

Career Profile

Annika Simpson

Molecular and Microbiology Facility Manager

Qualifications

Though I did the three sciences at A-levels, and very nearly took the route of mechanical engineering, I went on to do my BSc in Microbiology at the University of East Anglia. I then did my PhD in environmental microbiology at the Planetary and Space Sciences Research Institute at The Open University.

Career Pathway

After my PhD, I became a research assistant and lab manager in the Bioaerosol Research Facility at the Mathematics, Computing and Technology department at The Open University campus. This job involved quite a bit of work at landfill sites, testing and researching the microbe levels in the air. So, the NOC has been a bit of a departure!

Favourite thing about working in a lab

As my role is as support role for Ocean Technology and Engineering, my job is to be there for the scientists and engineers using my lab. Making sure that they have everything they need and are happy, gives me job satisfaction. That, and a tidy and clean lab at the end of the day.

Best technology you've developed/used

Though this may sound a bit boring compared to the technology some of my colleagues use/have developed, my favourite technology that I have used is still the SEM (scanning electron microscope). As a microbiologist, looking at microbes under the microscope, and to the level of detail an SEM can reach, is an incredible experience and nothing has yet topped that. It gives us an insight into a whole new world.

Support for equality and diversity

I have been lucky to have strong role models in my science career, from teachers during A-levels, lecturers during my undergraduate and now colleagues during my work life. I was only one of two girls in my Physics A-level class of about 25, but, even then, I was not made to feel any different. I very nearly became a mechanical engineer had it not been for my strong passion for microbiology. Both men and women have inspired me and made me feel that nothing is out of reach, as it should always be.



“I manage the NOC’s molecular and microbiology labs. Though a microbiologist by training, I am here to make sure scientists and engineers have everything they need for their work on biosensors. This means I do a range of things, from keeping the lab tidy, to managing stock levels of consumables, to helping run bioassays, and (my favourite part) helping to culture the bacteria and algae we use.”