Dr Stuart Gibson - Lecturer in Forensic Science

Tell us what you do in SPS?

I started a teaching and research position within SPS in July 2007 having previously been employed in the department as a research associate - developing a novel approach facial composite (a.k.a E-FIT) generation under the guidance of Dr. Solomon. Our facial composite software is currently being used by Leicestershire and Derbyshire police constabularies in a pilot project funded by the Home Office.

The facial composite work is a good example of how academic research has lead to a real world application that offers a tangible benefit to society (in this case the apprehension of suspects in criminal investigations). I'm still contributing to facial composite project whilst developing new areas of research including a method for digital image enhancement that employs an optimisation technique known as interactive evolutionary computation.

The advantage of this technique is that it allows non-experts to improve the perceived quality of a degraded digital image without having any prior knowledge of image processing algorithms.

You can help us assess and develop the method by taking part in our on-line experiment http://www.survey.visionmetric.com/FILTER/ (give it a try, it doesn't take long to complete and is also good fun!)

How long have you been here?

In 1994/5 I left my job as a furniture restorer and enrolled on the University of Kent's undergraduate physics programme. After graduating I took a year out and then returned to study for a higher degree followed by post-doc work.

During my time at Kent I have found the members of SPS to be friendly and enthusiastic about their work which has been a significant factor in my wish to stay here. Another contributing factor is the department's diverse research profile that allows a degree of freedom for academics to pursue their chosen research interests, leading to a creative research environment.

What do you do in your spare time?

In my spare time I like to be outdoors either running, walking or cycling.

Did you know…

Students on our Forensic Science degrees are taught not only by our in-house lecturers, but by expert industry lecturers from the Home Office, the Forensic Science Service and the Forensic Explosives Laboratory.

Having been a student at Kent yourself, what one piece of advice would you give to current students?

As an undergraduate I believe the key to academic success is to be diligent while retaining a sensible study/social life balance.

Post graduate work/study is a different prospect altogether and gives the student much more scope to be creative in their work. A good supervisor will always encourage this within the confines of the project outline.

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Dr George Dobre - Lecturer in Physics

Tell us what you do in SPS?

My role as Lecturer encompasses several functions.

Current SPS students will know me as a teacher, taking lectures and workshops and also the supervising the first year Physics lab. I am in the process of making my lectures more interactive which encourages students to meet the challenges on offer and means the sessions in the lab are more hands on and even more fun!

Applicants may know me as Admissions Tutor for Physics, and I spend some of my time dealing with their enquiries and following up applications with the University’s Admissions Office. I am also present at our departmental UCAS visit days and open days.

However, most of my time is spent on research and associated work. My research in Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) follows on from the work I did as a student. I worked on a project in partnership with BAE systems working on the use of tiny optical fibres in aeroplanes. This opened my eyes to the enormous variety of work in the optics area. Back in the area of OCT, I built the world’s first fluorescence OCT for the human eye, which was installed at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary. The technology allows clinicians to use a non-invasive means to understand what is happening within the eye, by basically using light in the same way as radar to determine distance. OCT has had a massive rise in interest, but is still comparatively new. I spend about 40-50% of my time on research, including writing grant applications, organising data, writing papers for journals, attending conferences and supervising research, project and post-doc students who actually undertake much of the practical research for me.

How long have you been at Kent? And what was it like being a student at Kent?

I came to Kent in 1991 and obtained a BSc in Physics. I then went straight to studying for my PhD even though my finances were rather precarious. After this was obtained in 1997 I stayed at Kent as a Post Doc (Post Doctoral Researcher), undertaking several projects. Then a lectureship in Physics came up in 2003 and here I am.

There have been many changes to the university and campus over the years. SPS is now even in a different building. The building may have changed but the atmosphere within SPS is the same—it is still a friendly department. As a student I thought Canterbury was great with easy trips to London and the continent. I still like Canterbury now, although more Japanese restaurants are needed – my favourite food is Japanese!

How would you spend an ideal day away from work?

Is it only a day I can have? I’d rather have a week, as that would give me time to travel abroad. I love exploring and my ideal next destination would be South America - this is somewhere I have never visited and I am intrigued as to how the culture and the architecture differs to that of Europe.

Having been a student at Kent yourself what one piece of advice would you give to current students?

Keep good notes. If you are unsure about anything ask your lecturer and don’t ignore the question. Lecturers are always happy to give advice and we’re here to help you!

Why did you stay at Kent?

I was always interested in Physics at school, although never really considered this as a career. Maths was always more of an interest to me, although Maths is of course the language of Physics and you need to be able to understand Maths to advance in Physics. I never set out to work as a teacher. In fact my long term secret aspiration as a child was to be an architect. Even now I have an interest in buildings and architecture.

The atmosphere at Kent has acted as a strong pull for staying. Once you are here it is quite difficult to leave. I embraced every opportunity that was open to me and I’m pleased that I did as I am very happy to be here.