

Alan Murray

Assistant Principal Academic Support
Head of Research Institute for BioEngineering



My role(s)

- Lecturer to 1st and 3rd year students
- Assistant Principal Academic Support (50% FTE)
- Head of Research Institute for BioEngineering (30% FTE)
- Principal Investigator on Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Programme Grant, Implantable Microsystems for Personalised Anti-Cancer Therapy (IMPACT) (50% FTE)
- Supervisor of three PhD students

A typical week involves...

- Research management, teaching and various administrative/leadership tasks.
- Producing documents/presentations etc.
- Attending meetings.
- Delivering lectures and tutorials.

My Career Journey

2004 -	Assistant Principal, Academic Support	1991 - 1994	Reader, Department of Electrical Engineering
2012 - 2015	Dean of Students, College of Science and Engineering	1984 - 1991	Lecturer, Department of Electrical Engineering
2008 - 2012	Head of the School of Engineering	1981 - 1984	VLSI Designer, Wolfson Microelectronics Institute
2002 - 2008	Head of the Institute for Integrated Micro and Nano Systems	1980 - 1981	Research Fellow, Department of Physics, University of Edinburgh
1994 -	Professor of Neural Electronics	1978 - 1980	Research Fellow, Solid-State Physics, Chalk River Nuclear Laboratories

What has helped me progress

- Lots of luck – predominantly good, very occasionally bad!
- An early academic “hero” and role model in Professor Ken Bowler, Physics.
- The change from Physics to Electronics was driven by lack of academic opportunities in Physics in the early 1980s.
- Everything else has been a combination of opportunities, persistence and luck in collaborating with some very talented and clever colleagues and PhD students.



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Supportive people

The late Professor Peter Denyer, who mentored me as a new lecturer in Electronics. He helped me to develop a research agenda that involved collaborating with him, but on a distinct area that was my own. I have tried to do that with my own Research Assistants and postgraduates.

Personal qualities needed for success

- Persistence/resilience – ability to move on from rejected research proposals
 - Flexibility – ability to perform research, teach and lead/administer all at the same time
 - Enthusiasm for collaboration
 - Strong interest in a subject area for both research and teaching
 - Empathy with and a liking of students.
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The rewards

Research	working with clinicians, scientists and social scientists toward a major interdisciplinary goal.
Teaching	sounds cheesy, but interacting with a new group of eager learners every year is exhilarating, especially when they turn out to be smarter than I am.
Leadership	being allowed to work on elements of the University's business that are likely to have long-term effects. These are primarily reward/staff recruitment processes and the associated HR systems that influence the nature of the staff we have here and their behaviour.

The challenges

As Assistant Principal	a long history of unbalanced esteem and reward between teaching and research. This leads to a deeply-ingrained "research is all" culture that is now not in keeping with the current strategy of and demands upon the University.
As a Head of Institute	bringing all institute members to their optimal level of research productivity and satisfaction in their work.
As a researcher	doing what we said we would do! The goal we have set (improving cancer treatment using smart sensor technology) is exciting, ambitious and therefore occasionally terrifying.
As a lecturer	balancing the needs of students to be educated, inspired, enquiring and able to pass exams. Also finding time to spend with students at the level that they deserve and need.

The next step

Retirement!

Ways of supporting others

- Meaningful conversations in annual reviews
- Meaningful conversations about careers etc, informally
- Ensuring that early-career academics build a research and teaching portfolio that is both distinctive and useful.



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