

# WIDE NEWS

## WIDE committee contacts

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## Well-being, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality Committee

Autumn 2023 Newsletter

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## Newsletter compiled by:

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# 1. Mission Statement

Create and maintain an academic community that:

- actively seeks out and removes barriers to learning and success;
- values and celebrates diversity;
- is inclusive and respectful;
- safeguards physical and mental wellbeing;
- is committed to equality of opportunity.

## The working groups that form WIDE:

- Communication and Engagement
- Disability and Neurodiversity
- Gender Equity
- LGBTQ Plus
- Mental Health and Well-being
- Race Equity

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](mailto:SMPCS-Wide@reading.ac.uk)

## 2. Dr Fazil Baksh (Director of WIDE)

I believe that our surroundings, experiences, and social context can significantly impact who we are as individuals. I also strongly believe that everyone, regardless of who they are, deserves the opportunity to thrive, and that actions speak louder than words. These convictions underpin my involvement with the School's WIDE committee, and my dedication to the fostering of an academic community wherein every member feels valued, heard, empowered to contribute their unique strengths, and are supported to realise their full potential.

A commitment to equality and diversity within academia is not just an ethical obligation but it is also a strategic investment in the advancement of knowledge, innovation, and societal progress. Embracing and celebrating diversity ensures that academia remains at the forefront of positive change, contributing to a more just, inclusive, and intellectually vibrant world.

## 3. Meet our team

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

**Gwyn Matthews** I'm a member of WIDE because I believe fostering a school culture that celebrates diversity, encourages a work-life balance, and ensures equal opportunities for all is the best way to empower individuals to thrive personally and academically. The work done by WIDE can create an environment that not only respects and supports everyone but also enables each individual to reach their full potential.

**Natalie Harvey** I am on the WIDE committee to help make SMPCS an inclusive, supportive environment for all students and staff.

This year I have been involved in finding potential speakers for the Edith Morley seminar, trained as a mental health first aider, arranged school wide parent/care giver lunches. I am currently co-organising a panel event on mental health and well-being within the school for next May.

**Claire Bulgin** I am a member of the WIDE committee because I am keen to promote equality and equal opportunities in the working environment. I am also passionate about raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing issues and acknowledging that it is just as important to look after our mental health as it is our physical health. I would like to see conversations about mental health and wellbeing become more commonplace within the school.

**Calvin Smith** A guiding light in my career is the belief that individuals can only do their best when they are safe and empowered enough to be their whole authentic selves, and that we all have a part to play in creating the environment and culture in which this can happen. This is important for any workplace or community but especially for a School like ours where our goals of research and teaching excellence can only happen if individuals are liberated from the perpetual burdens of needing to censor themselves and evaluate each interaction against the criteria 'am I safe with you?' (This ugly truth is, for many, a central part of the lived experience of LGBTQIA+ and other minoritised people.) In order to achieve this, I believe we need to actively work at hardwiring respect, kindness and a willingness to put the work in to genuinely understand the lived experiences of others into all we do.

## 4. Decolonizing the Curriculum

Decolonizing the curriculum is an approach aimed at countering the predominance of Western-centric academic views, acknowledging the colonial biases and legacies present in many disciplines. Awareness of different perspectives can encourage critical thinking and prepare students to challenge systemic inequalities and feel empowered to advocate for positive change. In STEM subjects there is sometimes a perception that decolonizing the curriculum is either not relevant or is difficult to achieve, because of the focus on technical knowledge. Through a funded staff-student Partnership in Learning and Teaching (PLaT) in the 2022-23 academic year a project team, led by Prof. Joy Singarayer and Dr Nick Biggs, sought to understand and implement actions to decolonize two STEM modules: Calculus (MA1CA) and Climate Change (MTMG16). The project involved several activities, including group discussions, workshops, journaling, and presentations. Key insights reveal the importance of expansive subject perspectives, representation, the integration of personal experiences, and fostering critical engagement in education. Based on the findings, a comprehensive list of module enhancements was compiled.

These developments will be integrated into the upcoming academic year with continuous feedback mechanisms in place to assess their efficacy and guide further curriculum decolonization activities within SMPCS. The project was highlighted as a case study in the new University of Reading Decolonizing the Curriculum Resource 2023: <https://www.reading.ac.uk/diversity/-/media/project/functions/diversity/documents/b30600-decolonising-the-curriculum-resource-2023-ht-v3b-screen.pdf?la=en&hash=FBB96801A6981E5C47DF2ADD1C9A3BB6>

## 5. Ada Lovelace career event

This year we ran an Ada Lovelace (widely known as the first computer programmer) event to celebrate the annual Ada Lovelace Day. This event showcases women in STEM subjects across the world and took place here on the 11<sup>th</sup> October. However, for us this was an inclusive event for everyone to attend. We brought 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. This was followed by a personal development session entitled “Leading yourself” led by an academic to help develop/enhance personal leadership qualities, for example self-care, self-compassion and self-reflection were briefly covered, all of which are extremely useful in university life and beyond. We hope this event gave students ideas to consider for the future.

We arranged for this session to be counted towards student RED Award training and development hours and/or staff Continuing Professional Development hours.

# 6. Edith Morley seminar 2023

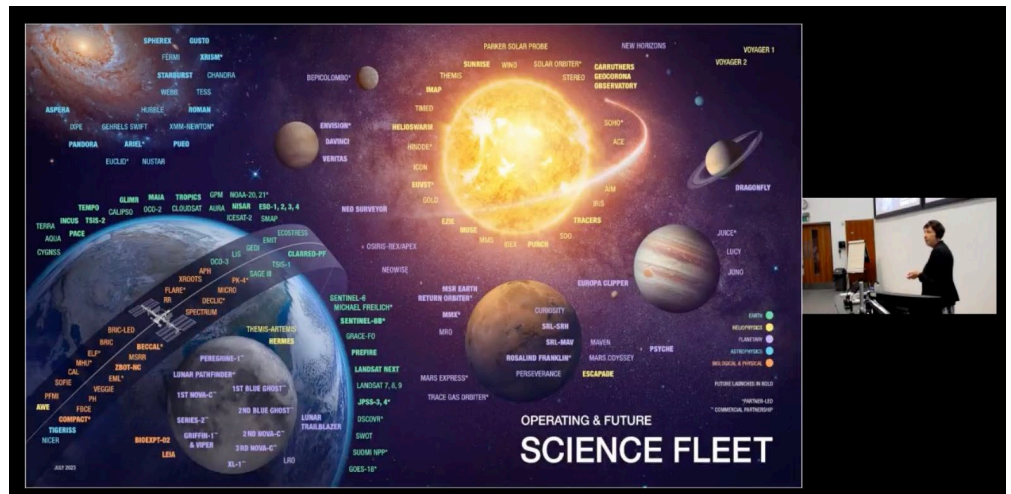
Andrew Charlton-Perez (HoS)

We had a hugely successful Edith Morely seminar this year, delivered by Dr Nicola Fox, Associate Administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate. Dr Fox gave us a great overview of the exciting science that NASA is involved in and the teamwork necessary to achieve some of the groundbreaking results such as the recent return of material from the Bennu asteroid. Dr Fox also spent time having lunch with early-career scientists and was hosted by Prof. Dominik Zaum and others for a celebration dinner in Park House after her seminar. A huge thank you to Mike Lockwood for asking Dr Fox to be our speaker and to Gwyneth and Debbie and other members of the WIDE gender working group for organising such a successful event.

The Distinguished Edith Morley Seminar took place on 28th September 2023 in the ICMA Lecture Theatre and online.

*Nicola Fox, Associate Administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate.*

Abstract: NASA helps discover secrets of the universe, searches for life elsewhere, and protects and improves life on Earth and in space. Success requires extreme innovation, teamwork, and leadership. The stories behind NASA's science endeavours are just as inspirational as the results and discoveries that unify and empower us to thrive on earth and beyond.



[Edith Morley Seminar 2023, University of Reading \(SMPCS\) - Dr. Nicola "Nicky" Fox.mp4](#)

## 7. Upcoming Activities and Events

### **LGBTQIA + Scientists event Wednesday 28th February 2 – 4pm Slingo Lecture Theatre**

We are running an event bringing together LGBTQIA+ scientists to share their experiences (both their academic achievements as well as providing space for personal reflections).

With the aim to create a space for a more student-led session to give this community a voice in the context of LGBT+ history month too.

### **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.