The Pendulum – Autumn 2026
Issue 28



Welcome to the first Physics newsletter of the new academic year, and my first as Head of Department. It has been a busy few weeks since the start of term, with a record number of undergraduates starting on our courses, a new cohort of graduate students, and some new staff as well. It is a joy to see the corridors busy with so many smiling faces.

Reflecting on this, I would like to begin thanking Professor Mark Newton for his leadership of Physics over the past five years, and for the enormous contribution he has made to the department during that time. He has left the department in a good place: we have large cohorts of excellent students, strong research income despite the challenging funding conditions, and we are delivering exciting science, some of which features in this issue. Importantly, we are also a friendly, collegiate and collaborative community that takes pride in the many achievements of our students and staff.

With the start of the academic year, I'd like to highlight a few changes in staff roles. James Lloyd-Hughes will be our new Deputy Head for Research, taking over from Steve Dixon in January (thanks, Steve!). Claire Hurley has taken on the role of Director of Graduate Studies, following Elizabeth Stanway, who is now the Head of the Astronomy and Astrophysics cluster (and thanks to Danny Steeghs for his work in that role). There are a couple of other changes in cluster leadership: Nick Hine is now Head of Theory (thanks to Julie Staunton), and Tony Arber is now Cluster Head for the Centre for Fusion, Space and Astrophysics. Sincere thanks must go to Sandra Chapman, who has led CFSA since founding it, with much support along the way from Richard Dendy. We also have a new undergraduate admissions tutor, Dan Bayliss; a new senior tutor for second-year students, Yorck Ramachers; and a new exam coordinator, David Quigley.

The start of the academic year always brings a burst of energy to campus as the new students arrive. This year, our burst was more intense than normal, with nearly 340 first-year undergraduates in Physics. I would like to thank our staff for adapting quickly and smoothly to this larger-than-expected influx. The smooth running of the first few weeks of term was due to a huge amount of work from key people behind the scenes, including our student office, Tom Hase, Michael Pounds, Nick d'Ambrumenil, and others. It is important that we give all our students our full support. With that in mind, thanks also to all who took part in the personal tutor training. Our personal tutorial system is a core component of our degree programmes, providing valuable in-person interactions between staff and students that allow us to share our love of Physics while supporting students both educationally and pastorally.

This time of year is also the start of our promotion and academic leave processes. Promotions are one way in which we celebrate staff success, and it was great to see so many promotions last academic year (see later in this issue). For staff considering applying, or who just want to know more, there are workshops and online resources available to help with the process.

As the weather turns and the shorter days set in, we move towards Christmas and the annual Christmas lectures (get your tickets!). This is one of the many outreach activities supported by the department, with other examples featured later in the newsletter. It is a joy to see staff and students sharing their love of Physics.

As ever, all contributions to the newsletter are welcome and we love hearing good news stories! Please share any items of interest with physicsadmin@warwick.ac.uk.

Best wishes,
Neil

Dr Adam Wright awarded prestigious ERC Starting Grant



Dr Adam Wright has been awarded an ERC Starting Grant of €2 million to investigate one of chemistry's strangest recent discoveries: that reactions can behave differently simply when taking place between two mirrors.

Find out more by reading the full press release.

Semiconductor research showcased at two of the world's leading physics and metrology conferences

For decades, the International Conference on the Physics of Semiconductors (ICPS) and Conference on Precision Electromagnetic Measurements (CPEM) have helped shape two closely connected fields: semiconductor physics and the science of precision electrical measurement. During August and September 2026, Warwick's Semiconductors Research Group carried its research from Tokyo to Madrid, contributing nine presentations at ICPS before taking centre stage with a keynote lecture at CPEM.

Find out more.

Dr Dinu Iuga becomes first technical specialist promoted to Strategic Specialist

The University of Warwick is celebrating a significant milestone with the promotion of Dr Dinu Iuga, who has become the first technical specialist at the University to be promoted to Strategic Specialist, a role equivalent to Professorial level.



Dr Iuga achieved his promotion through Warwick's Technical Specialist Promotional Pathway, the second initiative of its kind in the UK. Since its launch in 2023, the pathway has supported 38 successful promotions across 10 departments over three annual rounds, recognising the vital contribution of technical specialists to the University's research and innovation excellence.

Find out more.

Black hole feeding frenzy ends in cosmic indigestion

A study providing one of the most detailed optical records of a black hole outburst has been published in Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society (MNRAS).

The study led by Dr Noel Castro Segura used the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope (VLT) to follow the newly discovered black hole system. The study shows as the black hold consumes gas from a nearby star, it simultaneously launches some of that material back into space in the form of jets and winds.

Find out more by reading the full press release.

Astronomers find a world reborn from its star's ashes

A team of astronomers, led by Jamie Williams (PhD student) have identified the first second-generation planet ever found around a white dwarf.

The study funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and published in Nature Astronomy, focuses on the white dwarf HS 0209+0832. White dwarfs are usually known to pull in nearby material from planets, which are detected in their atmosphere, however, this discovery shows that a second generation of planets can form around this much more stellar remnant. Read the full press release.



Medieval 'guest star' reveals its secrets after nearly 850 years

Assistant Professor Dr Timothy Cunningham has worked alongside an international team to reveal the most detailed view of Pa 30, the likely remnant of a supernova documented in 1181.

More than eight centuries later, images from the Gemini North telescope on Maunakea in Hawai'i have revealed Pa 30, the likely remains of that explosion, in unprecedented detail. They show about ten times more filamentary structure than previously seen. Read the full press release.



Find out more about the PicoBot

Professor Emma MacPherson and her team have created the PicoBot – the first and only robot of its kind in the world. Each year, there are around 18,300 new cases of melanoma skin cancer diagnosed in the UK, highlighting the urgent need for earlier and more accurate detection. Spotting skin cancer is not always straightforward, and it can be difficult for surgeons to know exactly how far it has spread beneath the skin before operating. Watch the video to find out more.



Ever wonder what our alumni community are up too?

Amy Elliot completed the MSc Physics (2012-2016) and went on to undertake Research at the University of Oxford. After Her research, she secured a role as a Laser Protection Adviser (LPA) and Radiation Protection Officer (RPO).

Watch the video to find out more.



New roles for academic staff in the department

We congratulate and welcome the following colleagues to new roles:

Professor James Lloyd-Hughes as the new Deputy Head of Department (Research), replacing Professor Steve Dixon.

Research Cluster Heads:

- Professor Elizabeth Stanway as the new Head of Astronomy and Astrophysics, replacing Professor Danny Steeghs.
- Professor Tony Arber as the new Head of Centre for Fusion, Space and Astrophysics (CFSA), replacing Professor Sandra Chapman.
- Professor Nick Hine as the new Head of Theoretical Physics Group, replacing Professor Julie Staunton.

Academic responsibilities:

- Dr Claire Hurley as the new Director of Postgraduate Studies, replacing Professor Elizabeth Stanway.
- Professor Dan Bayliss as the new Undergraduate Admissions Tutor, replacing Professor James Lloyd-Hughes.
- Professor David Quigley as the new Exams coordinator, replacing Professor Neil Wilson.

Staff starters and leavers (30th June – 30th September)

The department welcomes:

Robert Airey

Jiayi Chen

Tim Cunningham

Ola Grendal

Claire McKeown

Seyed Mostafa Latifi

Xuejun Lu

David Morris

Adil Safeer

We say thank you and luck to:

Chris Cook

Neetesh Dhakar

Abbigail Elms

Behzad Jazizadeh

Jessica Marshall

Pooneh Nazari

Alex Newman

Tim Pearce

Nashra Pistawala

Paula Izquierdo Sanchez

William Scully

Valeriia Zhovkovska

Staffing updates

Within the professional services and Technical teams, we would like to welcome the following team members.



Jiayi Chen
Projects Coordinator - P5.58



Claire McKeown
Administrative Officer (HR) - P5.66



David Morris
Digital Communications Officer - P5.65

Congratulations to Mike Crosbie and Ewan Jewkes on their promotions within the Technical team and thank you to Keith Jewkes for all his support with statutory compliance and Health and Safety over the last few years.



Mike Crosbie



Ewan Jewkes



Keith Jewkes

We are currently in the process of filling the following three vacant posts: Programmes Assistant (UG & PG), Administrative Assistant and Deputy Technical and Building Services Manager.

Academic promotions

Congratulations to the following staff who have been promoted this year (commencing 1st August):

- David Armstrong – Professor
- Daniel Bayliss - Professor
- Oier Bikondoa- Associate Professor (Research focussed)
- Heather Cegla- Professor (Research focussed)
- Michael Crosbie- Technical/Facilities Officer
- Dinu Iuga- Strategic Technical Specialist
- Jiachen Jiang- Assistant Professor (Teaching focussed)
- James McCormac- Associate Professor (Research focussed)
- Farzana Meru- Professor
- Rebecca Milot – Professor
- Michael Pounds- Associate Professor (Reader) (Teaching focussed)
- Alex Roberston-Associate Professor (Reader)
- Colin Stephen- Assistant Professor (Research focussed)
- Anjana Wijesekara- Assistant Professor (Research focussed)
- Gloria Zhao- Assistant Professor (Research focussed)

Staff profiles



Name, Job title: David Morris (He / His), Digital Communications Officer for Department of Chemistry and Physics

My role involves: Looking at digital communication strategies across the whole department, especially around website management and social media. I will be looking to optimise and create digital content to engage with prospective and current students, showcase our research and expertise, and improve our overall digital presence. Some of the areas I will be focussing on include website and content management and strategies, user experience (UX), search engine optimisation (SEO) and web accessibility.

My career history: I've spent my career in various web, digital and marketing roles, with 12 of those years at Warwick. The majority of that time was as a Digital Marketing Officer for the Campus and Commercial Services Group (CCSG) where I managed the websites for the University businesses including Sport, Conferences, Food Group and more. I've also worked on web projects for REF and sustainability for the University.

My role included managing all aspects of the business's websites such as site structure, user experience (UX), search engine optimisation (SEO), content, news and blogs and also appearing in the occasional last-minute promotional video and photos.

When not at work, you can find me: Outdoors, most probably running (5k and half-marathons) and also spending time with my family hiking, paddleboarding and camping. You can also talk to me about Pixar movies and Lego.

View the other new staff profiles.

Sutton Trust summer school

The department marked a major milestone during the final week of July by hosting its first-ever Sutton Trust Physics & Astronomy Summer School.

Led by Dr Lauren Doyle, with support from Dr David Brown and Ally Caldecote, the residential programme brought 20 Year 12 students from schools across England to the university for an immersive experience of Physics, Astronomy and university life.



Find out more by reading the full story.

New Seed Fund launched

We are pleased to share that a new Department of Physics seed fund is now available to support projects, initiatives and activities that support inclusion in the department.

The fund is open to all staff and students within the Department of Physics. Further information about the fund, including eligibility criteria and application guidance can be found on the webpage: Seed Funding

We're looking for role models in the department

As part of the department's ongoing inclusion work, we aim to highlight the diversity of people who make our department a place where everyone can feel a sense of belonging. From research to technical roles, to teaching, we want to showcase the wide range of experiences, backgrounds, and pathways that shape our community, and inspire future members of the department. Find out more about our role models.

New award conferrals

Congratulations to the following people who have been awarded a Doctor of Philosophy in Physics:

Ioannis Apergis	Yilun Gao
Martin Cafolla	Aidan Horne
Alastair Claringbold	Rebecca Meadowcroft
Anna-Maria Cutolo	Morgan Mitchell
Sourav Das	Sergio Ramirez Ramirez
Ginger Frame	Freya Watson

Amplify 2026

In September, the department was delighted to welcome The Blackett Lab Family (BLF) to Warwick as hosts of their annual Amplify Symposium, bringing together Black and mixed-Black undergraduate physicists from across the UK.

Held on 10-11th September, Amplify is designed to provide a dedicated space for participants to build networks, explore shared experiences as Black physicists, and gain confidence as they consider future pathways.

This year's event welcomed 30 undergraduate students from universities across the UK, alongside 15 speakers and members of the BLF organising committee. The programme, developed and delivered by The Blackett Lab Family, featured a mix of inspiring talks, interactive workshops and opportunities for discussion and group presentations. Warwick colleagues supported the event with on-the-ground coordination and logistics, helping to ensure a welcoming and engaging experience.

The department's relationship with The BLF began when they were invited, and delivered a successful session on 'belonging in physics' at the Conference for Undergraduate Women and Non-Binary Physicists (CUWiP+) 2025, hosted at Warwick. After enjoying their experience at the conference and engaging with the department, the BLF team approached Warwick about hosting Amplify 2026.

Hosting Amplify reflects the department's ongoing commitment to creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome, valued and supported.



Images show attendees networking at the event, and the Ghanaian buffet lunch organised by The Blackett Lab Family.

Inclusion and Engagement Matters

Inclusion:

The last few months have seen the setting up of some new inclusion activities, supported by the Inclusion Committee. You can read about the Amplify conference earlier in this newsletter, which helped with our aim to showcase more diverse role models in physics and in the department. If you'd like to be focused as one of our departmental role models, please fill in the form. We would like to show different career paths into and through physics, and a wide range of different people.

If you would like to know more about inclusion, or enhance your skills, the Social Inclusion team run a set of workshops. These cover the basics of inclusion (Conscious Inclusion), through managing teams and disagreements, to providing adjustments for supporting staff and students. Find out more and book onto a workshop.

Outreach:

The Warwick Christmas Lectures are happening again! Tickets are available from the Arts Centre.

If you would like to be more involved in outreach, there are loads of opportunities – from helping to support school visits, going to talk at the Hearsall Family Science Club (email Dmitrii Kolotkov D.Kolotkov.1@warwick.ac.uk), running workshops, or even preparing a Christmas Lecture for next year.

We have a form available here which will be using to match people with outreach requests, so fill in your details and let us know what you can offer. We would love to support you with showcasing the great research you do – and you can help us reach a much larger audience to show them how awesome physics is.

Training and Development opportunities

The department encourages all staff to take up to 5 development days per year. The university offers a wide range of courses designed to support you at every stage of your career, whatever your role or experience.

Explore the courses and training available via the Talent and Development team.

Coaching is also available to all colleagues across the university. Coaches are trained members of staff who hold a recognised coaching qualification. Find out more about becoming a coach or finding a coach to support you.

Upcoming Dates

Anyone can add an event to the Physics calendar. Let us know if you can help out at our Open Days.

Physics Postgraduate Research Evening – Monday 9th November

Christmas Lectures – Wednesday 2nd December

Christmas Lectures – Thursday 3rd December

Department of Physics Christmas Lunch – Tuesday 15th December

Reminder of finance rules

Please be reminded that financial rules that were put in place in 2024/25 will continue into the 2026/27 academic year.

What spend is permitted?

- Spend on external research project codes/ internal project codes.
- Support for UG teaching, delivery of UG and PG admissions.
- Support for ongoing PhD projects if not R funded.
- Recruitment costs to fill vacant posts e.g. advertising costs, interview expenses, relocation.
- Spend against academic start-up funds.
- Purchase of necessary IT and equipment- but think recycle/reuse.
- Spend against discrete income (e.g. cash from industry partner for activity) to group discretionary account.

What is not permitted without permission?

- Spend that could be charged to a research grant.
- Routine spend on group discretionary accounts - to include:
    - Costs associated with travel to conferences & meetings (UK and overseas).
    - Entertainment costs for routine internal/ group events.
    - Spend on IT/equipment where items can be recycled within group.
- Catering for routine group/ department meetings.
- Spend on non-essential infrastructure/equipment.

As you will be aware alcoholic drinks cannot be charged to research grants. All contracts, including those with Warwick Conferences, require departmental approval and authorisation before proceeding. Staff must not sign any external contracts themselves.

If you have any queries, please contact physicsfinance@warwick.ac.uk

Welcome Week and Induction

We are pleased to welcome a record number of undergraduate students into the Physics department this year. It was great to see new students filling L3 during Welcome Week, where they found out more about their courses and the department from staff, and lots of top tips from Physics Society (PhysSoc). Afterwards, the students enjoyed getting to know one another, playing games and having lunch in Panorama as part of their departmental induction.

Later in the week they met their personal tutors for a tour of the department and mini-tutorial and afterwards there was a buzz of chatter on the concourse over drinks and snacks.

Students: If you are still unsure about anything, please feel free to ask your personal tutor or pop into the Student Office (P5.22) and we'll do what we can to help.