

Chemistry Update

Newsletter 334, 30 July 2021

Inside this Issue

Department of Chemistry maintains its place in the UK top 10	1
Professor Robin Perutz elected to Royal Society Council	2
York MChem student wins SCI undergraduate poster prize	
Two Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards for Chemistry	3
Dr Alyssa-Jennifer Avestro is PhD Supervisor of the Year	4
Funding wins more time for THYME	5
New starters	
Green Impact Triple Award Success	6
ChemInventory	
Sponsored Cycle for St John Ambulance - update	7

Department of Chemistry maintains its place in the UK top 10

The Department has once again confirmed its place among the UK's most highly regarded departments for the subject of Chemistry. The Department is ranked 8th in the UK in the Complete University Guide 2022.

Published annually since 2007, the [Complete University Guide](#) ranks 130 UK universities, 14 Arts, Drama and Music colleges and conservatoires, and 74 subjects by quality measures important to students.

Overall, the University of York was ranked 18th in the the UK, 1st in Yorkshire and the Humber and top 10 in seven subjects: Italian (3rd), Social Work (4th), German (6th), English (7th), Nursing (7th), Chemistry (8th) and Iberian Languages (9th).

Date of Next Issue:

31 August 2021

Professor Robin Perutz elected to Royal Society Council

Professor Robin Perutz, Emeritus Professor in the Department of Chemistry has been elected to the Council which governs the Royal Society, the oldest and one of the most prestigious scientific institutions in the world.



Professor Robin Perutz, an inorganic chemist and former Head of the Department of Chemistry (2000-2004) will begin his term of office as Royal Society Council Member on 30 November 2021. As a member of the Council, he will join with the other 20-24 fellows responsible for directing the Royal Society's overall policy, managing its business and acting as trustee for the Society's possessions and estates.

Professor Perutz was elected as fellow of the [Royal Society](#) in 2010 and has served in a variety of roles: the selection committee for new fellows in chemistry, the Diversity Committee, the selection committee for the Rosalind Franklin Award and the Industry Fellowships Panel. He is currently the Royal Society's representative on the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies.

On receiving the news of his election to the Royal Society Council, Professor Perutz said:

"First of all, I hope I can live up to the expectations of all those who have voted for me in the Council elections. The Royal Society has an independent voice on science policy and I look forward to contributing at a time when the key issues of climate change and biodiversity, as well as science funding, are centre stage."

"The Royal Society is already active in encouraging diversity in science including people with disabilities and the women in science agenda - I see it as my job to build on my experience in York to ensure that we can achieve real progress. There are more displaced people on the planet than ever, so I will continue to encourage leadership on human rights and academic freedom."

The last member of Royal Society Council from the University of York was Professor Alastair Fitter.

York MChem student wins SCI undergraduate poster prize

Jake Odger, a 4th year MChem student in the Department of Chemistry, has won first prize for his poster on Mosher's amides at SCI's National Undergraduate Symposium on 5 July. Jake is currently undertaking his industry placement at [Sosei Heptares](#) and is supervised by Dr Christopher Spicer at York.

This year's [event](#) was held online and saw final year undergraduate students working in organic, biological, supramolecular, physical organic or medicinal chemistry showcase their research on a national stage.

Two Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards for Chemistry

Chemistry lecturers, Dr Julia Sarju and Dr Lizzie Wheeldon have received the Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Award 2021 in recognition of 'excellent contributions' to learning and teaching activities in the Department of Chemistry.



The University of York [Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Award](#) celebrates significant achievements in teaching and learning support, and will be conferred later in the year at one of the 2021 deferred graduation ceremonies.

Dr Julia Sarju has been a Lecturer in the Department since October 2016, contributing widely to the Department's teaching. She has recently contributed to the development of a new research-led Masters level chemistry course, designed to connect students to authentic research taking place at York, and has designed and supervised Year 3 mini research projects developing synthetic routes to antimalarial target

compounds. Julia has led prize-winning inclusive teaching and accessibility training for GTAs, is an active member of the National Association of Disabled Staff Networks and is passionate about working for the inclusion of disabled scientists. She is the Departmental Disability Officer for Chemistry.

Dr Lizzie Wheeldon has been an Associate Lecturer in the Department since September 2019, delivering tutorials and workshops across all years on a range of modules and topics. As module coordinator for year 1 practical chemistry, she has led the first year students through the current challenging academic year in labs, and has been experimental coordinator for practical experiments in all 3 years. As a supporter of outreach and widening participation, Lizzie gets involved in many opportunities including the Royal Society of Chemistry Top of the Bench competition, and Salters Festival of Chemistry. Using her experience in outreach, she has also run a successful outreach mini-project for third year MChem students.

Vice Chancellor Charlie Jeffrey wrote to the winners:

"The Panel was impressed with the excellent contributions you have made across a wide range of learning and teaching activities in the department. The panel was also impressed with the outstanding feedback you receive from staff and students. You are clearly committed to the delivery of high quality, innovative teaching, engaging with and responding to your students, as well as carefully reflecting on your practices."

Online Department suggestion box



The online Equality and Diversity suggestion box has been extended to be a suggestion box for the whole Department. You can submit your thoughts/suggestions/ideas for general Departmental matters as well as matters relating to Equality and Diversity. You can find the Google form at this [link](#).

Dr Alyssa-Jennifer Avestro is PhD Supervisor of the Year

Dr Alyssa-Jennifer Avestro has been recognised as 'PhD Supervisor of the Year' in the York University Students Union (YUSU) Excellence Awards.



[YUSU Excellence Awards](#) are given on the basis of student nominations across ten categories, with up to four finalists in each category. This year was a bumper year for nominations, with 572 received in total – a 70% increase on the usual amount of nominations received. In Chemistry, Nick Heywood and Aidan Carr were nominated for GTA of the Year, Dr Seishi Shimizu was nominated as Most Inspiring and Dr Julia Sarju Mandle and Dr Jason Lynam were both nominated as Supervisor of the Year.

However, it was Dr Avestro's nominations which stood out to the student judging panel. The nominations described her 'forward-thinking guidance', her help to 'build self-confidence and professional networks' and spoke of being given 'the opportunity to develop beyond the work of my PhD'. One nominating student wrote, 'As an international student, finding funding to offset the

costs of pursuing a PhD in the UK is tough – Alyssa made it easier by supporting scholarship applications as well as giving me feedback to help strengthen my personal statements. She went beyond... As a first-generation PhD student, the advice has helped me to familiarise myself with academia and how to navigate through it to have a successful career. Her determination to not allow barriers such as country of origin affect my ability to do research has been inspiring and I'm excited to do similar things when I can mentor students.'

Dr Alyssa-Jennifer Avestro joined the Department of Chemistry in January 2019 as a Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Research Fellow, leading research in molecular materials for energy and is a key member of the Molecular Materials Research Group. She leads a team of 8 York-based researchers (3 PhD students, 2 postdoctoral research fellows, 3 undergraduates) as well as 2 final-year PhD students at Durham University, whose activities range between organic & supramolecular chemistries, advanced spectroscopies, electrochemistry and energy device fabrication to develop a holistic interdisciplinary approach towards the rational design of 'multidimensionally conjugated' electroactive materials.

Thanking Dr Avestro for the work she has done for students this year, Laura Kennedy of YUSU Student Voice said, 'It has been a challenging year unlike no other, but the 70% increase in Excellence Award nominations is a credit to the effort and dedication you and your colleagues have put in for the students of York.'

Dr Avestro said: "Thank you to everyone who nominated me, I am delighted. I view the award as being about the whole team, since they are certainly the ones who enable me to do my best!"



Funding wins more time for THYME

A regional collaborative project has won funding to continue for another year.



A project led by the University of York to boost the region's bioeconomy has been granted funding of £1.8m from Research England to continue its work for another year.

Collaboration

The [THYME project](#) is a collaboration between the Universities of York, Hull and Teesside. It aims to develop innovation and boost productivity in the region by strengthening relationships between academics and

industry, and enables scientific projects to progress to real-world commercial opportunities.

The project is delivered in partnership with the [Biorenewables Development Centre \(BDC\)](#) and [BioVale](#).

BDC Director Joe Ross said: "For the past three years, the engagement and enthusiasm of all the staff across the three Universities has been exceptional. We have found new and innovative ways to work together and to reach out to bio-based businesses and other regional stakeholders."

THYME has recently awarded the three universities a further £1m to develop 20 projects with industry to drive growth in the region's bioeconomy and help tackle some of society's most pressing challenges. One company supported by THYME is York-based Starbons. Its Chief Executive Officer Susan Bench explained how the project had helped develop the company.

Specialist

She said: "Via THYME proof of concept funding we were able to access specialist equipment and expertise at the BDC and Teesside University, to successfully develop our methodology of using damaged starch for the potential use in preserving vitamins and also in the fabrication of novel Starbon® products. We are also delighted to have received further funding and are now working on the next steps to scale up our research."

THYME is part of a multi-million investment package to drive university commercialisation across the country through Research England's Connecting Capability Fund (CCF). The additional funding for the project will run from July 2021 until June 2022.

New starters



George Clarke, Research Associate in Catalysis

Room: C/E114, C/E102 & C/E110; Ext: 2584/2563/2541; Email: george.clarke@york.ac.uk

Ryan Pound, Research Associate in Modelling Chemistry at the Air-Sea Interface

Room: C/G116; Ext: 4758; Email: ryan.pound@york.ac.uk

Green Impact Triple Award Success for Green Chemistry

The Green Chemistry Centre of Excellence (GCCE) has won three top prizes in this year's NUS Green Impact Awards, including Platinum Awards for both Labs and Offices.



Ryan Barker (centre) pictured with Will Pointer and Ewan Ward

Platinum, the new highest level for the Green Impact Awards, was introduced this year and the Green Chemistry team is among its first winners - as well as being the only team to win two Platinitums. Making it a triple win, third-year PhD Student Ryan Barker, who led the Green Impact team in Green Chemistry has won the overall Sustainability Hero Award, for "the person who has shown drive and enthusiasm within their team to encourage others and demonstrate sustainable good practice."

Ryan said, "I am delighted that Green Chemistry has won Platinum for both Labs and Offices. A huge thank you to Will Pointer and Ewan Ward for their help in achieving the awards this year, and to previous members who built the foundations over the years to help us achieve our awards to date. Thank you to those who nominated me for the Sustainability Hero Award, it is very much appreciated."

Dr Avtar Matharu, Deputy Director of the [Green Chemistry Centre of Excellence](#) said, "Congratulations to all involved. This year's triple success is a remarkable achievement."

[Green Impact](#) is a national programme which rewards green habits in the workplace, this year celebrating its tenth year. It is run by the National Union of Students on behalf of the University.

ChemInventory

The Department has recently purchased ChemInventory, a digital platform designed specifically for managing chemical stocks and inventories (as the name suggests), which has gone live this week! Its features include:

- ability to search by structure / name / CAS
- ability to locate up-to-date safety information
- barcode integration

Group users can access their own chemical inventories via their University login details on computers, tablets or mobile phones. Contact [Jing Wood](#) for further information on setting up your group inventory.

Sponsored Cycle for St John Ambulance - update



A small group of cyclists including Dr David Pugh and Dr Adrian Whitwood completed the 100 km ride on Saturday 3 July from Bridlington to York. We followed the Way of the Roses route which uses Sustrans routes 1, 66 and 164 which means it was nearly all on quiet country lanes. The weather was variable with some heavy showers over the Wolds, but we all made it safely to York. We stopped off en route at Driffield for lunch and for an ice cream in Pocklington, doing some fund-raising whilst we were there. Everyone enjoyed the ride and we're even starting to plan another for next year - possibly going all the way from the west coast to the east coast. Keep an eye out next year!



So far we've made nearly £900 so a big thank-you to everyone who has sponsored us. It's still not too late to sponsor us if you wish, [please visit the JustGiving page](#).

Adrian Whitwood