

School of Chemistry Community

Part of
THE EPS COMMUNITY



Summer 2013

Greetings

It gives me great pleasure to be able to write to you – our Alumni – and let you know about the exciting developments that have been happening recently in the School of Chemistry at the University of Birmingham, and where we are taking the School to ensure that we maintain a leading position both in terms of the quality of teaching, research and the way in which we prepare our graduates for life after their time with us.

The School Context and Vision: As you will undoubtedly be aware the higher education sector in the UK is in a period of rapid change which requires all University Departments to have a clear vision of where they see their future, such that it maps on to the needs of the country. In the School of Chemistry at the University of Birmingham, we have such a vision. The vision is to train and equip young people at undergraduate, postgraduate and postdoctoral levels such that they are not only technically proficient as professional chemists and more broadly as scientists, but are aware of the key technological challenges that their skills base can address. We aim to achieve this vision by having a syllabus that not only teaches the fundamentals of the discipline to a high level, but links the syllabus increasingly, as the undergraduate's years progress, to the research that goes on in the School. Thus, in the final year students are exposed to projects in our *outward facing research themes* of *Chemical Biology & Drug Discovery, Materials & Energy, and Imaging in Chemistry & Biomedicine*, much of which will be carried out collaboratively with complementary disciplines across the University.

Furthermore, we offer and encourage our best students to consider taking an integrated year in industry as a part of a 4 year MSci degree, to stretch them outside of the academic comfort zone, as well as expose them to the opportunities and needs of the commercial environment. The School has just been granted RSC accreditation for this degree. Indeed, it would seem that graduate employers are very pleased with the young people who leave us as we currently sit 9th out of the 30 Russell Group and 94 Institutions that have Schools of Chemistry in terms of employability 6 months after graduation.

This vision has led to an expansion in the School since 2008 with 12 academic appointments, including 5 prestigious University of Birmingham Research Fellows, representing 10% of these Fellowships across the University. In addition, the School has had considerable investment in equipment through the Birmingham Science City Initiative, which has been of the order of £2M for equipment and laboratory refurbishment. This initiative has enabled the School to engage with a whole host of industries from across the West Midlands, which has greatly improved and

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**Have you joined the
School LinkedIn
Community yet?**



An online community for alumni, students, faculty and friends from the School of Chemistry, the LinkedIn group provides you the opportunity to engage in conversation, find former colleagues, keep up to date with changes in the School and debate with academics.

[Join this growing community today.](#)

**We would love to
hear from you**

Everyone has a story to tell and we would love to hear yours. What have you been up to since

influenced the flavour of what we have to offer to our undergraduates and postgraduates. Furthermore, in the last year the School was invited by EPSRC (the UK Government's funding body for physical science), as one of only 20 Schools of Chemistry having won more than £10M in the last 5 years, to bid for £1M of funding for equipment, as part of the Core Capability call. Of the 20 Schools we were ranked 7th and were awarded the £1M, plus a further £0.5M from the University to buy state-of-the-art NMR, Mass Spectrometry and X-Ray diffraction kit, to allow some innovative lines of research to be carried out.

The Make-up of the School: Currently, the School has 31 academic staff, 15 academic related & support staff, 200 undergraduate students in year 2 & 3, and 60 in year 4. Last year we had a record cohort of first year students, being in excess of 130 matched by our highest A Level grade per student, and with 10% being overseas students. In addition, we have a postgraduate and postdoctoral population numbering 80 and 20, respectively, made up of young researchers from across the globe – France, Italy, Germany, India, Vietnam, US, China, and Saudi Arabia. Thus, as you can gather we have a dynamic and vibrant undergraduate and graduate School.

A Little About the Research That We Carry Out In The School: The School of Chemistry leads an EPSRC Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) 'Physical Sciences of Imaging in the Biomedical Sciences (PSIBS)'. The focus of PSIBS research is on the development of imaging techniques based on the chemical sciences and the computational analysis of image data, to enable and support future breakthroughs in biology and biomedicine. The DTC will train 50 high-quality engineering and physical sciences graduate students in a multi-disciplinary environment at the Life Sciences Interface. In addition, our materials chemistry research programs are addressing important issues in the energy arena, such as hydrogen storage, fuel cells and lithium ion batteries. Furthermore, in the realm of chemical biology and drug discovery a number of initiatives are on-going with the Medical School investigating novel therapeutics and diagnostic tools. Indeed two medicinal chemists have just been appointed, as part of a pharmacy degree programme in the Medical School, but who carry out research in, and work alongside staff in the School of Chemistry.

I hope you can sense that a Birmingham Chemistry graduate will not only be exposed to working within teams, but teams in which collaboration across disciplines is imperative to solve big science and technological challenges.

It is a very exciting time in the School of Chemistry as we address important scientific research questions around environmental sustainability and health science, allowing us to equip and train young people to go out and make their mark in the world. If you would like to know more please do not hesitate to drop me a line by [email](#), or try and come along to our Alumni Reunion Day which is held in June each year.

With best wishes,

Professor Jon Preece
Head of School
Chemistry

News from the School of Chemistry

Congratulations to all our recent graduates



Congratulations to everyone who graduated this summer and welcome to the alumni community! Graduations this year fell at the beginning of the heat wave and graduands enjoyed a beautiful summer's day to shake hands with Professor David Eastwood and receive their degree certifications. [To read more and see photographs of the day click here.](#)

leaving the School of Chemistry? Have you had any successes or challenges that you would like to share with fellow graduates? Do you have any particular words of wisdom you would like to pass on to graduating students?

Your stories help us to promote your School, communicate with prospective students and complete the history of this institution. Please fill in the [online form](#) or [email us](#), we would love to hear from you.

Your School needs you...

Would you be able to share some of your time, expertise or connections to help Chemistry to succeed? There are many ways in which you can give a little back, from providing a career profile, to mentoring a student.

Details can be found [online](#) and [email us](#) if you would like to get involved.

Illuminating the night with sunlight



What would you do without artificial lighting? On beautiful summer days like we had recently, the question may be only rhetoric. However on gloomy winter days you may feel differently: ever tried not turning the lights on when you enter your office in the morning, or when you arrive home? Depressing, isn't it? It gets worse when you realise that your TV, computer screen, and smartphone all use an artificial lighting source. Try turning them off — it's easy to see how reliant we have become. [Read more about developments in Organic Light-Emitting Diodes \(OLEDs\)](#) [here](#).

Successful Careers event leads to annual commitment



The School of Chemistry recently played host to a very successful Careers event involving speakers from industry, including Kraft, Unilever and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL). The event stressed the importance to the School of maintaining and developing strong links with industry, and the importance to students of developing their career and commercial awareness skills through attendance at such events. [Read more](#).

Female scientists campaign for change in gender inequality in science

Two University of Birmingham scientists took their cutting edge research to the streets on Friday 5th July as part of Soapbox Science and call for a change in gender inequality in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Professor Laura Piddock, Professor of Microbiology, and Dr. Zoe Schnepf, Fellow of the School of Chemistry, will be showcasing their particular branches of science and their research to the general public at the free event. [Read more here](#).

New staff in 2013

There have been a number of appointments in the School this year. [Read a summary of our new staff and their research interests online here](#).

Events taking place shortly...

[Chemistry Experience Days](#)

21-23/08/2013

Know anyone interested in studying Chemistry at Birmingham University, applying to UCAS in 2013/14 and are likely to achieve A level grades of AAB-ABB, or equivalent? They may be interested in attending one of our Experience Days.

[Undergraduate Open Day](#)

14/09 and 26/10/2013

Encourage students you know to visit the School of Chemistry, meet our staff and students and learn about our degrees.

Do we have the right details for you?

According to our records your current business details are as follows: **Position** at **Organisation Name**. If this is not correct, please visit [your.bham](#) or email alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

[visiting your.bham](#), emailing alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk, or telephoning +44 (0)121 414 2773 / 2744 / 4724. In order to further tailor the communication we send, all emails are tracked and processed; further information regarding our use of data, is available by looking at our [data protection statement](#)