



Dr Sharon Dewitt is a non-clinical lecturer, and is on a structured teaching and research career path within the School of Dentistry. Her career development and progress has been facilitated by the Athena Swan principles that promote the retention of women in science.

In 2010, Dr Dewitt was successful in applying for one of four academic fellowship positions with the Arthritis Research UK Centre of Excellence in Cardiff, to be

based, with financial commitment and professional support, within the School of Dentistry. These highly competitive positions provided a structured career pathway for early career researchers to develop their research excellence over a four year period, protected from significant teaching, which then allows entry to a permanent lecture position on a Teaching and Research contract. Dr Dewitt's appointment was made against criteria that demonstrated an emerging research excellence, highly regarded publications and successful grant including a Wellcome Trust VIP award. Between 2010 and 2015 she has developed her field of research, established new collaborations, successfully co-supervised several PhD studentships, continued to publish her work and attract grant funding with support of fellow research active staff within the School (including Tenovus, EPSRC, AR UK, MRC CiC). During this time, Dr Dewitt took 2 periods of maternity leave: 2012-2013 (10 months) and 2014 (9 months). Schools policies and processes relating to maternity leave and work-life balance have been crucial to ensuring her continued productivity during this period, enabling her to successfully balance her professional career with her personal life. This has included 'keeping in touch' days, which enabled continued contact with the School through her maternity leave so that important changes and events were communicated and she was still able to contribute when appropriate. Importantly, Dr Dewitt was also able to maintain communication with her postgraduate students and provide any advice/opinions when required. Following her return from maternity leave, Dr Dewitt took advantage of the 'phased return' procedures to ensure a smooth reacclimatization, and has also utilized flexible working patterns (working 4 days for an agreed period before returning to full time status).

"On my return from maternity leave in January 2015, I took up a lectureship position in the School of Dentistry. This is a structured career path with defined roles, expectations and guidelines on how to progress through different grades through to a personal chair. Ample training (eg PgCUTL) is provided, teaching and administrative workloads are managed to ensure there is still time to pursue an active research career, and various avenues of support and mentoring are in place. I am optimistic about her future academic and career prospects, and is confident about her future role in the School."

Dr Ilona Johnson is a Senior Clinical Lecturer and honorary consultant in Dental Public Health. She joined the School of Dentistry in 2008 on the Walport scheme as a Clinical Lecturer undertaking a PhD and specialist training concurrently. Completing consultant training in 2012, Ilona was successfully appointed, following a competitive recruitment process, to her current position, completing her PhD in 2013.



“I moved to Cardiff in 2008 with a four-year-old and an 18-month-old to take up a full time post as a Specialist Trainee. My husband’s job did not move with us, so he works away during the week. As such, I have been a single working parent with no local family support for most of my time in post.

University policies have enabled me to work flexibly as required in order to be a parent. Despite this, work-life balance has not always been easy, the children have inevitably become unwell without warning, and family life events happen at the most inconvenient moments. I have found that these are the times where support at work has really counted. It has been possible to arrange leave quickly when they have been ill or unexpected events have occurred.

During my training, I undertook a PhD, which enabled me to fully re-enter and progress in an academic career in my late 30’s. The arrangements for this were important for me. The Dean of the School at the time, Professor Treasure, acted as my primary supervisor. She supported my development and helped me to balance my time in relation to family and working commitments. I am aware that others in my position have received similar support from supervisors and senior staff.

Staff and students have nominated me for awards for the work I have done, and to have my name read out at the University Awards ceremony as a winner was a fantastic experience. I, like others who are developing have been put forward to represent the School at meetings at a College and University level. I was also chosen to attend an educational senior leadership training course to develop further my skills, in preparation for more senior roles. This has provided me with opportunities to meet other senior members of staff in different Schools, share ideas and develop my professional networks.

I will soon be applying for promotion. I have attended promotions training in the School and have discussed my application with the School Dean. Despite being a late entrant to academia and a working mother, I have felt fully supported in my journey to achieve my ambition of becoming a Professor.”



Professor Rachel Waddington is a non-clinical academic who has progressed through all of the academic grades within the School, supported via the application of Athena SWAN principles and policies facilitating a work life balance. Professor Waddington was appointed as a Postdoctoral Research Assistant in 1987 on a 3-year fixed-term contract funded by the Medical Research Council and in 1989 she appointed a Lecturer in Oral Biochemistry within the School. In 1998 she was promoted to Senior Lecturer, whilst on maternity leave.

In 2003/04 she took a second period of maternity leave, which did not hamper promotion to Reader in 2005. In 2006 she was made Director of Postgraduate Research within the School, a role that enabled her to sit on wider University committees and directly contributed towards her being promoted to Professor in 2011 – the School’s first female non-clinical Professor. She is currently a member of the School Senior Management team as Associate Dean for Engagement and Enterprise.

The School has facilitated Professor Waddington’s progression in several ways. Despite being on maternity leave in 1998 and 2003/04, this did not disadvantage her in being promoted through the academic grades. On both occasions, a two-way contact was maintained with the School whilst on leave and she was not only able to reacclimatise easily upon her return, but also still contribute to decision making, such as staff recruitments, whilst absent.

Earlier in her career, the School supported Professor Waddington in spending periods of time working abroad at the University of Toronto, Canada and an extended lecture tour of the USA including the NIH, University of Texas, Houston and University of Birmingham, Alabama. These experiences supported her career development and enabled her to build contacts in her field.

Professor Waddington has been supported in adjusting her core working hours in a way that enables her to start and finish work early to facilitate childcare responsibilities and this has allowed her to retain full-time status on return from maternity leave. She is also appreciative of the support from senior School staff in terms of advising her career development at each transition point and helping her to navigate promotion processes.

As well as supervising 13 PhD students, the majority of whom have continued into research careers, Professor Waddington is a mentor in the Women in Universities Mentoring Scheme (WUMS), has mentored academic staff in other schools within Cardiff University, and has spoken at the University’s Women Professors Network on her career progression.

Dr Melanie Wilson is a clinical academic who has progressed to a senior role in the School. Appointed in 1991 as an MRC Clinical Research Fellow, she was appointed as Lecturer upon completion of that role in 1995. In 1999 she took maternity leave, and then reduced her hours to 0.57fte in 2001 to meet childcare commitments. During this time, Dr Wilson's line managers continued to support her training and development needs. In 2002, Dr Wilson took a further 5 months maternity leave. Upon her return in 2003 she was promoted to Senior Lecturer/Honorary Consultant in Oral Microbiology. She was promoted based on her capability, and her part-time status was not considered to be an issue.



In 2007 Dr Wilson took maternity leave for a third time and submitted a request for a 3-year career break to facilitate childcare commitments. The School supported this career break. Dr Wilson remained in contact with the School during this time by undertaking a small amount of teaching and some minor work within her department. This was invaluable when it came to her return from her career break and she did not experience any difficulties in her return and reacclimatised very quickly.

Dr Wilson is very positive about her experiences in the School. She is clear that without the implementation of work-life balance policies, she would not have been able to continue her academic career within the School and would not be an employee at Cardiff University today.

