A message from the Dean of Psychology

Professor Mark N.O. Davies

Research lies at the heart of our activity in the School of Psychology and the University of East London (UEL). Our dynamic engagement with research ensures we are at the cutting edge of knowledge production, and so significantly enhances the quality of our academic delivery. UEL’s School of Psychology has a long history of engaging in externally funded research, in the delivery of scholarship and knowledge exchange with national and international partners.

We are committed to continuing this tradition of research excellence and to this end engage energetically and imaginatively with the challenges and opportunities facing contemporary higher education. Our academic staff are focused on conducting research that has local, regional, national and global impact, and makes a positive and substantive difference to people’s lives.

I hope you will consider collaborating with us as a partner in the delivery of one or more of our exciting research ventures and enjoy reading this profiling brochure.

M. N. O. Davies.

Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CBiol, CPsychol
Dean, UEL School of Psychology
Welcome to the UEL School of Psychology research brochure.

The purpose of this publication is to introduce you to some of the academic staff within the School and their research expertise. The School of Psychology staff are accessible and intellectually creative individuals who thrive on the challenge of producing new knowledge and applying it in novel settings. Research in the School covers a wide range of topics, from neuroscience to work on social policy, and incorporates the full range of research methods, both quantitative and qualitative in kind.

Currently, there are over 80 academic members of staff in the School, divided amongst five research groups and one research institute. These groupings in turn are composed of project-focused teams and laboratories. Our facilities are located in a large dedicated Research Suite, which includes a 128-channel electroencephalography (EEG) laboratory as well as laboratories for remote eyetracking, virtual reality, psychophysiology, cognitive psychology and health psychology, a qualitative laboratory and a Babylab.

Within this brochure you will be introduced to the School’s research groups and some individual academic profiles within each, exploring their research interests, current projects and published work. Please visit the University’s online Research Open Access Repository where many of our research publications can be found: uel.ac.uk/roar.

As you will see in this brochure, we are well equipped both in terms of personnel and infrastructure to continue to deliver research to the highest national and international standards.

We hope you enjoy reading this profiling brochure and that you will consider joining us in our research endeavours.

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The Institute for Research in Child Development (IRCD)

East London has always been an area of social change, with pockets of significant economic and social deprivation, and this inevitably has an impact on the development of children. Through the delivery of high-quality research and knowledge exchange, the Institute is working to ensure better outcomes for these and other children. Our research explores the fundamental processes of development and the conditions that influence outcomes. Our work is interdisciplinary and we collaborate with partners from the health, public and third sectors. Along with the academic staff featured here, we have research fellows and assistants working on specific projects, and others engaged in training and consultancy. Our work has been funded by the Wellcome Trust, the Nuffield Foundation, the UK National Institute for Health Research, the US National Institutes of Health and the UK Economic and Social Research Council. We also undertake consultancy work funded by local authorities and private companies. Our research involves children across different ages, from newborn babies to adolescents, and is focused within three overlapping themes:

Neuroscience and early development
Early screening for at-risk children is key to making a difference to long-term outcomes. Studies are currently taking place in the Institute’s purpose-built Babylab. The Early Language and Social Development (ELAS) study is using newly designed eye-tracking and electroencephalography (EEG) tasks, and assessing the effectiveness of these for detecting early language, attention and social difficulties in babies. In the TALBY study (Take A Look Baby!) we are taking these methods out into the community to engage parents and practitioners in children’s centres.

Health, wellbeing and risk
Our research examines the social, environmental and structural conditions that shape development, and interventions that maximise children’s physical and psychological wellbeing. We undertake work from small-scale observational studies to full-scale, randomised controlled trials. Projects include studying the impact of: prenatal drug exposure (The Development and Infancy study (DAISY)); nutrition on babies’ long-term developmental outcomes; hydration on children’s cognitive abilities (Drink to Think study); and of community-driven local interventions on the wellbeing of adolescents (The Well London study).

Fundamentals of child development
Underpinning the work of IRCD is fundamental research into the perceptual, social and cognitive capacities of children that form the foundations for the development of human thought and communication. This allows us to understand how, when and where development goes awry. Projects include studies of: the perceptual processes involved children’s understanding of emotions and human bodily communication; children’s understanding of ethnic and national identity; the relationship between language and numeracy; and the development of peer relations and moral development.

Professor Derek Moore
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Children’s development

Professor Derek Moore
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Research expertise

Derek is Professor of Developmental Psychology. His research specialism is in exploring social influences, developmental difficulties, developmental psychopathology and infants at risk. Derek’s work examines how social factors interact with neurocognitive processes throughout development, from conception to adolescence. His work has had impact across various disciplines (psychology, neuroscience, education, music, medicine), with his work cited widely in the UK and overseas in a number of fields.

Though based in the School of Psychology, as Director of the UEL Institute for Research in Child Development (IRCD) Derek works across all Schools in the University to support multidisciplinary research that involves children.

Biography in brief

Derek studied for his BSc at Manchester Metropolitan University and went on to complete an MRC-funded MSc in Biometrics at the Institute of Psychiatry, London, based in the Developmental Psychopathology Unit. Thereafter he became a Research Fellow at City University and at the Open University before moving to UEL in 1995 to take up a lectureship in developmental psychology. He became a Reader in 2004 and became the Director of the Institute for Research in Child Development (IRCD) in 2007.

Recently published research


Singer, L.T., Moore, D.G., Fulton, S., Goodwin, J., Turner, J.J.D., Min, M.O., & Parrott, A.C. (2012). Neurobehavioral outcomes of infants exposed to MDMA (Ecstasy) and other recreational drugs during pregnancy, Neurotoxicology and Teratology, 34, 303-310.
Early risk assessment

Dr Elena Kushnerenko
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Research expertise
Elena works in the UEL Institute for Research in Child Development (IRCD), developing electrophysiological research in its Babylab. She explores fundamental cognitive processes in infancy and childhood, using 128-channel EEG sensor net technology. Elena is developing a new infant neuro-cognitive assessment battery (INCBY) using EEG, eye-tracking techniques and behavioural measures of language, attention, executive functioning and social development. The battery identifies potential developmental risk factors as early as possible, given that the sooner rehabilitation starts, the more beneficial are the associated therapeutic outcomes.

Research conducted collaboratively with the Institute’s Director, Professor Derek Moore, IRCD post-doctoral research fellow, Dr Przemyslaw Tomalski, and Birkbeck-based collaborator, Professor Mark Johnson.

Biography in brief
Elena carried out her doctoral research at the Cognitive Brain Research Unit, University of Helsinki: a longitudinal study describing the normal variation and maturation of the auditory event-related potentials (ERP) of infants from birth to two years of age. Shortly after, Elena won an Academy of Finland fellowship for independent research at the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Birkbeck, University of London. With colleagues there, she investigated audiovisual speech integration in infants. Following this, Elena joined IRCD to continue her internationally recognised work on cognitive processes in infancy.

Recently published research


Drink to think

Dr Caroline Edmonds
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Research expertise
Caroline’s research focuses on the effect of hydration on cognition in children and adults, specifically the effect of drinking water on cognitive performance and mood. Some of her recent findings suggest that water consumption improves memory and attention in children. She is now engaged in a programme of research exploring and quantifying the effects of hydration on cognition in children and adults. Caroline has also explored the effect of nutrition on neuropsychological functioning and brain structure in children, adolescents and young adults. This includes examining the long-term effects on children born prematurely of different diets after birth, and the effects of intrauterine growth restriction.

Caroline’s engaging website www.carolineedmonds.com contains additional information about her work as a research psychologist.

Biography in brief
After completing her PhD at University College London (UCL), Caroline spent seven years as a research fellow at the MRC Childhood Nutrition Research Centre at the Institute of Child Health, UCL, a research institute affiliated to Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital, before joining UEL in 2007.

Recently published research


Ethnicity, gender and identity

Dr Virginia Lam
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Research expertise
Virginia’s research is focused upon the development of social cognition in relation to children’s social and ethnic identities, and the influence on these of peer interactions, intergroup attitudes and stereotypes. She has extended this research to encompass adolescents’ and adults’ ethnic and national (British and Chinese) identities, most recently exploring their conceptions of ‘God’ and other non-human agents.

Biography in brief
Virginia joined the UEL School of Psychology in 2003 after completing her PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London, which examined developing ethnic identities in middle childhood. This followed on from an MSc in Psychological Research Methods at Exeter University and undergraduate study at Cardiff University.

Recently published research


Peer relations

Dr Chris Pawson
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Research expertise

As a developmental psychologist, Chris’s research focuses on children’s peer relations, moral development and antisocial behaviour. Chris also researches aspects of teaching and learning psychology. Recently Chris has developed a line of research in which he is examining the effectiveness of written behavioural change messages when accompanied by pictorial presentation of eyes investigating this in both learning and health environments. Currently, Chris is developing work on predictors of political engagement. He is a member of the UEL Institute for Research in Child Development and is also Coordinator of the Psychology Learning and Teaching Research Group.

Biography in brief

Chris obtained his undergraduate BSc degree at UEL in 1998 and then worked as a researcher at the Home Office Statistics Directorate on interventions targeting the reduction of re-offending among young people.

In 2001 he returned to UEL as a graduate teaching assistant, before being appointed as a full-time lecturer in 2002. He recently finished his PhD, Peer influences on children’s moral judgement. As well as being an active researcher, Chris is a UEL Teaching Fellow, teaching advanced developmental psychology at undergraduate and postgraduate level, leading modules on introductory and political psychology in the Schools of Health, Sport & Bioscience and Psychology, whilst also contributing to the MA in Learning and Teaching programme in the UEL School of Education.

Recently published research


Researchers in this group examine human cognitive, emotional and behavioural functions, in particular in relation to the activity of the brain. Researchers focus on experimental cognitive psychology, cognitive neuropsychology, neurorehabilitation, behavioural neuroscience and evolutionary theory. Dedicated cognitive psychology, remote eye tracking, and 128-channel electroencephalography (EEG) laboratories support this work.

**Experimental cognitive psychology**

Our researchers examine cognitive processes in relation to object, word and face recognition, ageing, attention, language production, and decision making.

**Cognitive neuropsychology**

Here our researchers focus on: dementia, memory and amnesia; face processing; prosopagnosia (impairment of the ability to recognise faces); synaesthesia (cross-modal and/or intra-modal perception); social cognitive processes; hemispheric biases in emotional processing; cross-cultural aspects of neuropsychological assessment; and the neuropsychological correlates of chronic health problems.

**Neurorehabilitation**

Our researchers in this context investigate assessment and recovery of cognitive function following brain injury or other neurological conditions. A highly productive research team is focused on the development and application of computer-generated virtual environment techniques for assessment and diagnosis, training of the learning disabled, and rehabilitation following stroke and other brain damage. Our purpose-built Virtual Reality Laboratory is resourced with a state-of-the-art, fully immersive system, a ten-foot rear projection screen with stereoscopic facility, a head-mounted display, 3D motion trackers, data gloves and various supporting desktop systems.

**Behavioural neuroscience and evolutionary theory**

Research is conducted on the evolution of language and cognitive architecture, the application of evolutionary theory to the behavioural and cognitive sciences, mate choice and olfactory signaling, pragmatics and cognition, and behavioural genetics.

BCBRG researchers have extensive and active collaborative links with UK, European and US scientists and laboratories.

**Dr Melanie Vitkovitch**

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Object naming

Dr Melanie Vitkovitch
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Research expertise
Melanie’s research interests are focused on experimental studies of object naming in adults, using both behavioural and EEG methods. Specifically, Melanie investigates semantic effects during object name retrieval, particularly semantic interference effects. Her postgraduate students are working on experimental behavioural and EEG studies of word naming and phonological encoding processes. Most of Melanie’s work has been with adults who only speak one language, but she has also begun investigating object naming in bilingual and multilingual adults, and young children.

Biography in brief
After completing her first degree in psychology at Edinburgh University, Melanie worked as a researcher at Durham and Nottingham Universities. She joined UEL in 1992 after a brief teaching post at Thames Valley University and a post-doctoral research position at Birkbeck, University of London.

Recently published research


Decision making

Dr Volker Thoma
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Research expertise

Volker’s research interests focus on object and face recognition, memory and decision making, as influenced by attention or perceptual load. Within a cognitive neuroscience framework (ERP, fMRI), Volker collaborates with colleagues at Goldsmiths, University of London, University College London, MRC–CBU Cambridge and the University of Magdeburg. Within the domain of decision making, he has been working with Dr Inna Anderson (UEL) on a project investigating heuristics and reflective thinking in financial traders.

Recently published research


Biography in brief

Volker studied for an MSc (Dipl.Psych) at the University of Regensburg before working as a Human Factors researcher at the Fraunhofer Institute of Applied Science in Stuttgart.

After completing his PhD at Goldsmiths in 2002, on the role of attention in object recognition, he worked as a research fellow at University College London before moving to UEL as a lecturer and researcher in 2005.
Cognitive neuropsychology

Dr Ashok Jansari
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Research expertise

Ashok’s research focuses upon different aspects of memory loss, including long-term amnesia and the development of rehabilitation regimes, and different aspects of face recognition (including prosopagnosia and ‘super-recognition’). Since 2003, he has been refining a virtual reality assessment of executive brain function (the brain’s capacity to guide complex behaviours) and this is currently being translated into a number of European languages. In addition, he collaborates with UEL’s Dr Mary Spiller in research examining synaesthesia – cross-sensory perception.

Recently published research


Biography in brief

Ashok first studied psychology as an undergraduate at King’s College, Cambridge. He went on to take his doctorate at the University of Sussex, where he conducted research on memory and amnesia.

This was followed by a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. He was awarded the Cermak Award in 2004 for best research in memory disorders by the International Neuropsychological Society, and in 2008 was awarded a Media Fellowship by the British Association for the Advancement of Science.
Synaesthesia

Dr Mary Spiller
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Research expertise
Mary’s research focuses on psychological issues in synaesthesia: when a sensation that normally occurs in one sense modality happens when another modality is stimulated. Mary is particularly interested in the role of mental imagery in synaesthesia and this was the specific focus of her PhD research. She also has published research on intellectual disability and mental health.

Biography in brief
Mary originally joined UEL as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) in 2004, beginning her PhD work during this time. After a year as a GTA, Mary was awarded a full-time PhD studentship funded by the University, completing her PhD in 2009. She was appointed to a lectureship within the School in 2008 and recently has been awarded Promising Research funds to support her work as a researcher.

Before joining UEL as a lecturer in research methods, Mary worked as a research assistant in cognitive neuroscience at Harvard University, USA. She has also worked previously as a researcher within the domain of intellectual disabilities and mental health at the Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College, London.

Recently published research


Evolutionary psychology

Dr Tom Dickins
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Research expertise
Tom's research focuses upon evolutionary approaches to behaviour. He has a background in evolutionary psychology and the philosophy of science. Recently, he has applied these perspectives to an analysis of early fertility, in particular teenage pregnancy. He also works on issues within evolutionary ecology and epigenetics. Previously, he has published work on sexual orientation, empathy and aggression.

Tom began a series of European conferences on evolution and human behaviour in 2006, leading to the establishment of the European Human Behaviour and Evolution Association (EHBEA). In addition to being one of the progenitors of EHBEA, Tom is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Evolutionary Psychology.

Biography in brief
Tom studied psychology as an undergraduate in the early 1990s at the then Polytechnic of East London (now UEL). He then attended University College London and Imperial College, attaining a joint MSc in History and Philosophy of Science.

After working at the Liverpool Institute of Higher Education as a lecture and research officer, in 1995 Tom went to the University of Sheffield, conducting his PhD in evolutionary psychology, examining the origins of language. Tom then taught at the University of Greenwich, London Guildhall University (now London Metropolitan University) and Nottingham Trent University, before coming to UEL as a full-time lecturer in 2003.

Recently published research


The pro-social impact of digital technologies

Professor Mark N.O. Davies
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Research expertise

Mark’s research currently focuses on the psychological and pro-social impact of digital technologies, and in particular that of digital gaming. More specifically he is interested in technologies that are sensitive to human functioning – so-called augmented technologies – and in an analysis of these in relation to evolutionary processes and self-organising systems.

Previously he has investigated aggression, empathy and sexual preference. Earlier in his career, Mark conducted research on perception and motor control in birds. Mark’s PhD students have examined measures of attractiveness as a function of sexual orientation, multi-sensory cues in judgements of attractiveness, spatial memory, and, most recently, the psychological landscape of family members of emergency service workers.

Biography in brief

Mark started his career studying for a joint science degree in psychology and zoology at Nottingham University, which led on to a PhD at the same university focusing upon visuo-motor control in birds. Mark held his first lecturing post at Nottingham University for two years, and then moved to University College London for four years. He then joined Nottingham Trent University (NTU) as a senior lecturer, setting up the first psychology research laboratory there. He remained at NTU for seventeen years, spending the last ten as Head of Department of Psychology before moving to UEL as Dean of the School of Psychology in 2010.

Recently published research


Psychology and Social Change Research Group (PSCRG)

The core focus of this Group’s activity is a commitment to research with an emphasis on social change. This overarching theme involves varied activity across theoretical and methodological arenas, and is driven by different topic areas. Central to this work is the consideration that the psychological and social realms are inseparable. Members are involved in work across policy, applied and academic settings. The Group supports a number of international and national collaborations.

Key objectives include: taking an applied focus in using theory, research and methodology to impact on social change and quality of life; developing interdisciplinary approaches that draw on a variety of theoretical resources (social theory, process philosophy, critical psychology, feminist theory, embodiment and affect theory); and developing and using a range of methodological approaches, including critical and discursive approaches, visual methodologies and spatial analytics.

The Group’s current research priorities include the following:

- therapeutic and psychiatric practice
- health and reproduction
- sexuality and intimate relationships
- emotion and affect
- social embodiment
- psychology as ‘process’
- critical pedagogy
- domestic and sexual violence.

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Space, place and mental health

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Research expertise
Ian's current research focuses on three projects: the relationship between psychology, space and place in relation to community mental health; psychology of surveillance; and, self and digital technologies. Additionally, he is interested in the embodiment of emotion. In each of these domains, Ian approaches psychological experience as produced through multiple relations between psychological, social and material factors. Underlying them is the assumption that what we apprehend as psychological phenomena (for example, our identities) are formed through diverse socio-cultural settings, and are produced by a variety of social and material factors. In so doing, Ian draws on a number of disciplines, including social psychology, sociology, psychosocial studies, organisational studies and cultural geography.

Biography in brief
Ian obtained a first-class BSc Honours degree in Psychology at London South Bank University in 2002 and continued his studies at Loughborough University, completing his PhD on Deteriorating mental health in 2006. He worked as a full-time lecturer in psychology at the University of Northampton for three years before joining UEL in the same role in 2008. As a lecturer in social psychology, Ian leads modules on the undergraduate and Master's degree programmes that focus on conceptual and historical issues in psychology. Currently, he is co-ordinator of the UEL Psychology and Social Change Research Group, is a committee member of the History and Philosophy section of the British Psychological Society (since 2010), and is a nominated expert member of the Living in Surveillance Societies EU-funded network.

Recently published research


Discourses of distress

Dr Dave Harper
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Research expertise

Dave’s research interests include the use of critical qualitative research methods such as discourse analysis to examine how mental health professionals talk about key concepts (for example, psychosis and paranoid delusions) and interventions (for example, medication, electroconvulsive therapy and mental health legislation). He is also interested in social inequality, both how it is explained and its influence on mental health. His work seeks to have impact by developing more progressive responses to mental distress. More recently, he has begun to investigate how surveillance technologies are constructed within public discourse.

Recently published research


Biography in brief

Dave gained both his undergraduate degree in psychology and his Master’s degree in clinical psychology at the University of Liverpool. He then worked as a clinical psychologist in National Health Service mental health services in the north-west of the UK for nine years, completing a PhD at Manchester Metropolitan University at the same time. He joined UEL as a senior lecturer and academic tutor on the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology training programme in 2000 and was promoted to Reader in 2007.
Demedicalising misery

Professor Mark Rapley
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Research expertise

Mark’s research interests are in developing the application of discursive psychology to topics in clinical, community and applied social psychology. Within this framework, he has examined: interactions between professionals and ‘clients’; the professional construction of problems in living; psychology as a self-constructing discourse; the representation of psychology in popular and academic media; and the theory and practice of clinical psychology in relation to people with intellectual disabilities. Current projects include work on young people’s understandings of sexual assault, and the Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) ‘epidemic’.

Biography in brief

Mark gained an MSc Clinical Psychology from North East London Polytechnic, now UEL, before starting work as a clinical psychologist in the NHS learning disability services. He has since worked in Western Australia as an academic and consultant to intellectual disability services. On his return to the UK he joined UEL as Professor of Clinical Psychology and Director of the Doctoral Programme in Clinical Psychology.

Recently published research


Reinventing intimacy

Dr Mark Finn
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Research expertise
Mark’s main research focus is on couple relationships, relational identities, and different kinds of intimate partnerships. His research, which uses qualitative methods, looks at practices of traditional and non-traditional couple relationships, and the interplay of psychological and social processes. Specifically, he has explored meanings attached to monogamy and open non-monogamy. Currently, he is researching ways in which open relationships are understood and supported in therapeutic contexts. Mark’s work challenges taken-for-granted narratives about healthy and happy coupledom for both different- and same-sex couples. He is particularly interested in exploring new ways of organizing and experiencing intimate life in times of increasing mobility and social economic and personal instability.

Biography in brief
After taking a first degree in English Literature and a DipEd at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, Mark worked as a teacher and training co-ordinator before returning to university to gain a first-class BSc (Hons) Psychology at UEL. He then went on to complete his PhD in psychology at the University of Western Sydney, where his thesis explored the discursive productions and regulations of couple relationships, in their various contemporary forms, including non-monogamous, same-sex and non/extra-dyadic relationships. After post-doctoral research at Cardiff University, working on qualitative projects about fatherhood and masculinity and HIV-related quality of life, Mark joined UEL as a senior lecturer in psychology in 2008.

Recently published research


Mental health across cultures

Professor Rachel Tribe
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Research expertise
Rachel’s research activities and work as an applied psychologist focus on: psychological trauma; working with interpreters in mental health; the mental health of refugees and asylum seekers; culture and mental health; professional and ethical practice; and organisational development.

Biography in brief
Rachel is chartered both as a counselling and organisational psychologist. She has extensive consultancy experience in the private, public, charity and academic sectors, both nationally and internationally. She has worked with: the UK Department of Health; the National Institute for Mental Health; the UK Department of Children, Schools and Families; the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Harp Archive for Refugee Portal; and the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Rachel has also delivered training on behalf of: Amnesty International; the Department of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Sri Lanka; the British Council; the British Psychological Society; Médecins Sans Frontières; the Red Cross; Save the Children; and the Singapore Psychological Society. Rachel is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and is programme director for the UEL Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology.

Recently published research


Applied and Professional Psychology Research Group (APPRG)

Members of this group are researchers with diverse interests in the realm of the applied behavioural sciences. These cover counselling, clinical, coaching, occupational and educational psychology, and also careers guidance. The group is active in supporting doctoral-level research through the School of Psychology’s four professional doctorate programmes: Applied Educational and Child Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Counselling Psychology and Occupational Psychology. Specific areas of research interest include research into personality types (MBTI), spirituality, therapeutic relationships and careers.

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Offenders and risk

Dr Amanda Roberts
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Research expertise
Amanda’s research examines the risk of anti-social behaviour at the individual and population levels and evaluates mental health interventions for public protection. Specifically, she has investigated fighting and weapon use and the relationship with the misuse of drugs and alcohol. Another important domain of research for Amanda is that of personality disorders in offenders (especially neuropsychological aspects), including risk factors for anti-social behaviour, violence and extensive pornography use. All of this research is based on epidemiological and psychological theory, focusing upon mental health and related areas, including forensic psychology and criminology. In addition, Amanda has researched psychological aspects of chronic fatigue syndrome.

Biography in brief
Amanda completed her first degree, a BSc Psychology, at University College London, before moving to Cardiff University to conduct her PhD in behavioural neuroscience. Amanda took up her first permanent full-time post at King’s College, London, before moving to Queen Mary University and then to UEL.

Recently published research


Forensic psychology

Dr Lara Frumkin
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Research expertise

Lara’s research interests lie in forensic psychology; specifically the perceptions of eyewitness testimony based on accent and ethnic background, and psychological precursors to engagement in terrorist activities. She has also collaborated on wide-ranging reviews relating to the inclusion of ethnic minority learners in educational contexts and has researched student perceptions of lecturers.

Biography in brief

Lara studied for a Bachelor of Science in Psychology at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in the US, before going on to complete an MA and PhD at the University of Maryland, both in social and community psychology. Whilst in North America she worked at a non-profit association in Washington DC, prior to a role at the Justice Department with the US Federal Government. After moving to the UK, Lara worked at Middlesex University and the University of London’s Institute of Education before joining UEL in 2010.

Recently published research


Listening to children

Professor Irvine Gersch
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Research expertise
Irvine's own doctoral research focused on school leadership and pupil behaviour. His ongoing research interests include listening to children, spiritual listening, special educational needs (SEN) mediation, and the future of the profession of educational psychology.

He has published peer-reviewed journal articles, books and chapters on listening to children and pupil involvement, behaviour management, school leadership, systems analysis, management, educational psychology training, conciliation and mediation in special needs, and teacher stress. Irvine’s work on listening to children has resulted in the development of student report forms (completed by children and young people about their needs), research into dramatherapy and ways of talking with children, and adult mentorship at a deeper, spiritual level about their lives and plans.

Biography in brief
Irvine graduated in psychology from University College North Wales Bangor (now Bangor University), before completing a four-year course of integrated training in educational psychology at Swansea. He then began his career as a school teacher, educational psychologist, and deputy and principal educational psychologist, before coming to UEL in 2000 to lead the Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. Irvine has served as chairperson of the British Psychological Society Training Committee for educational psychology and as a member of the UK Department for Education and Skills (DfES) working group on the future role and training of educational psychologists. He has also acted as a consultant to the National Audit Office on improving poorly performing schools. In 2002, Irvine received the British Psychological Society’s annual award for distinguished contributions to professional psychology. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society, the Royal Society of Arts and the Higher Education Academy, a chartered educational psychologist and a chartered scientist.

Recently published research


Guiding careers

Professor Rachel Mulvey
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Research expertise
Rachel’s research focuses on graduate employability and professional education for career guidance practitioners. Her expertise is sought by policy makers, and Rachel is vice-chair of the parliamentary task force on the career guidance profession as convened by the Department of Education. She is also on the steering group for a pan-European Erasmus Network, led by the University of Heidelberg. This 32-partner project, funded by the European Union, is developing innovative approaches to the training of career guidance professionals in higher education institutions. Rachel has undertaken consultancy in careers guidance at local and national level. Her clients include: learndirect; the National Health Service; Career Management Futures; and Skills Training UK.

Biography in brief
After a first degree at Manchester University, followed by teaching in Malaysia, Rachel undertook professional training at UEL then practised as a generic and specialist careers adviser (post-16) in London and the south-east. She progressed to management posts in careers services and a further education college, before joining UEL’s School of Psychology. Initially, Rachel lectured part time whilst undertaking her PhD at Warwick University, then full time as the Head of The Centre for Training in Career Guidance. Rachel is a Fellow and past president of the Institute of Career Guidance, and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She is also the Associate Dean of the School of Psychology and holds the Chair in Career Guidance.

Recently published research
Members of this Research Group (HPRG) examine health behaviour and outcomes from a combination of psychological, social and biological perspectives, using a variety of methods, whether quantitative, qualitative or a mixture of the two.

The Group hosts the Chronic Illness Research Team, led by Professor Christine Dancey. The team looks at the ways in which different illnesses affect the lives of people who suffer from them. This includes how psychosocial and illness factors relate to neuropsychological function in Ménière’s disease, Mal de débarquement (disembarkation sickness), chronic motion sickness, epilepsy and chronic fatigue syndrome (also known as myalgic encephalopathy).

The Group is home also to the Recreational Drugs Research Team, led by Dr Lynne Dawkins. The team’s work focuses on the psychological precursors and consequences of recreational drug use, misuse and abuse on mental and physical health, whether it be alcohol, nicotine, ecstasy (MDMA) or other substances that have psychogenic effects.

Active research interests of other Group members include: post-traumatic growth among female breast cancer survivors (Dr Kate Hefferon); psychological aspects of prostate cancer and lower urinary tract symptoms (Dr Ken Gannon); individual differences in rebelliousness (Professor Mark McDermott) and in mindfulness (Dr James Walsh) as they relate to health behaviour and cognitions; the effects of poly-drug use on pregnant women (Dr John Turner); and, positive psychology approaches to wellbeing and its measurement (Dr Ilona Boniwell).

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Chronic illness

Professor Christine Dancey
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Research expertise
Christine and her research team work with sufferers and health professionals to examine the psychosocial factors involved in chronic illness, especially those implicated in the impact of such illness on quality of life. Christine’s recent work in this area has conducted research into cognitive factors and memory problems in inflammatory bowel syndrome (IBS), chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Christine co-founded the IBS Network, a national UK charity which provides information and support to people who suffer from IBS. This initiative, together with her five books and numerous publications in the area, has helped raise the profile of invisible chronic illness in general, and IBS in particular.

Biography in brief
Christine studied undergraduate psychology at Goldsmiths, University of London, before taking a position as a part-time lecturer and going on to complete her PhD in 1990. Since then, she has lectured in psychology at UEL and is a chartered health psychologist and chartered academic psychologist.

Recently published research


Mindfulness

Dr James Walsh
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Research expertise
James’ research focuses on individual differences in both mindfulness and trait anxiety, within the context of social cognition models and their application to health-related behaviour and outcomes.

Biography in brief
James studied at University College London as an undergraduate before completing his PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is a chartered psychologist and member of the Division of Health Psychology, the British Psychological Society and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

James has worked at UEL since 1995 and is chair of the School of Psychology’s Research Degrees Sub-committee and represents the School of Psychology on the university-wide Research Degrees Sub-committee.

Recently published research


Rebelliousness

Professor Mark McDermott
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Research expertise
Over the course of his career, Mark has maintained an active research interest in individual differences in rebelliousness, which latterly has focused on the prediction of health behaviours and resistance to health persuasion messages. A second research theme has been Mark’s work on social cognition models as predictors of alcohol consumption, in particular risky, single-occasion drinking, culminating in a randomised control trial funded by the Alcohol Education and Research Council. He has also published research on forms of hostility as psychological risk-factors for coronary artery disease. Mark’s research reflects his ongoing interest in the biopsychosocial modelling of health and illness.

Biography in brief
Mark began his career in psychology in 1978, studying as an undergraduate at University College Cardiff (UCC), before going on to complete teacher training (PGCE) at the same University’s Department of Education. He completed his PhD in Cardiff, focusing on individual differences in rebelliousness in adolescence and young adulthood. During this time, he spent a year at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA, enhancing his research skills in questionnaire design and development. Mark then trained as a clinical psychologist at Manchester University before joining UEL in 1989 to take up a lectureship in health psychology. Mark was promoted to Professor in 2008.

Recently published research
Nicotine addition

Dr Lynne Dawkins
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Research expertise
Lynne’s research focuses on acute and chronic effects of nicotine on behaviour, mood and cognition. She is particularly interested in the implications that current neurobiological models of addiction have for smoking cessation in terms of reward motivation, impulse control and cue-reactivity. She has recently been exploring effects of the ‘electronic cigarette’ on craving and mood and is continuing to explore its potential for smoking cessation.

Biography in brief
Lynne completed her first degree in applied psychology at the University of Central Lancashire before completing her PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London, exploring the effects of Parkinson’s disease and smoking on reward motivation and executive functioning. Lynne joined UEL in 2006.

Recently published research


Positive growth and wellbeing

Dr Kate Hefferon
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Research expertise

Kate’s research is focused on understanding the links between wellbeing and the body. Her doctoral research examined the experience of personal growth among women who survive the trauma of breast cancer and the role of the body in that recovery process. Other areas of research interest for Kate are optimal functioning, the psychology of physical activity, applied positive psychology, existential psychology, and the use of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) in qualitative research.

Biography in brief

Kate graduated from the University of Ottawa with a BA English Literature and Psychology, followed by a BA (Hons) Psychology from Carleton University, Canada. This led to the completion of an MSc in Performance Psychology at Edinburgh University. Kate has worked with top sport scientists and internationally renowned dance companies, in addition to working with multiple elite Canadian performers.

Recently published research


Wellbeing

Dr Ilona Boniwell
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Research expertise
Ilona’s research focuses on wellbeing and its relationship to time perspective and measures of time use. Latterly, she has developed a multidimensional measure of wellbeing. In addition to this, within the domain of positive psychology, Ilona is also working on evaluations of resilience training amongst school-aged children and on the utility of mindfulness-based interventions. Ilona is particularly interested in practical applications of positive psychology.

Biography in brief
Ilona received her PhD from the Open University and then began her professional career at Oxford Brookes University, followed by City University, before joining UEL as programme leader for the first Master’s degree in Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) in Europe. She founded the European Network of Positive Psychology (ENPP), organised the first European Congress of Positive Psychology, and was the vice-chair of the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA) in 2007–9. Ilona appeared on the BBC2 series The Happiness Formula and has also been involved in other media work. She is a prolific speaker and often addresses international psychology and professional audiences. In addition to her academic work, she is a qualified coach and a facilitator of personal development programmes.

Recently published research


Psychology Learning and Teaching Research Group (PLATRG)

Members of this Group carry out research and scholarly activity in the area of teaching and learning in higher education. The Group is developing a pedagogical research infrastructure that will benefit our students and staff in the long term and ensure a legacy of learning and teaching enhancement within the School. This objective is aligned with two major development projects: the creation of a learning and teaching research laboratory; and the design and implementation of a pedagogical research database.

This Group’s research focuses on the practical application of improving university students’ performance and making the learning experience more enjoyable and rewarding. To such an end, our researchers are interested in investigating the utility of new technologies, for example, the use of virtual learning environments such as ‘Second Life’ to enable greater student and staff interaction (Joy Coogan and Chris Pawson).

Other active research interests of the Group include: the effects of hydration in exams on students’ performance (Caroline Edmonds and Chris Pawson); students’ expectations and experiences of higher education (Pippa Dell); critical thinking skills in undergraduates and how these can be developed (Ian Wells); and research into the student experience and factors that predict student first years’ engagement (Anna Stone and Elizabeth Attree).

Several projects have been funded by the University’s Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund.

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