

WIDE committee contacts

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Newsletter compiled by:

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WIDE NEWS



Well-being, Inclusion, Diversity and Equality Committee

Summer 2024 Newsletter

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1. Meet our team

In each newsletter we will highlight some of our core team members.

Dr Julia Abery

I joined the WIDE Disability and Neurodiversity Working Group earlier this year and have recently agreed to take over as chair. My interest in these issues arises partly from my lived experience advocating for my son, who is neurodiverse. Navigating the challenges to secure the necessary support and understanding for him to thrive in school was not easy, but we got there in the end. I firmly believe in the importance of inclusive practices and have seen firsthand the difference it makes if a learning environment understands and embraces neurodiversity, allowing students to thrive as their authentic selves. As a lecturer and academic tutor, I have a growing conviction of the need for more progress in this area, to make things better for our students. As chair I aim to continue the great work started by Holly Ayres, to collaborate with colleagues to enhance support for all students experiencing disability and neurodiversity, increase awareness among staff and students, and foster a more inclusive community where every individual is valued and empowered.

Paul Williams

I was the first in my family to obtain a PhD, and it has had a transformative impact on my life. I would like to see improved access to academia for people from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, as I think this aspect is sometimes missing from equal opportunities discussions.

Robin Smith

I am a member of the WIDE committee because I think it's vitally important that our organisation treat everyone as humans rather than simply roles and functions - that means helping the School provide everyone with the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

Robin Hunter (H&S Manager)

My role on the committee is as the liaison between the Health & Safety Committee and WIDE. As work-related H&S legislation comprises Health, Safety, and Welfare, there is clearly some scope for overlap in the two areas. Both committees may periodically have concerns raised which require the input of the other.

The working groups that form WIDE:

Communication and Engagement – Chair Fazil Baksh

Disability and Neurodiversity – Chair Julia Abery

Gender Equity – Chair Fazil Baksh

LGBTQ Plus – Chair Calvin Smith

Mental Health and Well-being – Chair Sukhi Sanghera

Race Equity – Chair Joy Singarayer

If you are interested in joining the WIDE committee or any of the Working Groups contact **Fazil Baksh/Debbie Turner** or email: SMPCS-Wide@reading.ac.uk

2. Ellie Highwood Award

The WIDE Committee is delighted to announce the joint winners of the 2023 SMPCS Ellie Highwood Award for Mentoring are Steve Woolnough from the National Centre for Atmospheric Studies (NCAS) and Karen Poulter from Mathematics & Statistics.

Named in honour of Ellie Highwood, a former Head of the Department of Meteorology and Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, this award recognizes outstanding contributions from staff or students within our School who have significantly impacted others through exemplary mentoring.



Karen's exceptional qualities as a mentor were eloquently captured in her nomination:

"Karen embodies approachability and warmth, always making time to lend a listening ear."

"Her ability to offer objective perspectives and encourage reflection has been invaluable in challenging biases and broadening horizons."

"Under Karen's mentorship, I've embraced leadership opportunities, spearheading projects and events with newfound assurance."



Steve's nomination beautifully illustrates the profound impact of his mentorship.

"Steve has not only been a remarkable line manager but also a catalyst for my professional growth. He provided me with opportunities to develop as a leader and encouraged me to cultivate my research collaborations and independence. Steve's humility ensures that I receive due credit and acknowledgment for my contributions."

"Steve empowers me to focus on my passion projects and pursue an independent path with confidence. "

The Wide committee recognises Steve and Karen's exceptional contributions to mentoring and is pleased to extend this well-deserved recognition to both of them.

Nominations for the 2024 Award for Mentoring will open shortly. In the meantime, please reflect on individuals who have positively influenced your journey and consider nominating them for this award.

Together, let us celebrate and encourage the culture of mentoring excellence within our School.

3. Mental Health and Well-being panel event – 14th May 2024

As part of mental health awareness week, 5 very courageous members of the School of Mathematical, Physical and Computational Sciences shared their personal experiences of poor mental health and some of the strategies that have helped them. They also answered questions posed by other members of the school and the numerous sources of information and guidance for staff and students were highlighted.

We hope this event is a step towards encouraging people to talk more freely about mental health, reducing stigma and creating a more positive culture within the school.

4. LGBTQIA + Scientists event



From left to right: Maya Carlyle (NPL), Luciano Rila (UCL), Fazil Baksh (SMPCS WIDE Director) and Calvin Smith (SMPCS Director of Teaching and Learning and Chair, WIDE LGBTQ+ Working Group)

In February, the LGBTQ+ working group of WIDE held a seminar and workshop in celebration of LGBTQIA+ History month and to highlight the contributions, success and achievements of the LGBTQIA+ community. Speakers Luciano Rila from UCL and Maya Carlyle from the National Physical Laboratory delivered captivating and informative presentations. Luciano Rila, a mathematician, delved into the intriguing history of UCL's first student GAYSOC, established back in 1972. Drawing parallels with contemporary discussions on the trans community, Luciano's talk offered a compelling exploration of societal shifts and ongoing debates, providing fresh perspectives on a topic often overlooked.

In parallel, Maya Carlyle, an accomplished computer scientist, shared her personal journey intertwined with her current research on measuring bias in datasets and ethical AI. Maya's insights underscored the importance of addressing bias in AI models to ensure equitable and accurate outcomes, sparking reflection on the ethical implications of technological advancement.

Although the disappointing turnout dampened the potential for broader engagement and exchange of ideas, the talks were met with enthusiastic praise from those in attendance, including remarks of being "inspirational and restorative."

5. Inclusive Practice Workshop

On 24th April 2024 WIDE held a workshop for teaching staff across the School of Mathematical, Physical, and Computational Sciences (SMPCS) on '**Developing Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning**'.

The aim of the workshop was to consider practical steps staff can make towards enhancing inclusive teaching practice that will contribute to closing awarding gaps in our degree programmes.

An awarding gap refers to the disparity in degree outcomes between different groups of students, usually given in terms of the proportion achieving top grades, such as between white and minoritized-ethnicity students in the UK, which is primarily attributed to systemic factors and institutional practices.

The workshop was developed and led by Mathew Haine (Student Success and Engagement Team) and Michael Kilmister (CQSD - Academic Development and Enhancement) in conjunction with Fazil Baksh, Calvin Smith, and Joy Singarayer from SMPCS.

The session included inspirational and powerful personal stories shared by two student representatives, Aaliya Williams and Faith Makanjuola, as well as by Mathew and Michael. These and other stories shared around the discussion tables highlighted the challenges faced by students but also how transformative when students feel a sense of belonging at university and feel that staff believe in them.

During the workshop, attendees were encouraged to develop 'one small change' that could remove barriers to success for students. A number of creative solutions and ideas were shared in the session and in the workshop feedback, in terms of welcoming teaching environments, flexible assessment/feedback, and inclusive curriculum design.

For anyone interested, there is now an Awarding Gap Toolkit online resource containing more information on awarding gaps and practical steps to enhance inclusive practice: <https://sitesd.reading.ac.uk/inclusive-teaching-and-learning/awarding-gap-toolkit/>

6. Colonialism, Coloniality, and Climate Science - 10th May 2024



From left to right, facing camera: Allán Laville (Dean for Diversity and Inclusion), joins historians Debjani Bhattacharyya (ETH Zurich), Deborah Coen (Yale) and Aïda Diongue-Niang (IPCC Working Group 1 vice chair) in expert panel discussion.

Colonialism has widely acknowledged legacies in both the cause of the climate crisis and the inequality of the harms it is causing. But what about the links between colonialism and climate science?

To explore this question, Joy Singarayer, Ted Shepherd (Met. dept), and Rohan Deb Roy (History dept) held a hybrid public roundtable event with three leading experts: historians Deborah Coen (Yale University) and Debjani Bhattacharyya (ETH Zurich) and IPCC Working Group 1 vice chair Aïda Diongue-Niang (Senegal).

The event outlined how colonial activities and climate sciences were entwined in their development. The lively discussion reflected on those colonial legacies for scientific practices today and on current institutional approaches. There are plans to develop these initial discussions.

If you are interested in being involved, please contact Joy Singarayer (j.s.singarayer@reading.ac.uk).

7. Upcoming Activities and Events

The Personal development session for Part 1 students

2nd October at 2pm

This is a personal development session entitled “Impostor syndrome” led by an academic. It will aim to unpack what is meant by impostor syndrome, reveal how common it is, and provide some techniques for dealing with it whilst at university. The session can also count towards the RED Award training and development hours and/or Continuing Professional Development hours.

The Ada Lovelace event for Part 1 students

11th October at 2 pm

We are running an Ada Lovelace (widely known as the first computer programmer) event which is to celebrate the annual Ada Lovelace Day which showcases women in STEM subjects across the world. However, for us this is an event for everyone to attend. We will bring together academics across the departments and a former student to talk about their career path and/or their inspirations which may help/show different avenues to achieve future goals. There will also be a question-and-answer session afterwards. The session can also count towards the RED Award training and development hours and/or Continuing Professional Development hours.

International Day for LGBTQIA+ People in STEM

18th November 2024 2pm – 5pm

This is collaboration currently between three schools (MPCS, Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy and Biological Sciences). The theme of the day is around lived experience of LGBTQIA+ of people of working in Sciences and STEM fields and speakers will be invited to talk about their lived experiences in STEM.

Edith Morley Seminar

The school's annual Edith Morley Seminar, named in honour of the first woman to be appointed a university professor in the UK and which seeks to promote gender equity in academia, is planned for the first semester in the new academic year.

Following on from a very successful event last year, the organising committee has once again identified a very high profile and dynamic scientist to give the guest lecture and to network with our next generation of scientists and STEM academics.

Further details will be provided once the date is confirmed.

8. Regular Clubs and Groups

SMPCS Parents Group

The SMPCS parents' group meets once a month for lunch. Typically we meet on the Earley Gate side of campus and get together to chat about all things related to being a parent! There is also a mailing list that can be used to ask questions, get advice or sell/pass on equipment.