged for the Anne McLaren Fellowship.

More details and how to apply at:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/researchwithus/fellowships/nottingham/index.aspx>

## Get Involved.

**Diversity is for everyone.** There are several routes you can use to report an issue or make a suggestion. Go to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion page listed on the Physics and Astronomy front page and click the link. This is an anonymous link! We are also installing a box in the reception area of physics for you to post your suggestions. This is as anonymous as you want it to be.

## Competition Time!

To win a copy of Angela Saini's new book, *Inferior: How Science Got Women Wrong*, email [clare.burrage@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:clare.burrage@nottingham.ac.uk) with your answer to the following question:

Question: In 2016, what percentage of female students chose A-level physics?

- a. 1.9%
- b. 6.5%
- c. 9.5%

Look out for an exciting talk by Angela about her work for International Women's day 2019.



## Focus Groups.

Moustafa Gharamti has agreed to run the BME focus group.

He is hoping to run a session this term. Look out for more information.

Alfonso Aragon-Salamanco has taken on the role of LGBT+ tutor for Physics and Astronomy.

## What's going on around the University!

# Black History Month 2018

October is Black History Month.

There are lots of events going on in the university.

Highlights are:

Salute film screening. 6pm Tuesday 16 October

B-Global – Introducing Nottingham's black business network. 7.45pm Thursday 25 October.

Career success- the BME experience 6-8pm Tuesday 30 October

Steel live performance 12-2pm Tuesday 30 October.

Find out more @

<https://exchange.nottingham.ac.uk/blog/black-history-month-2018/>

## Highlights from the Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics



Three 4th-year physicists from the University of Nottingham recently attended the fourth Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics (CUWiP) UK in the Department of Physics at Oxford University, we share the highlights of their trip here. A longer report can be found at

<http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/physics/2018/04/25/highlights-conference-undergraduate-women-physics/>

**Lilly:** The CUWiP was a totally unforgettable experience, one I would consider unmissable for any young female Physics undergrad who is given the chance. What I will really take with me from the conference is the inspiration that I have gained from the fierce positivity of all these women- they demonstrated great determination that the gender imbalance in STEM subjects, particularly Physics, can and will be amended. **Maddy:** The highlight of my weekend was a talk given by Sonia Antoranz Contera, an enthusiastic Spanish lecturer who specialised in biomedical imaging. She started off by introducing her field and went on to talk about what can be done to tackle sexism in science. Although there is a clear gender gap in research, it doesn't dishearten Sonia but instead she channels her research to find ways to overcome these barriers.

**Rikke:** My favourite part was hearing people such as Suzie Imber and Merritt More talk about not only their passion for physics, but also their incredible achievements outside of academia in mountaineering and ballet! I was inspired by their enthusiasm for taking on very different types of challenges, and realised the significant value of holding onto interests outside of physics as well.

Being a female student in a subject as male-dominated as physics can be overwhelming, so inspiring and uplifting events like these are priceless!



### The Nobel Prize in Physics has been awarded to a woman for the first time in 55 years.

Donna Strickland, from Canada, is only the third woman winner of the award, along with Marie Curie, who won in 1903, and Maria Goeppert-Mayer, who was awarded the prize in 1963. Dr Strickland shares this year's prize with Arthur Ashkin, from the US, and Gerard Mourou, from France. It recognises their discoveries in the field of laser physics.

Dr Ashkin developed a laser technique described as optical tweezers, which is used to study biological systems.

Drs Mourou and Strickland paved the way for the shortest and most intense laser pulses ever created. They developed a technique called Chirped Pulse Amplification (CPA). It has found uses in laser therapy targeting cancer and in the millions of corrective laser eye surgeries which are performed each year. Speaking to the BBC, Dr Strickland said it was "surprising" it had been such a long time since a woman had won the award. However, she stressed that she had "always been treated as an equal", and that "two men also won it with me, and they deserve this prize as much if not more than me".

# An Interview with Frazer Pearce about part time working.



*On his reasons for working part time*

One is small children, I have two boys, eight and six now, and I just wasn't having enough time with them. My partner is a medic, and I wanted to take some of the load. Going part time meant that I could spend an extra day a week doing childcare. The other reason was that I have health problems; I am immuno-suppressed. I had a succession of health problems and there are not that many immunosuppressant drugs. I have to keep changing the drugs and they kept blowing out and not working. Stress is bad for it too. So, it was the combination of bad health and small children, both of which are reasons the university accepts for going part time.

*On the process of arranging part time work.*

I was seeking a way of prolonging my ability to work by reducing my stress. So I talked to John [Owers-Bradley] about it. My initial thought was to take a career break. I talked to John and he suggested that maybe going part time would be a better option. We came to the idea that I could just go down to 80%, which seemed fine. Then we chatted about what would happen, what I would give up if I went to 80%, came to an agreement, I applied and it went through.

The process was easy, it's a one page form. Mike [Merrifield] signs that to say the school is supportive, then it goes to the university and the university agreed it pretty quickly. I didn't start thinking about going part time until late summer, and by the start of term I was on part time load. That's pretty quick for a university process.

The only problem was that they couldn't timetable me off on Fridays in the first year, because all my teachings in the first term had already been set. That was perfectly understandable. Did I take all the days in lieu? Probably not. But I had the option to.

I have done two full years part time now, I'm going into the third year and I don't intend to try and get back to full time work. It's worked for me. My health is significantly better, I haven't had a hospitalization for a year now, and I get to do more with the kids.

*On how it works in practise*

What we decided was that I would drop my admin duties because of the stress issues. But I kept all my teaching, so that's where the balance is. I do my share of the load on the modules that I teach, and not 80% of my share of that load, but I don't teach on Fridays.

The university is pretty good about not rostering me beyond when I am supposed to work. I'm down as not teaching Fridays on the calendar. When I book my holidays and book a Friday off it doesn't count, but I have pro-rated, less holiday.

What is interesting about going to 80% is that it is not as big a hit on your salary as you think because the bit you lose is the higher tax bit of your salary. You don't actually lose 20% of your take home pay.

*On working a fixed schedule*

I work a fixed Monday to Thursday schedule. Taking a fixed day off is better for timetabling, of course, and I also felt that that was better for actually taking the day off. It is genuinely tricky to try to keep Friday free, you come to realize how many weekends you do work!

*On colleague's reactions*

I haven't felt any pressure from colleagues to do more than 80%. In fact, colleagues have been very supportive. I'm totally open about the fact I work four days a week and I'm not coming in on Friday. I've had no problems at all.

I've been told a couple of times 'you are a bit light on admin, maybe you should do this duty?' And basically I tell them to sod off. I'm happy to be a year leader again if people ask, but which teaching course don't you want me to do?

*On how it works for research*

I'm not doing 80% of the research I did before, you can't do research like that. You do research when research happens, there's always more research you could do then you've got time to do.

I think I do exactly the same research load as I did before. I see research as being an add-on you do in your spare time anyway, and it always was before I went part time. There's no way you can do research properly in 36 hours a week, it's totally ridiculous to expect anyone to manage to do it. So it's all done in my extra time. If anything, my research has probably gone up the last two years.

*Advice for people thinking of going part time*

Talk to John! By all means come and talk to me as well.

The only thing that people should bear in mind is that there's no guarantee the university will take you back on a full load. Essentially, you have to go into working part time imagining it's a one way process. You can't just automatically go back to 100%. So you have to be pretty certain that you don't want to go back.

It has pension issues of course, because every five years you lose a year towards your pension. Essentially, I view it as I'm taking a bit of my pension now, when I'm hopefully fit, or fitter than I will be at 70. So it makes more sense to work an extra year or two at 70 than it does to work now, with small children to play with. I think it makes more sense to work four days than five if you can afford it.

## News from the Diversity Committee

Ideas for helping students with accessibility needs are currently being trialled in first year. Focusing on individual feedback and extra help with basic skills.

A talk by Angela Saini is being organised for March next year. Look out for more details. Enter the competition at the start of the newsletter to win a copy of her new book (Inferior: How Science got Women Wrong and the New Research)