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# Managing the administration of a world-leading Research Group at the University of Oxford

Sara Jolliffe

Mathematical Institute

Andrew Wiles Building

Radcliffe Observatory Quarter Woodstock Road

Oxford, OX2 6GG



# Mathematical Biology Research Group

## - Background

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- The Group was established by Professor James Murray FRS in 1983 and was the first of its kind in the United Kingdom.
- It was funded by a government grant with the remit to foster interdisciplinary collaboration in the newly established field of mathematical biology, and to grow the subject within the UK.
- It is now a world leading group in its field.



# Mathematical Biology Research Group

## - Background

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- The Research Group has grown in size over the past few years; now with six full-time faculty members, 12 Early Career Researchers and 30 Doctoral students.
- The key research themes are in developmental biology and disease (for example, cancer).
- Most research projects are jointly supervised with other departments, institutes or pharmaceutical industries.

# My Background

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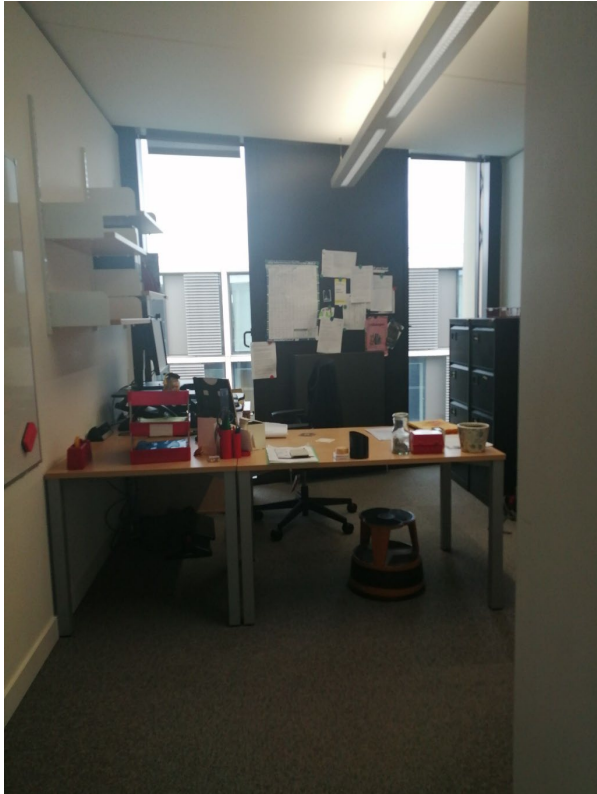
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- I joined the University in 2001 and worked for the Oxford Centre for Applied and Industrial Mathematics (OCIAM) and the Centre for Mathematical Biology
- As Mathematical Biology grew in size, I worked full-time for them – it is now the Wolfson Centre for Mathematical Biology.
- I have managed the Administration processes of the group for 22 years.
- I am now the Senior Research Group Assistant, and manage a team of six Research Group Assistants

# Senior Research Group Assistant

## The role

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- Finance
- IT
- Visitors
- Graduate Admissions
- Seminars
- Student Welfare
- ...and bringing the group together to create a welcoming and inclusive workplace!

- The University uses the same system for reconciling accounts for the general ledger and grants and running quarterly reports.
- The same system contains details of the University's preferred suppliers who offer discounted prices for their goods and services.

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- It is essential to make yourself aware of the financial rules/laws which may affect any financial processes. Check with your Central Department, and arrange team training if required.
  - Regularly review the budgets of any accounts that you are responsible for, keep good records and update your Finance Team (or accountants).
  - Always seek specialist advice early if you are unsure on any financial matter as the consequences can be great.
  - We have online systems to process expense claims, pay invoices, book travel, submit travel insurance details.



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- Contact your IT section to ascertain the University's and Department's IT regulations, and ensure that these are communicated to any new members of your Research Group
  - Ensure that all members have appropriate access to the IT services in the Department, including whether they might need any adjustments or equipment like ergonomic keyboards, multiple screens.
  - Ensure that you maintain accurate records and keep data securely, only sharing information with those who need to know (called GDPR legislation in the UK).

# Visitors

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- Make sure that you are familiar with the Immigration regulations/laws of your country and any Department regulations.
- If unsure, contact your HR Team for advice, who should be familiar with the regulations/laws.
- We have an online system which processes visitor applications quickly and efficiently.

# Visitors - Continued

- Send any relevant invitation letters to the visitors as they often require these for Visa applications.
- Ensure that you prepare for visitor arrival in good time, for example opening IT accounts and obtaining a building access card beforehand.
- Check with the Department about the procedure when a visitor arrives, will the Department need a photocopy of their Passports?

# Graduate Admissions

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- Be aware of the application deadlines so you can prepare for the applications when they are distributed and communicate these to the Faculty beforehand.
- Our Department does have a system in place whereby applications are uploaded and the links are circulated after the deadline date.
- Circulate the applications to your Faculty so they can consider these.

# Graduate Admissions - Continued

- Familiarize yourselves with the proposed interview dates and deadline dates for making decisions.
- Once the initial decisions have been made, send interview invites to the applicants.
- After the interviews, record the decisions and ensure that these are communicated to either the relevant section or to the Applicants direct.
- The Wolfson Centre for Mathematical Biology receives about 30 applications a year and 2-3 get funded.

# Seminars



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- Agree a seminar schedule, i.e. the same day and time each week.
  - Contact your Research Group for possible seminar names.
  - Compile a spreadsheet of possible names and circulate to your Faculty's Group.
  - Ascertain the budget so you are aware of how much to spend and this will affect who you invite.
  - Invite the agreed seminar speakers via email.

# Seminars - Continued

- Once the speakers have accepted the invitation, ascertain whether they will need accommodation and their travel arrangements.
- Book appropriate accommodation and maybe travel.
- Contact the speaker to obtain their title and abstract and advertise these on any appropriate webpages.
- Arrange a lunch between the speaker and host and contact the speaker a week before the seminar to confirm the arrangements.

# Events

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- Our Events are run by our Events Team.
- The organizers need to organize funding either by approaching sponsors for example, any publishers, apply for funding through grant funding bodies.
- Once funding has been organized, we approach our Events Team to book the room space and catering requirements.
- The organizers will draft a budget for costs.



# Events - Continued

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- Our Events Team offers discounts for room hire and catering costs.
  - Our Events Team has a food brochure from which the organizers can choose their catering requirements.
  - The Events Team will take care of all the arrangements including setting up Conference Accounts for the delegates.
  - Oxford is lucky in that they can use the various colleges to host the various conference dinners.

# Student Welfare

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- About 1/3 of students have welfare issues.
- It is important to build a strong relationship with the students in order for them to feel comfortable to talk through any problems that they face with you.
- Always contact the Head of your Research Group to alert them about any student problems.

# Student Welfare – Continued

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- Liaise with your student welfare department to obtain advice on how to deal with welfare issues.
- It is important to note that the job in academia has changed over time in that the job is split into two parts; academic and welfare.

# Student and Group Interaction

- Our Group organizes a weekly tea once a week, during term time in our Common Room, so the students and group can interact with each other.
- Our Group also organizes meals, drinks and other events, in the evenings on a regular basis.
- The Group has a puzzle table in our waiting area, which is used for students to interact with each other.



# Community Feel of the Wolfson Centre for the Mathematical Biology

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- The Group has an active visitor programme and welcomes many visitors over the year.
- The majority of the visitors comment on the warm and community feel of the Group.
- My role plays an important part in this community feel and many visitors have commented on how helpful and welcoming I have been to them when they first arrive.



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Any Questions?