

Chemistry Newsletter

Special Edition "Lockdown 2020"

Message from Head of School, Gill Reid

I would like to take this opportunity to urge all staff and students to look after your well-being in these challenging times; we do recognise that many individuals will have significant additional pressures and that working from home is not ideal for any of us! We have to consider our own health and that of others we may be caring for, as well as the additional pressure of supporting home schooling, etc. We have collated a list of helpful places to find support at the end of this newsletter along with some general principles below.

I would also like to thank all staff and students for their cooperation and assistance in assuring the orderly shutdown of activities in the School of Chemistry as the UK Government lock-down came into force, and for your patience as we navigate through the current challenges.

The School of Chemistry wants you to know that we recognise and understand the difficulties many of us have at this time ...

You are not 'working from home', you are 'at your home, during a crisis, trying to work';

Your personal physical, mental, and emotional health is the top priority right now;

You should not try to compensate for lost productivity by working longer hours;

Be kind to yourself and don't judge how you are coping based on how you see others coping;

Be kind to others and don't judge how they are coping based on your perceptions of how you are coping;

Your success and that of your group will not be measured the same way it was when things were 'normal'.

Keep in touch with colleagues, not just work meetings, consider a "virtual coffee" or a "G+T" meet up, as an alternative to help support each other and keep things in perspective.

We look forward to seeing you all back in the School in due course, but in the meantime do look after yourselves, seek support if you need it and stay safe.

UoS Chemistry: COVID efforts

The School of Chemistry is proud to be actively involved in several COVID-19 related projects.

Staff in spin-out company ATDBio have been working intensively in the School throughout the shutdown to prepare, purify and supply modified oligos for CV-19 diagnostics and testing.

Prof. Sumeet Mahajan's project with Biological Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine developing deep UV (UV-C) pathogen disinfection technology targeted at the current crisis is progressing very well and showing some real promise for highly effective virus decontamination from surfaces.

A team of staff and students from Chemistry has been working closely with Medicine to prepare mask testing solutions that are in short supply but required urgently to protect frontline NHS staff and care workers. They have now been produced and distributed to >7 NHS Trusts in Hampshire already, including UHS, with distribution of close to 700 bottles (and 20-40 litres per week); the team is exploring roll-out of the procedures nationally via the RSC and other networks.



Read more [here](#)

Other projects are currently under consideration via COVID-19 specific funding routes.

Chemistry were also involved in the University's donation of PPE equipment to NHS workers.



UoS Chemistry @UoSChemistry · Mar 25

Today we've been able to donate a supply of disposable gloves to our NHS workers in the fight against COVID-19. That's a total of 22,000 gloves! #ThankYouNHS



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Do you have an article you wish to contribute to a future edition?

Please email Lynda Brown L.J.Brown@soton.ac.uk or Dawn Dunlop D.Dunlop@soton.ac.uk



The Royal Society of Chemistry supports our chemistry community, including providing grants for carers and equipment needed to work from home and /or to home

<https://www.rsc.org/covid-19-response/find-support/>

The Chemists' Community Fund also provides advice and financial assistance to RSC

members <https://www.rsc.org/membership-and-community/chemists-community-fund/>.

This has also extended to non-members during the present crisis – further details coming soon from the RSC, see their website.

Congratulations & Celebrations

Congratulations to Chemistry SUSU Academic Award winners:

- Hannah Watson (Chemistry President and Y4 Rep) – winner of the FEPS Academic Rep award for 'Best Contribution to the Faculty.'
- Prof Andrea Russell: Best Pastoral Support – Winner.
- Dr Paul Duckmanton: Best Pastoral Support – Highly Commended.

NSS Completion - the final Chemistry completion rate was 79% (+ 2% vs. last year); the overall completion rate for UoS was 73%.

Thank you to all students that completed the survey; we will use the feedback to help to improve our programmes further by identifying both areas of best practice and suggested changes.

Congratulations to Professor Graeme Day in Chemistry, securing an extremely prestigious ERC Synergy Grant - the first such grant to be awarded in the University of Southampton. Led by Graeme and involving PIs from Liverpool and Rostock, the project, ADAM (Autonomous Discovery of Advanced Materials), is being funded to the value of €10M over 6 years. Further details are available <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/news/archive.page>

Congratulations to David Harrowven whose project, 'SmartT' (Smart Textiles for Regional Industry and Smart Specialisation Sectors), a €5.5M Interreg grant led by Southampton Chemistry (with partners in ECS and in France) under the France (Channel) England Programme, is going through the final stages of approval.

Congratulations to Sumeet Mahajan – “Lighting the Way to a Healthy Nation - Optical 'X-rays' for Walk Through Diagnosis & Therapy” - £5.6M EPSRC Programme Grant – a collaboration involving Edinburgh (lead), Southampton and Nottingham.

Congratulations to Nikolay Zhelev who became a Chartered Physicist at the end of 2019

Where possible we will continue to circulate details of relevant research funding calls for Chemistry. Please contact Prof. Bruno Linclau (DHoS -R) if you have any questions on these.

With the decision to delay REF2021, there is still time to publish high quality papers that could be included in the School's submission. Please notify Prof. Graeme Day (REF Champion) if you would like support with reviewing manuscripts prior to submission or if you have key paper published that might be included in our submission.

Planning is underway to put in place the necessary protocols to allow a phased re-opening of the buildings to allow out PDRAs and PGR students to recommence their research while ensuring social-distancing and high standards of hygiene. The timing will be dictated by Government and University guidelines. We all need to be patient while these plans are tested and implemented gradually as the safety of our staff and students is paramount.

Education update

Since the spring term was ended prematurely, Chemistry staff have been working very hard to prepare their lecture material in readiness for on-line teaching through the remainder of this academic year; this has required a great deal of ingenuity and has been a steep learning curve for us all as new technology has become available! Thanks to staff for their engagement and to those students that have reviewed materials and methods and fed back comments as we refine the methods of delivery. Hopefully this is now going reasonably smoothly for our students and that you are also finding your way with the new methods of working and are now able to focus more on your studies again. Please contact your PAT or Dr Eugen Stulz (Senior Tutor) for advice or guidance on any such matters.

We all recognise that it is really important for our students to engage effectively with the on-line materials, associated discussion sessions and other exercises to ensure you achieve the module and programme learning outcomes and are able to continue to develop your skills and knowledge in preparation for the next academic year.

Events

Thurs 21st May 3:30pm RSC Webinar
Kindness – Building a better chemistry culture:
<https://www.chemistryworld.com/webinars/kindness-building-a-better-chemistry-culture/4011630.article/>

Tues 19th May 12-1pm *Mental Health and Wellbeing*
<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/events/vitachat-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

Thurs 4th June 12:30-13:30pm RSC Webinar
<https://www.rsc.org/events/detail/44409/how-to-make-your-team-more-effective-exploring-the-five-dysfunctions-of-a-team>

3MT 2020 including Covid 19 update
<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/events/three-minute-thesis-competition>

Chemistry Building news

The B29 team have continued to work towards delivery of the project during the covid-19 shutdown. Leading up to the closure of the Chemistry complex, the contractor made safe and suspended their operations on site in the interest of Health and Safety. Around this time the University issued what is known as a Practical Completion Certificate. This means that the works are practically complete save for minor works or defects/snagging, and Chemistry has use of all the key areas and is getting the benefit from them.

During the closure the project team have been considering what work can be safely carried out to move towards completion of the B29 project. An important objective will be to progress tasks that can be completed safely while the buildings have a reduced occupancy, rather than trying to resume when Chemistry operations are ramping back up. At present, small groups are engaged in testing and commissioning of the fume cupboards and extraction system in B29, which can be done in a managed and safe way. Some planning and checking work against the building snagging list is also currently in progress.



Chemistry Students working in Labs

We look forward to welcoming students back to the new labs as soon as it is safe to do so.

Here's one from the archives, an image of a Chemistry Lab in the University of Southampton from 1978!



SOTSEF 2020



SOTSEF 2020 is back with a fresh digital twist as 'SOTSEF Goes Digital' with a variety of different activities, from downloadable resources, virtual tours, talks, podcasts and blogs to live debates, performances and Q&A sessions, to citizen science projects: <https://www.sotsef.co.uk/>

Chemical Engineering

The MEng and BEng programmes have now had the stage 2 validation meeting, where they were very well received by our external advisor and the University. They have been accepted subject to some very minor amendments. These programmes will enter the UCAS cycle this summer and will be taking their first students for 2021 entry. We are now preparing the website and virtual open day materials. A key part of the success of the Chemical Engineering degree programmes is the construction of a purpose-built Chemical Engineering teaching laboratory, computer suite, and virtual control room. The feasibility study for their construction has just been completed and we are now entering the detailed design and procurement stage. The Chemical Engineering team continues to grow, and we welcome both our new staff, Dr Mohamed Hassan-Sayed and Dr Nuno Bimbo, we very much look forward to working with them. Any chemistry staff who are interested in being part of the programme team are invited to get in touch with Mohamed (m.g.hassansayed@soton.ac.uk), the programme lead, or Andrea Russell (a.e.russell@soton.ac.uk), chemistry's contact person for the degree programme. A presentation on the content of the programmes and describing the new teaching facilities to the Schools of Chemistry and Engineering Sciences will be arranged soon.

Where to find support if you need it:

[University Covid-19 Information & Guidance page](#)

Students:

Summary of wellbeing resources and activities:

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/edusupport/index.page>

Students can contact Enabling Services in the usual way via enable@soton.ac.uk

Students facing significant difficulties or dealing with a crisis, should email firstsupport@soton.ac.uk

Staff:

Wellbeing while working at home:

<https://sotonac.sharepoint.com/teams/HealthWellbeing/Site/Pages/Working-from-home.aspx>

Support for your mental health:

<https://sotonac.sharepoint.com/teams/HealthWellbeing/Site/Pages/Mental-Health.aspx>

Employee Assistance Programme:

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/eap/index.page>

If we can help with signposting you to further support, please contact Lynda Brown: L.J.Brown@soton.ac.uk