SULSA
Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance

POST-ACADEMIC CAREERS CASE STUDIES

UNIVERSITY ROLES

HEAD OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

SULSA
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Mhairi Stewart

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

I completed 3 post-doctoral research posts in Scotland, Germany, and then back in Scotland. I enjoyed the subject area, but started to fall out of love for the research activity itself. On reflection I fully believe this disenchantment was due to my character not being suited to prolonged focus on one project.

To make up for this I developed my interest and experience in facilitating public engagement. This started with single deliveries, then larger projects and eventually ended up with winning larger grants and awards. This culminated in writing the public engagement strategy for a successful core grant for my research unit and finally taking up my current position as public engagement lead for St Andrews University. A role I love and which brings daily challenges that inspire me.

What does your current job entail?

As Head of Public Engagement with Research my role is one of advising, facilitation, training, network building, and mentoring. I create, innovate and identify the structures and processes that support individual researchers, research teams, Schools and Professional Service Units, and the Institution to deliver high quality engagement with our wider communities. I manage a team of 2 PE officers, with a view to enabling a culture of engagement throughout the institutional framework, not just with researchers but also with research and professional staff. The team also supports public engagement professionals embedded within research groups and schools, leads on high profile events (e.g. Cell Block Science, Explorathon), including submitting the funding proposals, project management, and evaluation of these events and programmes, and contributes to institutional, and occasionally, wider strategy on engagement.

What is the best part of your current role?

Variety. In my current role we are running multiple projects, including their development, funding, delivery, and evaluation. All of these feed into the larger strategic aim of creating an environment supporting world class engagement activity in all its infinite forms.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

1 Being able to understand individual and institutional policy drivers, and how to use these to inspire and influence.

2 Being able to make genuine contacts and connections from the Principal to an undergraduate student, and in professional service units from Estates to Research Impact.

3 Being imaginative and proactive.

"Think laterally about your career..."

Mhairi's Advice

Consider what actually drives you. While supervisors and line managers have a duty to be aware of opportunities and advise accordingly, it is down to you and no one else to make yourselves aware of the diversity of opportunity.

Teaching (from primary to tertiary), research management and administration, academic and governmental research and research policy, science writing and editorial opportunities, research funding and management within and out-with funding bodies and, of course, public engagement are not second choices. Without these support roles research would be impossible to sustain.

So, be self-aware. Stay open to opportunity and don't chase a vanishing horizon –not the same I hasten to add as not trying hard enough to reach that horizon. Subscribe to a few mailing lists that you are marginally interested in. Chase what you are not just good at but love doing. It isn't always obvious or easy but in my experience it is always worthwhile.

PhD Studied
Parasitology
University of Glasgow

PhD Completion
2003

Current Job
Head of Public Engagement with Research at University of St Andrews

HEAD OF RESEARCH SERVICES

SULSA
Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance

David Fergusson

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

Since completing my post-doc at the University of Glasgow focusing on fundamental biomedical and drug discovery research into parasitical diseases and cancer, and developing and teaching MSc module in basic molecular biology for nursing staff, I've had the following jobs:

- *Bioinformatics Development & Consulting, Aneda Biocomputing Ltd*

- *Deputy Director, National e-Science Centre, University of Edinburgh:* The National e-Science Centre (NeSC) is a national institute supporting the adoption of advanced IT technologies to support all aspects of research in the UK.

- *CEO BioIT Limited:* BioIT has the aim of providing distributed computing expertise in a variety of domains, including supporting bioscience.

- *Visiting lecturer, University of Greenwich*

- *Head of Scientific Computing, Francis Crick Institute:* Taking full responsibility for developing, organising, implementing and delivery of the core scientific computational services of the Crick.

What does your current job entail?

I am currently Head of Research Services at the University of Edinburgh. This involves leading research infrastructure projects, which will underpin the University's world-class 5* research. Delivering a rich e-infrastructure environment of large institutional scale computational services, a blend of enterprise scale and specialist data services, and associated outreach, support and consultancy services.

What is the best part of your current role?

Engaging with research activity and ensuring the correct resources are available for research to proceed without being limited by computing or data storage limitations.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

1 Technical IT Skills

2 Project Management Skills

3 A deep understanding of the research process

"Remember that there is more than just the core academic route"

David's Advice

Keep options open, remember that there is more than just the core academic route in your area of interest.

PhD Studied
Biochemistry-Ecotoxicology
University of Reading

PhD Completion
1991

Current Job
Head of Research Services IT-I
University of Edinburgh

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Allison Jackson
@allijjackson

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

After my PhD in Melbourne, I did postdoctoral research for eight years in Paris, Sydney, then Glasgow. I was flirting with the idea of starting my own lab (I'd had an interview and also applied for a fellowship – both unsuccessful), but I realised that I was less interested in the nitty-gritty details of the science, and more interested in the broad 'business' of research. Plus, the things that I was good at, I could take away from my job as a postdoc and use in other jobs that I felt were more suited to me. After a lot of soul-searching, I decided I wanted to stay close to research and remain working in a University. Once I made this decision, I told everyone that I was looking for a change, and when the Research and Communications Manager at Glasgow Polyomics (an omics research facility at Glasgow Uni) became available, several people suggested to me that I should apply for it. I worked really hard to get that job, I studied hard over a couple of months, talked to many people about the position and the facility, and I started working there early 2015.

I knew about SULSA (vaguely) and I knew that it was relocating under a new Director from Dundee to Glasgow. I thought that the job might be beyond my experience (after all I had only been out of the lab for 2.5 years), but I decided to go for it anyway as it sounded really exciting and would expand my skill-set. When I was offered this position (a promotion), I negotiated a 50/50 split and corresponding promotion with the Polyomics job. I have worked for SULSA since 2016.

I have absolutely loved both positions – they have been a fantastic learning experience and have been so varied so I have developed a wide range of skills and knowledge, as well as a huge network. When the Head of Research Operations position became available at Glasgow Uni, I felt that it was a chance to bring in all my experience together under one position, and the prospect of working with a large team of really engaged research management professionals appealed to me. It was also an opportunity to be part of senior central university management which I believe will be important for my future career.

What does your current job entail?

I currently have two 0.5 FTE positions – Executive Director of the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA), and as Research Development Manager at The University of Glasgow.

As SULSA's Executive Director I am responsible for driving the strategic direction for SULSA and ensuring the associated activities are implemented successfully. SULSA aims to enhance Scotland's vibrant life sciences research community by improving opportunities for collaboration, funding and career development. I advanced an active early researcher development programme, and we support research in strategic areas via seed-funding calls. We represent the Scottish Life Sciences research sector in policy issues – which I lead on. I regularly visit our (11) partner universities to keep them up-to-date in changes in the research landscape and potential opportunities, and to find out about their exciting research activities.

As Research Development Manager I have two key roles: one as the Manager of Glasgow Polyomics – an omics research facility which has metabolomics, proteomics and NGS labs, plus a team of bioinformaticians and data analysts. I am responsible for ensuring the smooth-running of the facility, financial success (we have to be self-sustainable), and I lead on strategic planning and administration. I am also responsible for the University's Wellcome Institutional Strategic Support Fund (ISSF), a strategic block grant from the Wellcome Trust that is used to stimulate and embed strategic culture change. Our ISSF activities include supporting translational research, public engagement, early career researcher support, and diversity and inclusion activities.

I will be starting a new position as the Head of Research Operations at The University of Glasgow in summer 2019 – this job is responsible for implementing the University's research strategies and policies. I will be overseeing the teams responsible for research assessment, research impact, researcher development, postgraduate training, fellowships, research misconduct, and research communications.

PhD Studied	PhD Completion	Current Job
Parasitology University of Melbourne	2006	Executive Director, SULSA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SULSA
Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance

Allison Jackson
@allijjackson

What is the best part of your current role?

I love interacting with people from all over Scotland from lots of different backgrounds – be that research, research management, policy, learned societies, funders and industry. It is really interesting to be connected with so many different inspiring people who are all supporting the Scottish research landscape in various ways. I am continually learning things as well which I enjoy, and no day is the same. I feel like I am making a difference to researchers and their careers.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

1 Excellent communication skills (both written and oral)

2 Strong negotiating and influencing skills

3 Broad understanding of the research landscape (research assessment, researcher development, government and funder policy, strategic research areas, understanding the way research is funded and how this is changing)

"Make sure you really think about what your transferrable skills are - it may not be obvious to you, but they are there"

Alli's Advice

I am passionate about showing people the wide range of options available for researchers looking to move beyond the lab – hence I started this Post-Academic Careers Showcase!

If you are interested in a job – go and speak to the people involved (both centrally and peripherally). You will get a much better insight about the role and it will help with your application/interview prep. Make sure you really think about what your transferrable skills are – it may not be obvious to you, but they are there. Also – if you want to get into research management, you need to be doing more than just standard lab work. You have to show you are serious about moving out of the lab. Think about doing extra activities like public engagement, organising seminars/conferences/forums, blogging, social media, attending policy conferences etc. Networking is also key! You need to get out and about and make it known you are looking for a job.

Although I don't regret the time I spent as a postdoc, as it gave me a fantastic understanding of what the challenges are in a research career which I utilise every day in my current positions, if I had known more about research management jobs I may have made the jump sooner. That being said, I think these types of jobs are much more common now, and also more visible. You need to be proactive though – don't expect these jobs to fall in your lap. Taking a maternity cover position (at potentially a lower grade) is a good way of getting direct experience – everyone that has worked for me in a maternity cover has gone on to secure a better, long-term position afterwards. See if you can find an unofficial mentor to help you when you want to move out of research – they can give you advice, help you shape your CV and might know of posts coming up, or suggest people to talk to. Sign up to Research Professional Jobs to see what is out there. Finally – if you feel yourself stagnating, getting bored or feeling like you have stopped learning, or if you feel like you have done what you can with the role, it's time for a change!!!

PhD Studied	PhD Completion	Current Job
Parasitology University of Melbourne	2006	Executive Director, SULSA

FACILITY MANAGER

SULSA
Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance

Rebecca Saleeb

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

My PhD was in biophysics, using and helping to develop advanced imaging techniques to address problems in cell biology. This gave me a really good start in optical microscopy even though my background was cell biology. After my PhD, I went straight into facility management. My first role was managing the Edinburgh Super-Resolution Imaging Consortium at Heriot-Watt University for a 12-month maternity cover, after which I moved to the Champalimaud Foundation in Lisbon to work as an Imaging Specialist in their core facility. Though I would love to have stayed longer in each post, exposure to different institutes gave me great insight into different facility processes and challenges, experience with different imaging techniques and it helped me extend my network.

What does your current job entail?

I now manage the CMR Advanced Bio-imaging Facility at Queen Mary University of London. Like any imaging facility job, it is really diverse and there's always more I want to do than I can ever get done! A big element of the role is training microscope users, making sure the systems are working optimally and troubleshooting problems. However, the role also involves organising events and courses, testing new technologies, supporting image analysis, implementing new imaging methods, grant writing, collaborating with users, writing risk assessments, attending courses/conferences, developing and updating webpages and budget management/financial administration.

What is the best part of your current role?

I really enjoy its diversity; not just in terms of the tasks I do, but also in the science I support, which currently includes projects across neurobiology, biomaterials, cancer research, immunology and cardiovascular biology.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

1 Of course, a strong knowledge of imaging!

2 Problem solving and multi-tasking skills

3 The patience to teach

"Take advantage of the time, local expertise and resources you have to learn as much as possible!"

Rebecca's Advice

Firstly, be kind to yourself and patient with the process; I was tough on myself when new techniques wouldn't go smoothly right away, but troubleshooting the problems gave me invaluable knowledge that continues to help me teach others. Secondly, take advantage of the time, local expertise and resources you have to learn as much as possible! There is rarely another opportunity like it to learn and explore. If you think bio-imaging facility management might be for you, try to select roles that move out of your imaging comfort zone. Although the challenges faced by a scientist trying to achieve single molecule resolution are very different to the challenges of a scientist trying to track neurodevelopment in a live zebrafish model, both will come to you for advice.

PhD Studied	PhD Completion	Current Job
Biophysics Heriot-Watt University	2017	Bio-imaging Facility Manager, Queen Mary University of London

RESEARCH MANAGER

James Doonan
@doonanjames

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

Following my PhD, I worked as a post-doc at the University of Strathclyde from 2014 until 2018. In this time, I held six fixed-term contracts and despite loving the science, I decided it was time to begin looking at career paths that offered more security. Towards the end of my final fixed term contract I asked for my hours to be reduced to 2 days a week so that I could actively spend time looking for opportunities elsewhere that would help bolster my CV. This was when I was lucky enough to begin working at Glasgow Polyomics in the University of Glasgow as an Executive Assistant. For 6 months I worked two jobs and I quickly realised that the skills I had learned during my PhD and post-doc helped me excel in my new role. From there, I wanted to move into a role that combined my admin skills and built on my existing scientific knowledge. This led me to my current role as the Orthopaedic Research Manager in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

What does your current job entail?

As the Orthopaedic Research Manager, I am situated between the University of Glasgow and NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, and I am responsible for the clinical research in the Orthopaedic Department in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. This entails overseeing the clinical trials from inception, to funding, through the approvals and ethics maze, to site set up, recruitment, long-term follow up, study close out and dissemination of the research. However, day-to-day, my job is to make sure that the clinical trials are all ticking over, that the milestones are met, the finances are monitored and all stakeholders receive regular progress updates.

What is the best part of your current role?

The best thing about my job is that no two days are the same. When I worked as a post-doc, I was predominantly running the same series of assays for four years with only slight variations. In hindsight, I can't believe I didn't leave the lab earlier! However, in my new role I am constantly faced with new challenges which require different approaches to solve.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

1. Project Management
2. Interpersonal Skills
3. Problem Solving

"Leaving academia does not equal failure! There's so much success and job satisfaction to be had out of the lab"

Jamie's Advice

Don't underestimate your network. I've always found that people are more than happy to discuss their career and provide advice if you reach out.

Sign up to job alerts, even if you aren't looking for a job because it'll give you a better overview of what jobs are out there. You might find a dream job that you didn't know existed.

Leaving academia does not equal failure! There's so much success and job satisfaction to be had out of the lab and I wish that I had realised this sooner.

PhD Studied
Immunology
University of Glasgow

PhD Completion
2014

Current Job
Orthopaedic Research Manager
University of Glasgow

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT LEAD

Laura Wicks
@lcwicks

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

After 6 months off, I started a post-doc at Heriot-Watt University in early 2010. I was funded on various grants for five years. After the first three years, I took on the role of public engagement coordinator for my university, which was 50% of my time and core funded. After a period of maternity leave, and a year working 50% research, 50% public engagement, I then resigned from the research role and have since built my career in public engagement

What does your current job entail?

I am the public engagement lead at the same institution I started my post-doc, and I support, stimulate and promote public engagement within the institution. This has evolved to more of a strategic role and I now have team members for the more on the ground engagement. My job is very variable, from developing strategies, to support academics with research proposals, coordinating training, some event management, writing funding proposals, coordinating the PE network, sharing best practice….

What is the best part of your current role?

The variation in the job – no two days are the same and I have the freedom to pursue my ideas and bring best practice from the sector into the institution

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

1. Adaptability
2. Persistence
3. Ability to multi-task

"Look for opportunities in your institution to grow your skills and identify what you enjoy doing, and what drives you"

Laura's Advice

Look for opportunities in your institution to grow your skills and identify what you enjoy doing, and what drives you. Many of the skills in research are the same for this role – writing grant applications, learning new things, working in a team, exploring new ideas. There is a lot of banging your head against a wall, and things take a long time to change in universities but it's great to be part of the change. I find it really rewarding to know that what I am doing is benefitting the university and society.

PhD Studied
Marine Biology
Victoria University of Wellington

PhD Completion
2009

Current Job
Public Engagement Lead
Heriot-Watt University

PROJECT COORDINATOR

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Alexandrea MacPherson

"Your PhD gives you lots of highly transferable skills"

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

After I completed my PhD, my first and only academic post was for 1 year as a Post-doc Researcher at University of Glasgow Dental School. During this time, I realised that job security was important to me, and academia could never really offer me this and I made the decision to look into other avenues that could offer more security and perhaps where my output was directly related to my effort. Depending on the area you're in, the direct effort you put into science may only yield 10% results, and this takes its toll on you.

I started to look for jobs in Glasgow that contained the word 'research' in any capacity and found a job as a Research and Training Manager in the NHS, working in sexual health services. Here I managed all research and trials conducted by the service, helped write applications and manage funding, and ran a research training programme. This job enhanced the soft transferable skills gained through my PhD: communication, time management, problem solving etc.

After 2 years in the NHS, it was time to move on and luckily at the time the University of Glasgow had just introduced new project coordinator roles, helping manage the research portfolios of PIs. These roles incorporated my science background with admin experience, and were permanent- the holy grail of jobs for scientists. This is where I am now, 6 years after graduating from my PhD, in a job I never even knew could be an option.

What does your current job entail?

I have been a project coordinator for 3.5 years now. My job involves supporting 30+ PIs and managing their research portfolios; helping them apply for funding; completing all related admin with applications and awards; managing their finances; and being a contact for all things research.

What is the best part of your current role?

The job is mostly 9-5, this gives me back my evenings and weekends that were lost to science. The PIs I look after are very grateful- science never thanked me, whereas I am thanked daily for my work. The thanks and the fact that my effort readily translates to outputs means I have greater job satisfaction in this role than I did during my time at the bench.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

1. A good grasp of numbers
2. The ability to deal with varying personalities
3. The ability to prioritise workloads and deal with last minute issues

Alexandrea's Advice

When I was a PhD/Post doc I wish that I had known that research admin/ manager opportunities were open to me - I wouldn't have felt so scared of the future then. I now know there is an association of research managers and administrators (ARMA), working to acknowledge and support research admin and management jobs and make it a profession.
My top tips would be not to pigeon hole yourself and recognise that your PhD gives you lots of highly transferable skills: time management; the ability to plan and prioritise; the ability to adapt to competing demands; the flexibility to come up with contingency plans when it all goes wrong; communication skills- verbal and written; numeracy skills; experience in dealing with different personalities- which seems not worthy to note but is extremely important when working in a big organisation; evidence based thinking; the list goes on…..

PhD Studied
Immunology
University of Glasgow

PhD Completion
2012

Current Job
Project Coordinator
University of Glasgow

PROJECT MANAGER

Annya Bruce

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

Towards the end of my PhD I engineered a number of conversations with clinicians and clinical scientists working in the neuroscience field to help me understand the translational opportunities open to me post PhD. I really enjoyed my PhD in molecular imaging and gained a wealth of valuable experience but I knew fairly early on that my interests lay at the 'bedside', rather than the 'bench'.

After completing my PhD in 2012, I worked as a Clinical Research Assistant in the Department of Psychiatry, University of Edinburgh. As part of that role, I managed the local recruitment and assessments of patients enrolled in interventional (drug) and non-interventional (questionnaire) clinical studies. After two years in this patient facing role, I wanted to learn how clinical research studies were set up 'behind the scenes' and what the requirements were for testing drugs and medical devices in patients. I then moved to the ACCORD office in the University of Edinburgh where I worked closely with clinical investigators in the design, set up and management of phase I-IV clinical trials, in particular the facilitation of funding applications, protocol design and development, risk analysis, project timelines, safety reporting requirements and ethics and regulatory application review.

Although working to support research teams was very fulfilling and provided me with invaluable experience and connections with the UK regulator, funders, charities and key opinion leaders, I wanted to transition back into a research team to use my experience to drive 'our' clinical research agendas forwards. In 2015, I accepted a Project Manager position in the Centre for Inflammation Research, University of Edinburgh, and since then have been working with a fantastic multidisciplinary team focussed on designing and developing novel imaging technology to detect lung pathologies.

What does your current job entail?

I am currently a Project Manager in a large interdisciplinary research group, made up of biologists, clinicians, chemists, physicists, machine learners and engineers; developing revolutionary technology that will provide quick, in situ, in vivo diagnoses and management of lung diseases in the clinical environment. This grouping has received major investment from the EPSCR, MRC, BBSRC, CARB-X and Wellcome and is now at the stage of clinically testing and validating a fully integrated system to provide rapid detection of lung disease.

As part of this role, I am responsible for the management and delivery of impact driven pre-clinical and translational research grants (totalling £3.5M) which focus on developing new ways to detect and diagnose lung infection, cancer and scarring. This role involves the overall management of the award finances, milestones, timelines, staff, administration and Intellectual Property (IP) portfolio to ensure the success of each project.

I am also responsible for designing and managing a portfolio of complex first-in-human clinical studies to test the safety and performance of lead optimised components and systems. My role involves building national and international relationships with large med tech and pharmaceutical companies, funders and partnering academic institutions and contributing to the preparation of innovative clinical strategies and research proposals. I am also expected to manage the team's work schedules, keep up-to-date with fast paced research developments, represent the team internally and externally and develop commercialisation and business cases for the group's technology.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the team are now concentrating on developing a programme of pre-clinical and clinical research projects to interrogate the inflammatory signatures intrinsic to this disease. Specifically, I have been central to the design and set up of an Urgent Public Health badged clinical platform to test promising re-purposed therapies in COVID-19 patients. A tissue study that we have also set up in NHS Lothian to immunophenotype COVID-19 patients will help to inform the selection of these therapies.

Finally, I am also a co-founder of Prothea-X; a University of Edinburgh spin off

PhD Studied	PhD Completion	Current Job
Molecular Neuroscience University of Edinburgh	2012	Project Manager, University of Edinburgh

PROJECT MANAGER

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Annya Bruce

What is the best part of your current role?

Working with such a large, interdisciplinary and talented group of people, including patients, patient groups and patient representatives. I cannot think of another job that allows someone to work so closely with scientists, clinicians, patients, industry and academic leaders, regulators, ethics committees and funders to develop technology that could revolutionise patient care. I do feel very lucky working so closely with end users (patients, clinicians) as they are key to ensuring that the new technology we are developing addresses a clear and unmet clinical need.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

1 Organisation and communication skills are key to working across so many disciplines.

2 Problem solving is also an important quality

3 Flexibility - we are trying to overcome barriers and expedite translational pathways so we need to work in a very flexible manner with a large number of external and internal stakeholders.

Annya's Advice

I would recommend anyone to really think about what they are enjoying in their PhD/post doc and to focus on that. I really enjoyed interacting with clinical colleagues and understanding how the basic science directly impacted on the clinical care of patients, and that opportunity helped to open so many doors! If this isn't provided, or isn't immediately available, seek it out! Don't be afraid to contact people who you think may be able to help rather than stay on a path that you think you're 'supposed' to follow.

"Don't be afraid to contact people who you think may be able to help rather than stay on a path that you think you're 'supposed' to follow.

PhD Studied
Molecular Neuroscience
University of Edinburgh

PhD Completion
2012

Current Job
Project Manager,
University of Edinburgh

FACILITY MANAGER

SULSA
Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance

Alison Dun

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

This role was the first following my PhD. In many ways it was a matter of right place right time as I was finishing my PhD and my supervisor had just written a large grant to establish the Consortium. Saying that I do believe my extra-curricular activities during my PhD and the relationships I built meant I was considered for the role. During my PhD I ensured that I was involved in activities outside my research some paid and most voluntary these included: Medical Student Teaching, writing features and organising socials for the EuSci Magazine, running classroom sessions in schools in the Researcher in Residence scheme.

What does your current job entail?

My role as facility manager for Edinburgh Super Resolution Imaging Consortium (ESRIC) is multifaceted and involves both managerial as well as technical expertise. My day to day work involves training on the microscopes, assisting and advising on research projects, maintaining the lab and microscopes as well as analysis facilities, managing the finances and the booking software. I am responsible for all online communication (webpage and social media) which involves creating educational tools. I am required to present at neighbouring institutions as the person responsible for the facilities promotion, organise public outreach exhibitions and I organise events including the ESRIC Super-Resolution Summer School which is attended by people from all over the world. I also seek out and work on funding applications for the facility.

What is the best part of your current role?

This job requires a great deal of networking to be able to keep ESRIC 'on the map' in terms of advanced microscopy in the UK and the world. This is a part of the job I discovered I am most fond of, I connect with other academics, industry representatives and also artists and public engagement officers in a wide range of projects. As well as the networking the range of projects keeps the role interesting and allows you to meet and work with a diverse mix of people.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

1 Creativity. Working to establish a facility from the very beginning it is important to be able to think about ways to sustain and grow the facility and its reputation, this can take the form of bringing in money or creating events.

2 Problem Solving. Particularly when collaborating with researchers using high-end complex systems to generate high quality research, when things go wrong and the cells are dying on the microscope you need to think quickly!

3 Time Management. It is a juggling act with so many facets to the role, you need to be able to manage all of these, meet deadlines and keep the quality of the work high.

"Talk to people outside of the academic sphere, so facility staff, industry reps, public outreach staff and those within university administration"

Alison's Advice

I wish I had of known this was an option for me. I believed if you didn't want to be a PI then there was no point in doing a PhD. There are so many options following a PhD and being a facility manager (not just in microscopy) is one of them and is a growing career. My advice is to talk to people outside of the academic sphere, so facility staff, industry reps, public outreach staff and those within the University administration. I have had a few coaches and mentors and they have been the cornerstone of my career development, Universities can provide these or you can just ask someone to be a mentor! I did and they were more than happy to do it!

PhD Studied
Cellular Communication & Advanced Microscopy, University of Edinburgh

PhD Completion
2013

Job (at time)
Facility Manager, ESRIC