



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Chemistry & Molecular Biosciences

Introduction to Research, Honours & Masters research projects



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The images included on the cover are submissions to the 2019 and 2020 SCMB Art of Science Competition by Gauri Nair and Xiao Wen Chen. The annual competition is coordinated by the School's Coursework Students Advisory Group.

AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS

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Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology – AIBN

Australian Centre for Water and Environmental Biotechnology – ACWEB

Centre for Advanced Imaging – CAI

Centre for Clinical Research – UQCCR

Frazer Institute

Institute for Molecular Bioscience – IMB

Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation – QAAFI

Queensland Brain Institute – QBI

EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONS

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QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute – QIMR Berghofer

Mater Research



PROFESSOR JAMES DE VOSS

HEAD OF SCHOOL

It is my great pleasure to provide a brief introduction to the School of Chemistry & Molecular Biosciences 2026 Research Projects Book. Within these pages, you will find highlights of the many excellent research opportunities available to students wishing to undertake research projects within our School.

SCMB is a research-intensive School covering a diverse range of disciplines. The School is particularly known for its unique cross-disciplinary expertise in chemical and molecular life sciences. The School is recognised nationally and internationally for its research quality and output including publications and patents, for its commercialisation of discoveries and for the success of its staff in attracting research fellowships, grants, prizes and awards.

Becoming part of this dynamic research environment will be a highlight of your student experience.

Many of the group leaders you see in this book will be familiar to you; maybe you have met them when they have been lecturing or coordinating a course, running a practical or workshop. These pages provide a window into the science that drives them, research that they don't normally talk about in their lectures. Most importantly, these are cutting-edge research programs that you can become a part of, either through the Introduction to Research courses, an Honours year, a Postgraduate Coursework degree or a PhD.

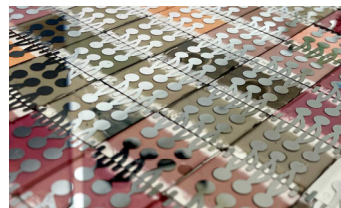
We believe a substantive research experience is a key part of an excellent science education. The lessons and experiences that come from undertaking a research project with one of our research groups include fostering creativity, learning how to balance individual and collaborative teamwork and developing independence, problem-solving and critical thinking as well as communication skills. All these attributes will be invaluable to you regardless of your subsequent career path. If you are thinking of a research career, then undertaking a true research experience is your chance to take the next step and begin the transition from a student who is learning about science into being a scientist yourself.

We encourage you to review the exciting research opportunities available to you in SCMB and to talk to as many current students and staff as you can.

We do hope to see you as one of our research students in the future!

SCMB RESEARCH THEMES

ADVANCED FUNCTIONAL
MATERIALS



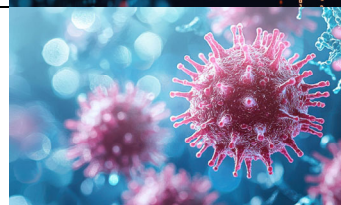
BIOMOLECULAR AND
MEDICINAL CHEMISTRY



COMPUTATIONAL
MOLECULAR SCIENCE



INFECTION AND
IMMUNITY



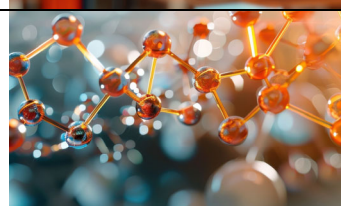
MOLECULAR GENETICS
AND GENOMICS



SCIENCE EDUCATION



STRUCTURAL BIOLOGY
AND BIOCHEMISTRY



SYNTHESIS AND
CATALYSIS



ADVANCED FUNCTIONAL MATERIALS



Advanced Functional Materials are targeted towards applications including optoelectronics, clean energy generation and storage, separation technologies, biomaterials, nanomedicine and molecular recognition.

This research theme draws together expertise in synthesis (including self-assembly), characterisation (including spectroscopy, colloid and surface science) and computational modelling.

A diverse range of materials are explored spanning organic, inorganic and composite materials, from small molecules to macromolecular structures including polymers, dendrimers, frameworks, gels and nano-porous structures.

Theme Leader:

Paul Shaw	Photophysics of organic semi-conductors
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Primary Theme Members:

Jack Clegg	Metallo-supramolecular chemistry
Ian Gentle	Energy materials
Shih-Chun (Lawrence) Lo	Functional opto-electronic materials design, synthesis and characterisation
Michael Monteiro	Living Polymers
Matt Trau	Nanostructured assembly and matter manipulation for production of novel materials/devices
Alain Wuethrich	Development of diagnostic nanotechnologies for precision medicine

Research Fellow Theme Member:

Mile Gao	Condensed matter physics – charge carrier dynamics in organic semiconductor devices (OLEDs & OPVs)
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Secondary Theme Members:

Debra Bernhardt	Theoretical and Computational Molecular Science
Evan Moore	Lanthanide metal ions properties
Rachel Stephenson	Nanotechnology in vaccine delivery

BIOMOLECULAR AND MEDICINAL CHEMISTRY



Biomolecular and medicinal chemistry includes the structure, reactions and synthesis of biologically important molecules, chemical investigations of proteins, enzymes and other biomolecules, and the design and synthesis of compounds with biological activity.

Members of this multidisciplinary research theme are brought together by their common approach to understanding the structures and mechanisms of biologically relevant organic and inorganic molecules at a molecular level, which informs their role in nature and their potential therapeutic and industrial applications.

Theme Leader:

Vito Ferro Organic Chemistry - Glycoscience, drug discovery and biotechnology

Primary Theme Members:

Joanne Blanchfield	Drug development and delivery
James De Voss	Biological and synthetic chemistry
Lisette Pregelj	Biotech innovation and commercialisation speed
Avril Robertson	Drug discovery (inflammation, cancer, pathogenic fungi), medicinal chemistry
Elizabeth Krenske	Computational Modelling, Chemical Reactivity, and Drug Design
Gary Schenk	Physical Chemistry – Structure, function, mechanism and pharmaceutical potential of metalloenzymes
Mariusz Skwarczynski	Nanotechnology in vaccine delivery
Rachel Stepheson	Synthetic vaccines and vaccine adjuvants – human and animal research
Craig Williams	Organic Chemistry - Synthesis and isolation of complex natural products; method development; medicinal, agrichemical and physical organic chemistry; microelectronics, energetic materials, hydrogen storage, and unusual molecules

Secondary Theme Members:

David Cantillo	Organic chemistry; synthetic organic electrochemistry; flow chemistry
Evelyne Deplazes	Combination of computer simulations and biophysical chemistry experiments to study biomolecular systems, focusing on understanding how small molecules interact with biological membranes.
Lisbeth Grondahl	Bio-interface science
Mark Schembri	Bacterial pathogenesis, antibiotic resistance
Alain Wuethrich	Development of diagnostic nanotechnologies for precision medicine

COMPUTATIONAL MOLECULAR SCIENCE



Computational Molecular Science uses advanced computer-based techniques to understand, predict and design new molecular processes, with applications ranging from chemical synthesis and materials science to biomedicine. Powerful simulation and modelling techniques, including quantum and statistical mechanics, molecular dynamics, and machine learning, are used to explore molecular structures, dynamics and interactions at an atomic level, and to generate new predictive technologies.

Current areas of focus include simulating complex reactions, uncovering the links between gene sequences and protein structure and function, and designing new functional materials for energy storage and catalysts for emissions reduction.

Theme Leader:

Elizabeth Krenske Computational Modelling, Chemical Reactivity, and Drug Design

Primary Theme Members:

David Ascher Biological data modelling

Effie Kartsonaki Develop flexible modes of high order thinking activities and support in large, diverse groups of chemistry learners

Debra Bernhardt Materials chemistry application

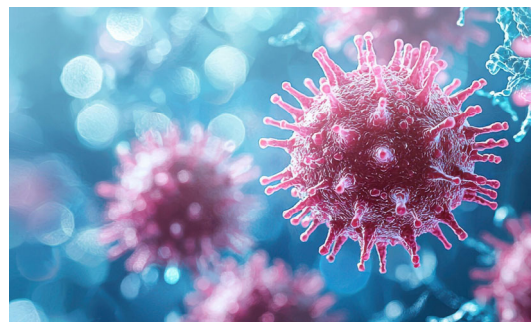
Alan Mark Physical and computational chemistry; simulation of biomolecular systems

Secondary Theme Members:

Cheong Xin (CX) Chan Genomics, computational and evolutionary biology

Luke Guddat Protein structure and drug discovery

INFECTION AND IMMUNITY



Our infection and immunity research encompasses the study of microbial pathogens and the response to infection by their hosts. Specific areas of interest include molecular virology, bacterial pathogenesis, fungal pathogenesis, parasitology and innate immunity. Theme members represent a core group within the [Australian Infectious Diseases Research Centre](#), a multidisciplinary network encompassing more than 80 research groups at UQ and the [QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute](#).

Theme Leader:

Alex Khromykh Molecular mechanisms of flavivirus replication and virus-host interaction

Primary Theme Members:

Keith Chappell	Vaccine development – medically/environmentally significant viruses
Ulrike Kappler	Bacterial metabolism as a determinant of host-pathogen interactions
Graham Leggatt	Immunotherapy of non-melanoma skin cancers
David Muller	Virology
Natalee Newton	Molecular virology and structure of flaviviruses
Jody Peters	Mosquito-borne viruses and vaccine/diagnostic platforms
Mark Schembri	Bacterial pathogenesis
Kirsty Short	Influenza virus pathogenesis
Kate Stacey	Cellular response to foreign nucleic acids
Daniel Watterson	Virology and rapid generation of treatments for viral diseases
Nick West	Tuberculosis microbiology and pathogenesis

Secondary Theme Members:

Stephen Barker	Evolutionary genetics and genomics of parasitic arthropods
Seweryn Bialasiewicz	Microbial ecology of the human body
James Fraser	Sex virulence and evolution in pathogenic fungi
Bostjan Kobe	Structural biology of proteins involved in infection and immunity
Michael Landsberg	Structure and function of molecular machines
Avril Robertson	Drug design and development, medicinal, synthetic organic chemistry
Ben Schulz	Viral glycobiology
Mariusz Skwarczynski	Development of vaccines and immunostimulators

Research Fellow Theme Members:

Ariel Isaacs	Vaccine and therapeutic development for emerging viruses
Chris McMillan	Vaccine development and immunology

Affiliate Theme Members:

Sassan Asgari	Mark Blaskovich	Ian Henderson	Karyn Johnson
Larisa Labzin	Mark Morrison	Matt Sweet	Ala Tabor

MOLECULAR GENETICS AND GENOMICS



Our molecular genetics and genomics research encompasses the application and analysis of targeted and high-throughput approaches to better understand all domains of life.

Vertebrates, plants, insects, microorganisms and microbial communities are subject to innovative methodologies to elucidate evolution, ecology and function at the genetic and regulatory levels.

Theme Leader:

Miloš Tanurdžić Molecular genetics and genomics of plant developmental plasticity

Primary Theme Members:

Stephen Barker	Evolutionary genetics and genomics of parasitic arthropods
Scott Beatson	Molecular pathogenomics
Mikael Boden	Bioinformatics (analysis, modelling and integration of biological data)
Cheong Xin (CX) Chan	Genomics, computational and evolutionary biology
Paul Evans	Microbial metabolism and genomics of natural environments
Marina Fortes	Genetics and reproductive biology in mammals
James Fraser	Sex virulence and evolution in pathogenic fungi
Phil Hugenholtz	Microbial ecology & evolution

Research Fellow Theme Members:

Seweryn Bialasiewicz	Microbial ecology of the human body
Anne Sawyer	RNA vaccines as sustainable alternatives to chemical pesticides

Secondary Theme Members:

David Ascher	Biological data modelling
Marloes Nitert Dekker	Metabolism and Microbiome in Pregnancy
Mathew Jones	Cancer Cell Biology and Genetics
Justin Ridge	Research Skills: how can students learn key research skills and how can we assess this
Mark Schembri	Bacterial Pathogenesis

Affiliate Theme Members:

Sassan Asgari	Karyn Johnson	Mark Morrison	Ala Tabor
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SCIENCE EDUCATION



Our theme members work to build new educational experiences and examine how well they work for students and academics.

Our research projects use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the development, implementation, stakeholder experience and outcomes of educational activities.

Working directly with educators, employers and other students at UQ and further afield, our research students:

- conduct surveys and interviews
- examine student outputs
- analyse feedback from multiple sources
- work directly on creative teaching media such as online learning tools, video productions, student magazines, radio programs and podcasts.

Theme members also collaborate with other academics in local, national and international contexts to evaluate and improve educational practice.

Theme Leader:

Gwen Lawrie	Students' awareness of their own conceptual models in chemistry and their motivation to apply formative feedback in their learning.
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Primary Theme Members:

Andrew Allsebrook	Development of technology and alternative methods to aid student learning and skill development in the Chemistry laboratory.
Effie Kartsonaki	Develop flexible modes of high order thinking activities and support in large, diverse groups of chemistry learners.
Justin Ridge	How students learn key research skills and how to assess this. Teaching core biochemical, microbiological and molecular biology knowledge to students of the health professions.
Philip Sharpe	The barriers to student success in the chemistry laboratory and how to maximize their learning. Mathematical foundations for Chemistry study.
Jack Wang	Integration and evaluation of undergraduate research experiences, and assessment/feedback practices in large undergraduate microbiology courses.

Secondary Theme Members:

James Fraser	Sex virulence and evolution in pathogenic fungi
Ulrike Kappler	Microbial physiology and biochemistry of metalloenzymes
Graham Leggatt	Immunotherapy of non-melanoma skin cancers
Mark Schembri	Bacterial pathogenesis
Simon Worrall	Mechanisms of drug-induced liver damage

STRUCTURAL BIOLOGY AND BIOCHEMISTRY



Our structural biology and biochemistry research focuses on understanding basic processes involved in cell regulation and disease at a molecular level. We use biophysical techniques such as X-ray crystallography and NMR spectroscopy, together with computer simulations and modelling techniques, to understand at an atomic level how proteins and peptides interact with themselves and other cellular components such as lipids and sugars to form functional complexes. We use biochemical and molecular biology approaches to probe differences in protein expression, interactions or activity associated with different disease states.

Theme Leader:

Michael Landsberg Structure and function of molecular machines

Primary Theme Members:

Evelyn Deplazes	Biophysical and computational chemistry
Elizabeth Gillam	Biocatalysis and molecular toxicology
Luke Guddat	Protein structure and drug discovery
Mathew Jones	Improving cancer treatment by targeting DNA replication and repair
Bostjan Kobe	Structural biology of infection and immunity
Alan Mark	Physical and computational chemistry; simulation of biomolecular systems
Marloes Nitert Dekker	Metabolism and microbiome in pregnancy
Ben Schulz	Synthetic systems glycobiology
Simon Worrall	Mechanisms of drug-induced liver damage

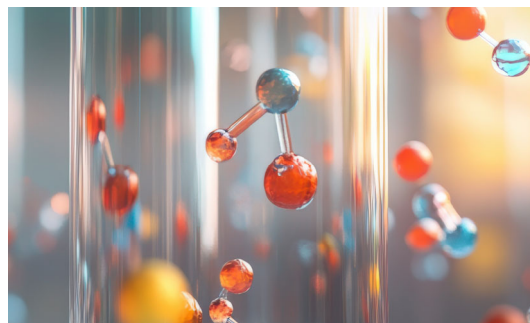
Secondary Theme Members:

David Ascher	Modelling biological data to gain insight into fundamental biological processes
David Cantillo	Organic chemistry; synthetic organic electrochemistry; flow chemistry
Gary Schenk	Physical chemistry: structure, function, mechanism and pharmaceutical potential of metalloenzymes
Katryn Stacey	Cellular response to foreign nucleic acids
Justin Ridge	Research skills: how can students learn key research skills and how can we assess this

Affiliate Theme Members:

Jeffrey Harmer	Ian Henderson	Glenn King	Mehdi Mobli
Megan O'Mara			

SYNTHESIS AND CATALYSIS



Synthesis and catalysis spans the areas of inorganic and organic chemistry with a focus on reaction methodology development, target-oriented synthesis and molecular design. Product characterisation (structural elucidation and spectroscopic analysis) is central to all researchers in this theme.

The development of new catalysts for reactions of commercial importance using greener chemical approaches relies on a clear mechanistic understanding along with the capabilities and limitations of each method. Electrochemical and photochemical methodologies are employed in parallel with more traditional synthetic approaches.

Theme Leader:

Paul Bernhardt Inorganic chemistry – coordination chemistry

Primary Theme Members:

David Cantillo Organic chemistry; synthetic organic electrochemistry; flow chemistry

Evan Moore Lanthanide metal ions properties

Rowan Young Inorganic Chemistry – Organometallic chemistry, organic synthesis, medicinal chemistry, transition metals, fluorine chemistry, pincer ligands, frustrated Lewis pairs, homogenous catalysis

Secondary Theme Members:

Joanne Blanchfield Natural Products from Traditional Medicines and Drug Development

Jack Clegg Metallo-supramolecular chemistry

James De Voss Biological and synthetic chemistry

Vito Ferro Carbohydrate chemistry, medicinal chemistry, drug discovery

Elizabeth Gillam Biocatalysis and Molecular Toxicology

Michael Monteiro Polymer synthesis, characterization, and applications

Matt Trau Nanoscience, Nanotechnology, Molecular diagnostics

INDUSTRY PROJECTS

Would you like to undertake your research project in collaboration with industry?

- Experience a commercial workplace
- Make contacts to help you with your career
- Receive support and guidance from UQ as well as your industry supervisor



Opportunities exist in these industries and more:

- biotechnology
- chemical
- pharmaceutical
- food processing
- pathology

You may be able to undertake a research project or internship with companies with which SCMB already has a working relationship. Many academics currently offer research projects in collaboration with industry partners. This provides an excellent opportunity to gain contacts in industry and get experience in the skills they value and understand their business.

For first-hand industry placement experience, SCIE3050 – *Science Industry Placement* is a course offered over a summer semester as part of your undergraduate degree.

SCMB students have been hosted for a variety of industry projects and internships at the following companies:

- Anteo Diagnostics
- Patheon by Thermo Fischer Scientific
- Mars Petcare (Albury-Wodonga)
- Resolian Bioanalytics (Alliance)
- Neogen Australia
- OECD

Summer project benefits student and Biotechnology company

Van Mai was inspired by a lecture to do an industry placement internship that led to her work being incorporated into presentations to customers by a successful Brisbane biotech company.

“Two scientists from Anteo Diagnostics gave a guest lecture in the second year *Issues in Biotechnology* course I was taking,” she said. “I found it very interesting and thought provoking.”

Course coordinator Professor Vito Ferro, mentioned to students that an eight-week internship at Anteo was available for a student taking the course *Biotechnology Industry Placement* over the summer semester. Van applied and was chosen.

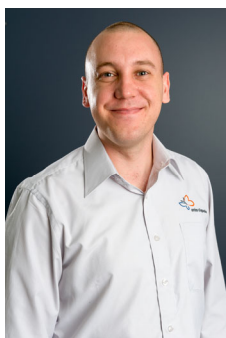


After two weeks of on-site training about company policy, equipment use, experiment design and record-keeping, Van felt well-equipped to undertake six weeks in the company laboratory.

“I worked with one of Anteo’s signature products, Mix&Go, a high-performance substance for surface coating,” said Van.

“The product enables fragile biomolecules to correctly orientate and attach to a wide range of surfaces.

“Specifically, I worked on optimising protocols for plate-based enzyme linked immunosorbent assays.”



Shaun Cooper of Anteo Diagnostics supervised Van’s project and said that Van was asked to use the underlying theory of Anteo’s novel ligand-metal coordination chemistry to determine its utility in improving sensitivity of an immunoassay in a format where low surface area traditionally limits performance.

“Van identified the performance differences of the product in high and low surface area plate formats,” he said.

“Her data demonstrated that sensitivity differences can be observed with the application of Mix&Go and that improvements are greater in the lower surface area format.

“Some of her data was incorporated into technology overview presentations given by the company’s chief scientific officer to prospective customers and partners.”

Van said that the work environment at Anteo was warm and welcoming and that the experience had taught her about the business side of scientific research, including policy, protocols and the importance of discussion and collaboration.

“It has also built my confidence,” she said.

Van is an international student who won a scholarship from the Vietnamese government to study in Australia. She was awarded Dean’s Commendations for high achievement in her undergraduate studies, worked as a peer tutor and charity volunteer, and is now completing her Honours year in materials chemistry.

She praised the quality of UQ’s teaching and learning, the range of courses, lab facilities and the beautiful St Lucia campus.

Anteo Diagnostics has hosted a number of UQ biotechnology students and is keen to host more.

“Students who undertake internships like Van’s gain not only general workplace skills, but also some insight into how Australian research contributes to commercial product realisation,” said Mr Cooper. “Support for translational research is currently a topic of government policy debate, and projects like Van’s are a good example of the interface between research and commercialisation.”

ACADEMIC STAFF



PROFESSOR DAVID ASCHER

Phone: 07 3365 3991

Email: d.ascher@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://researchers.uq.edu.au/researcher/33027>



Research Area

Biology is increasingly becoming a data-driven science. Technological advances have led to an explosion in the amount of data being generated. This has created challenges in managing, describing and modelling these data. Our group is interested in developing and validating novel computational methods to exploit biological data through statistical and machine learning approaches, in order to provide powerful insights into biomedical questions. Our goals are to:

- Use mathematical models and statistical inference techniques to better understand biological processes and diseases;
- Integrating omics and structural biology to generate an integrated view of biological processes at molecular resolution;
- Develop computational tools to provide insights into protein structures, interactions, drug development and clinical decisions;



Treating the Person, Not the Disease

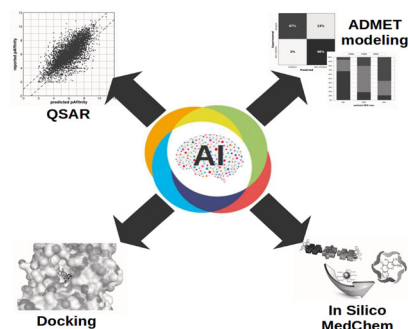
Patient treatment and outcomes can be greatly influenced by underlying genetics. We have been developing approaches to analyse these genetic differences. In this way, we can have mechanistic insights underlying diseases and phenotypes, evaluate gene function in the context of their molecular interactions, and identify molecular relationships among apparently distinct phenotypes. These tools have also enabled the interpretation of heterogeneity in clinical trial and are being used to inform treatment strategies and personalised medicine.

Discovering Sequence-Structure-Dynamics-Function Relationships

Studying the architecture, shape, and dynamics of biological macromolecules is paramount to understanding the mechanisms that drive the essential processes of all life. By applying fundamental principles of physical sciences, we are beginning to establish sequence-structure-dynamics-function relationships that enable deeper levels of discoveries and enable *de novo* structural and functional predictions at the proteome level. We are using these insights to engineer biotherapeutics with tailor-made properties, including for nerve agent detoxification and enzyme replacement therapies.

Developing Better and Safer Drugs

Many drug candidates fail clinical trials due to issues with efficacy and safety. We are using computational approaches to guide development of better drugs. We are also developing tools to pre-emptively predict and identify likely resistance mutations, to guide the development of 'resistance-resistant' treatments, contributing to maintaining the longevity of developed treatments.



Techniques you learn in our group may include: artificial intelligence, machine learning, deep learning, python coding, statistical analysis, molecular modelling (small molecules, proteins and pathways), genomic variant characterisation (genetic diseases and drug resistance), clinical genomics, high-performance computing, bioinformatics.



PROFESSOR STEPHEN BARKER

Phone: 07 3365 3303

Email: s.barker@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/stephen-barker>



Parasitology

My research is cross-disciplinary in that it contributes to 2 of the 7 research themes in our school: (i) Molecular Genetics & Genomics; and (ii) Infection & Immunity. I study parasites which along viruses, bacteria and fungi are the 4 main groups of organisms that cause disease other than



My current research-focus is on the ticks of Australia, NZ, PNG and the West Pacific. Ticks are the 'pests of our times' in that many people are more concerned about the diseases from ticks than with any other infectious disease. Ticks cause disease in humans, our domestics animals, particularly dogs, and wildlife.

Our goals are to:

1. Resolve by bioinformatics the Ixodida (tick) branches of the three-of-life from entire mitochondrial and nuclear genome sequences.
2. Find new and interesting genes in ticks that are associated with disease in humans, our domestics animals, particularly dogs, and wildlife.
3. Resolve by bioinformatics and big data the climatic requirements of the ticks of Australia and PNG and thus the potential changes to the geographic distributions and amount of disease caused by ticks, under a range of climate-change scenarios.

1. This work is the Australian contribution to an international project to resolve the tree-of-life called the Tree-of-Life Web Project (<http://tolweb.org>). Students will use common bioinformatics tools to mine our Illumina nucleotide sequence data & the Sequence Read Archive for mitochondrial genomes & ribosomal RNA gene-clusters. Then students will use Geneious to manipulate sequences, & other programs to predict ("reconstruct") the evolutionary tree of the ticks. Virtual time machines! Have a look at the You Tube Channel of my *Tick Mitochondrial Genome Network*: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnBhfYxjC4rsJmVpBwHT0g/featured>

2. Mine our Illumina nucleotide sequence data & the Sequence Read Archive for new and interesting genes in ticks that are associated with disease in humans our domestics animals, particularly dogs, and wildlife.

3. Ticks are the "pests of our times" in that the current generation of Australians & indeed people all over the world are more concerned about the diseases associated than with ticks that with any other infectious disease. This is understandable since we know so little about how the climate influences why ticks live where they live (*geographic-risk*) & why ticks are abundant in some years yet rare in other years (*variation in risk among years*). Students will use computer models to predict how the climate influences why ticks live where they live (*geographic-risk*) & why ticks are abundant in some years yet rare in other years (*variation in risk among years*); and thus the potential changes to the geographic distributions & amount of disease caused by ticks, under a range of climate-change scenarios.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: microscopy, bioinformatics, creation of DNA diagnostic tests, public health concepts and strategies.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biomedical Science / Computational Science / Genetics / Microbiology



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SCOTT BEATSON

Phone: 07 3365 4863

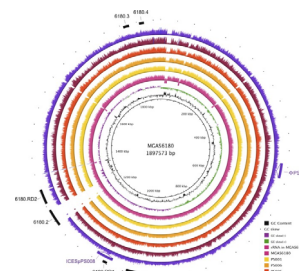
Email: s.beatson@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/scott-beatson>



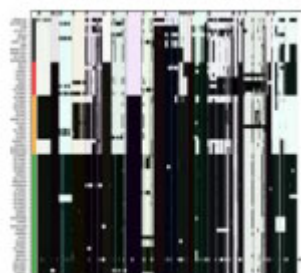
Microbial genomics

We aim to exploit next-generation DNA sequencing to better understand how medically important bacteria cause disease, become resistant to antibiotics and disseminate globally. Our major focus is the role of mobile genetic elements in the evolution of virulence and antimicrobial resistance amongst pathogens such as *Escherichia coli*, *Streptococcus pyogenes*, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. Our group develops new computational approaches for the rapid analysis of bacterial genome data from the latest sequencing technologies.



Genomic investigation of antimicrobial resistance.

Carbapenem resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) pose an urgent risk to global human health. CRE, which include organisms such as *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Escherichia coli*, are resistant to almost all currently available antibiotics. Almost 50% of patients who develop bloodstream infections with these organisms die from the infection. In this project we use Pacific Biosciences Single Molecule Real-Time (SMRT) sequencing to determine the complete genomes of CRE isolated from local hospitals. Comparative genomic analysis will enable us to recognise the genetic cause of antibiotic resistance and the relationship between isolates from an outbreak. As we outlined recently (Beatson SA, Walker MJ (2014) *Science* 345: 1454-1455), in contrast to short-read sequencing technologies commonly used in genomic studies, SMRT sequencing allows complex antimicrobial resistance elements to be properly characterised.



Phylogenomic analysis of global pandemic *E. coli*.

Escherichia coli sequence type 131 (ST131) is a globally disseminated, multidrug resistant clone responsible for a high proportion of urinary tract and bloodstream infections. By sequencing the genomes of ST131 isolates from all over the world we were able to use phylogenomic analysis to investigate the rapid emergence and successful spread of this clone (Petty, Ben Zakour et al., PNAS, 2014). In this project we will analyse the genomes of other global pandemic multidrug resistant *E. coli* clones in order to understand of the role of mobile genetic elements and antibiotic resistance in their evolution.

Novel methods to visualise bacterial genomic data.

We have previously developed easy-to-use software such as BRIG and Easyfig for visualising bacterial genome comparisons. We are seeking computationally focused students to develop novel web-based software for intuitive visualization and reporting of virulence and antimicrobial resistance gene profiles from genome data generated using Illumina or Nanopore technologies.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Comparative genomic analysis, Phylogenomics, Bioinformatics, Python programming, Web programming; Joint projects that have both computational and “wet-lab” components may be arranged with other SCMB microbiology group leaders on request.

Useful Majors/Minors: Genetics / Microbiology / Bioinformatics / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Computational Science



PROFESSOR PAUL BERNHARDT

Phone: 07 3365 4266

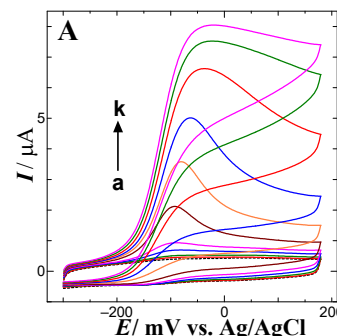
Email: p.bernhardt@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/paul-bernhardt>

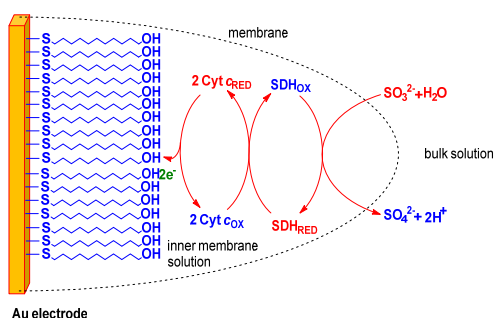


Coordination and Bioinorganic Chemistry

Our research efforts are concerned with electron transfer reactions and coordination chemistry of relevance to biology and catalysis. Students interested in any of these areas of research should contact Prof. Bernhardt for a more detailed project description.

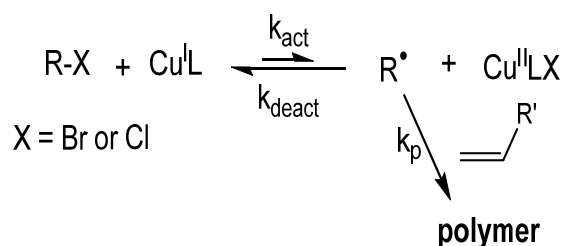


Enzyme Electrochemistry



Enzyme electrode biosensors are devices that comprise a redox active enzyme integrated with electronic circuitry to give real-time quantitative analysis of chemical compounds in biological fluids or the environment. The current that is generated by the oxidation or reduction of the substrate provides a quantitative measure of the substrate concentration. This project will involve the electrochemical investigation of metalloenzymes currently available within in our group.

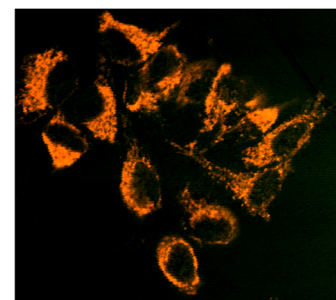
Copper complexes as catalysts for atom transfer radical reactions



Simple Cu(I) complexes (e.g. [Cu(bipy)₂]⁺) are capable of generating organic radicals from alkyl halide precursors and have been used extensively in so called atom transfer radical polymerisation (ATRP). The mechanism by which the radical is produced remains controversial. This project will use spectroscopic and electrochemical methods to understand the reactivity of these simple but highly reactive compounds.

Imaging Metals in Cells Using Fluorescent Ligands

Within living cells transition metals may occur in various forms either tightly bound (to proteins) or weakly bound to small molecules. Identifying the cellular localisation and chemical form (oxidation state etc.) of these metals is an important goal. Due to its high sensitivity fluorescence is a popular technique for visualising molecules at low concentrations. This project will investigate the combination of the ideal metal binding properties with fluorescent tags such as fluorescein (a well characterised fluorophore) in order to develop ligands that respond as ON/OFF fluorescent switches when complexed to different metal ions within cells.



Techniques you learn in our group may include: electrochemistry, synthesis, spectroscopy, structure determination.

Useful Majors: Chemistry / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology



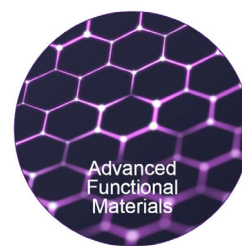
PROFESSOR DEBRA BERNHARDT

AIBN/SCMB

Phone: 07 3346 3939

Email: d.bernhardt@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://www.aibn.uq.edu.au/debra-bernhardt>



Theory and computation for new materials and fluids

My research group is interested in the study of matter using theoretical and computational methods that can ultimately be used to address a wide range of practical problems. Applications of interest include transport in nanopores, fluctuations in nanoscale systems, melting, solubility, separation of gases, lubrication, design of ionic liquids, design and assessment of materials for energy conversion and storage, carbon dioxide sequestration and catalysis. Our group has world leading expertise in various theoretical and computational methods ranging from quantum chemical calculations to the statistical mechanics of nonequilibrium systems, access to high performance computing facilities and an international team of collaborators. Possible projects include:

Transport in nanoporous systems

Nanoporous solids are used as adsorbents in pollution control, industrial separations, storage of fluids and catalysis. Simulations can be used to assist in the design of better materials, and to understand the fundamental nature of the adsorption and transport processes. One of the key factors determining flow of fluids through nanopores is their stick or slip behaviour near the walls. We have recently developed a new approach for studying this behaviour that should be more efficient for complex systems and have projects where this approach can be applied.

Computational studies of ionic liquids

Ionic liquids have exceptional solvation properties and electrical conductivity, meaning they have a wide range of industrial applications. By combining different ions, ionic liquids can be designed to optimize their properties. However, the science of ionic liquids is new and therefore prediction of their properties is problematic. To address this, we are taking advantage of recent developments in nonequilibrium statistical mechanics to create efficient algorithms to determine key properties of ionic liquids.

Statistical mechanics of nonequilibrium fluids

Any system that is flowing, stirred, has a temperature gradient across it or is subject to an external field is in a nonequilibrium state. The properties of these systems are not well developed when the systems are far from equilibrium. In this project theory and computational methods will be used to expand our fundamental understanding of these systems.

Design of new materials for energy applications

New materials are required for solar energy applications, catalysis, adsorbents for pollutants, storage of fuels, new polymers, fuel cells etc. Quantum mechanics enables the properties of these materials to be predicted in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Projects are available that will focus on the prediction of material properties using a range of computational quantum chemical methods.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Molecular dynamics simulation, quantum chemical calculations, development of theories, modelling of experimental results.

Useful Majors/Minors: Bioinformatics / Biophysics / Chemistry / Computational Science / Computer Science / Mathematics / Physics / Chemical Engineering / Materials Engineering / Software Engineering

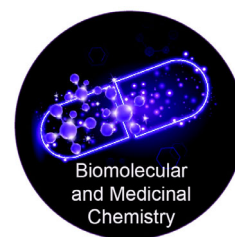


PROFESSOR JOANNE BLANCHFIELD

Phone: 07 3365 3622

Email: j.blanchfield@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/joanne-blanchfield>



Isolation and Bioavailability of natural products from herbal extracts

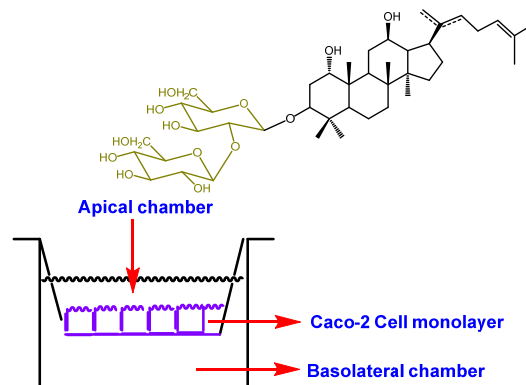
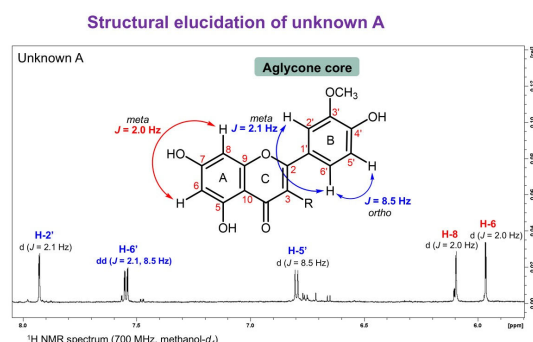
My research broadly concerns natural products isolation and elucidation, drug discovery, design and development. We search for potential new drugs in natural sources such as medicinal herbs and traditional remedies. We also examine the compounds' bioavailability using cell-based assay to explore the mechanisms of absorption across biological molecules.

Our goals are to:

- Explore the phytochemistry of traditional medicinal plants to elucidate the structure of new compounds and determine the active components of extracts.
- Determine the compounds in plant extracts that can cross the GI tract and thus are most likely to be the biologically active components.
- Build scaffolds that can present the components of antigens to the immune system to elicit protective antibodies without having to use whole organisms in vaccines.

Herbal remedies and traditional medicinal plants are a major source of medical treatment for much of the world's population. Unfortunately, little is known about the fate of the natural products in the extracts or which, if any, are biologically active. We offer projects that involve the isolation of natural products from Australian native plants and commercially significant herbal extracts. We also use a cellular model of the small intestine (Caco-2 cell monolayers) to investigate which natural products are likely to enter the blood stream after oral intake.

We also look closely at what changes the compounds undergo during digestion and absorption. This project involves working closely with collaborators from our industry partner, Integra Healthcare and colleagues at Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin and Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.



Useful Majors: Chemistry / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology



PROFESSOR MIKAEL BODÉN

Phone: 07 3365 1307

Email: m.boden@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/mikael-boden>

Project topics: <http://bioinf.scmb.uq.edu.au/projects>



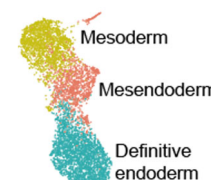
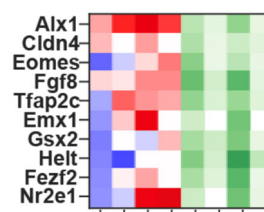
Bioinformatics

The scales of data produced by genome and proteome technologies allow us to distinguish biologically meaningful signals from mere noise or artefacts, e.g. to identify "drivers" of function and structure. On the flip side, the complexity of signals challenges our ability to process, integrate and interpret them. To this end, our research group uses probabilistic modelling, machine learning and data analytics. While we aim to resolve a range of ever-changing problems in genomics, systems and protein biology, our "bioinformatics" goals are to

1. effectively manage the computational complexity involved in analysing thousands of genomes, epigenomes and proteomes, each capturing thousands of biologically diverse molecules
2. enable the seamless integration of uncertain and incomplete data, typical of recent biotechnology and data collections, with strong attention to biological expertise to constrain resulting models
3. empower the interpretation of "whole system" data, aimed at understanding the genetic, epigenetic and evolutionary basis of phenotypes of scientific and applied significance

Modelling the dynamics in development and disease

Increasingly genome technologies uncover spatial and temporal specificity of observations, but data need to be carefully and selectively pieced together. We work on integrating genomic, transcriptomic and epigenomic data, viewed together with information that can be predicted from sequence and other genomic markers, accounting for the uncertainty of their juxtaposition. With collaborators we have been using data integration to infer drivers in development (of the brain and other organs) as well as in cancer and disease.

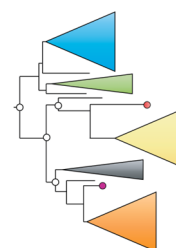


Developing computational tools to harness sequencing data

New (sequencing) technologies bring new opportunities and challenges, including long- and short read technologies at single-cell or bulk resolution, and with spatial specificity. We develop tools for leveraging the scale of available data, including assessment of reproducibility, the discovery and extraction of biological footprints that emerge across time, in 3D and different cellular conditions, or that are available by complementarity between data types, including sequence motifs. We regularly publish prediction services and computational tools open to the scientific community.

Inferring evolutionary determinants to support synthetic biology

All biological components that are genetically encoded are subject to evolution—selective pressures in their ecological niche. With biochemists and protein engineers, we develop (phylogenetic) tools for detecting what specific changes explain the make-up of a gene or protein; this leads to a fundamental appreciation of genetic determinants of success, but can also be used to design novel variants or even re-run evolution artificially to generate gene products that perform in conditions for medical, industrial and agricultural applications in the emerging bioeconomy.



Skills you may develop include: machine learning, probabilistic modelling, advanced coding, statistical analysis in genomics, transcriptomics and epigenetics, phylogenetic analysis

Useful Majors/Minors: Bioinformatics / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Computational Science / Data Science / Genetics / Computer science



PROFESSOR PAUL BURN

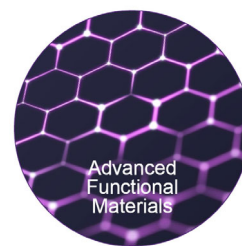
FAA FRSC

UQ Laureate Fellow

Phone: 07 3365 3778

Email: p.burn2@uq.edu.au

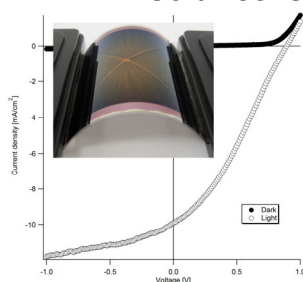
Web: <http://www.physics.uq.edu.au/cope/>



Chemistry of Materials and Nanotechnology

The research mission of the Centre for Organic Photonics and Electronics (COPE) is to take **nanotechnology** from the “bench to the market”. COPE contains state-of-the-art synthesis laboratories, a Class 1000 clean room, device fabrication facilities, and a suite of instrument rooms for the characterization of materials and opto-electronic devices. COPE has Honours research projects in all branches of Chemistry (organic, inorganic, materials, physical, and computation) giving a fantastic opportunity for you to develop your own interests and skills at the cutting edge of a technological area, e.g., **solar cells, flat panel displays and lighting, plastic electronics, explosives sensors, cameras and imaging, and synthetic vaccines**. Below is a snapshot of some of the projects on offer and I would be happy to discuss them with you.

Thin film solar cells



A key component of slowing and ultimately halting climate change is converting a proportion of the 1 kJ of solar energy that falls on each square metre of the Earth's surface per second of every daylight hour into electricity. Would you like to use your synthetic chemistry skills to create new nanomaterials (organic and inorganic, e.g., perovskites) that can be used in efficient, flexible, and light-weight solar cells? Do your interests lie in studying structure using neutron scattering or would you like to apply computation to develop an understanding of why some materials work well and some do not, leading to new design criteria?

Flat panel displays and lighting



Lighting and displays based on organic light-emitting diodes (OLEDs) have the potential advantages of cheap manufacturing, better power consumption, better colours, and ultimately being flexible. Imagine a TV screen that could roll up into your mobile phone! Would you like to apply your interest in synthetic chemistry to develop new emissive materials that can be incorporated into real OLEDs at COPE or apply physical chemistry techniques to understand how they degrade?

Sensors for explosives



We are developing in partnership with industry a handheld technology based on fluorescence quenching for the detection of explosives to replace canines. Are you an organic or physical chemist who would like to work in an interdisciplinary team developing and testing dendritic sensing materials?

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Synthetic chemistry [organic and organometallic, small molecule, dendrimers, polymers, and poly(dendrimers)]; characterisation techniques [chemistry (NMR, mass spectroscopy, IR, UV-visible etc), materials (GPC, DSC, TGA, electrochemistry, neutron scattering etc)]; photophysical (PLQY, PL spectra, time resolved PL measurements); computation; device fabrication and testing.

Useful Majors/Minors: Chemistry / Computational Science



DR DAVID CANTILLO

Phone: 07 336 53932

Email: d.cantillo@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/12038/david-cantillo>

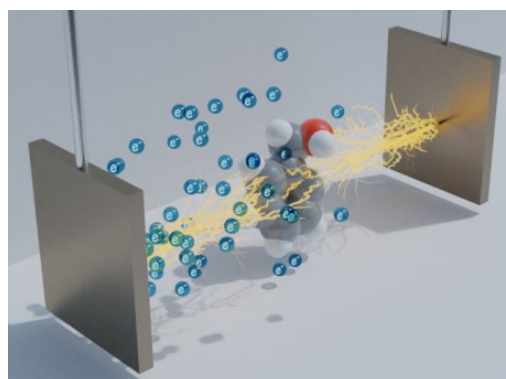


Synthetic Organic Electrochemistry

The synthesis of organic compounds using electrical current instead of chemical reagents is rapidly growing as one of the most sustainable methods for the manufacturing of important compounds, such as pharmaceuticals and agrochemicals.

Our goals are to:

- Create new methods of organic synthesis based on electrolysis
- Develop electrochemical methods for the synthesis of pharmaceutical ingredients
- Design novel electrolyzers for commercial application pharmaceutical industry

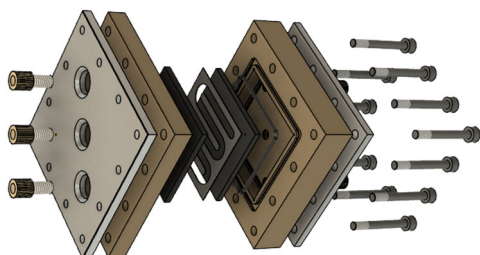
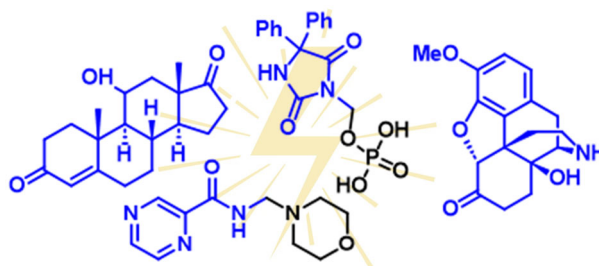


Electrochemical synthetic method development

We research on novel methods for the synthesis of organic compounds based on the anodic oxidation and/or cathodic reduction of organic compounds. Electron exchange with an electrode surface can generate high energy intermediates such as radicals, carbocations and carbanions from relatively inert and simply organic compounds under mild conditions. Thus, electrochemistry can be used to enable reactions difficult to accomplish with conventional methods.

Sustainable electrochemical synthesis of pharmaceuticals

Electrochemical methods utilize electrical current instead of reagents to realize organic transformations, avoiding the use of stoichiometric amounts of chemicals and thus reducing costs and waste. We apply these principles to the development of new, greener electrochemistry-based routes for the synthesis of medicines.



Flow chemistry and flow electrolysis

This research focuses on the development of technologies for the scale-up of electrochemical reactions and other transformations, via computational design of flow electrolyzers, their manufacturing, and implementation in the electrochemical synthesis of medicines.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: synthetic organic chemistry, process chemistry, electro-organic synthesis, electrolysis, application of green chemistry metrics, flow processing, quantitative reaction monitoring (NMR, GC, HPLC), characterisation of organic compounds (NMR, MS).

Useful Majors: Chemistry / Chemical Sciences / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology



PROFESSOR BERNIE CARROLL

Phone: 07 3365 2131

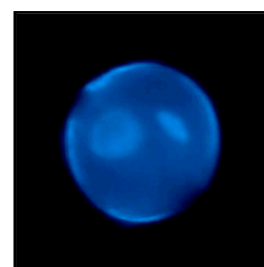
Email: b.carroll@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/bernard-carroll>



Research Area

We are using *Arabidopsis* as a eukaryotic model for studying the mechanisms of RNAi and epigenetic silencing. Gene silencing is a highly conserved process in plants and animals, and is of fundamental importance to developmental regulation of gene expression, defence against viruses, transposon silencing, adaptation to environments and genome evolution. Gene silencing is also of immense relevance to biotechnology.



Our goals are to:

- Understand components of gene silencing pathways in eukaryotes, including mechanisms of intercellular movement of gene silencing
- Define the importance of gene silencing pathways in eukaryotic development, reproductive biology, defense against pathogens, and adaptation to environmental change

Molecular basis of meiotic drive in pollen

Meiotic drive involves defective meiosis and results in preferential transmission of selfish chromosomes through to the next generation. We have recently identified the first example of meiotic drive in pollen of flowering plants (see above). This project aims to identify the gene responsible for the meiotic drive phenotype in pollen. Our data suggests that the meiotic drive phenotype may have an epigenetic basis. This project should shed new light on mechanisms of cell division (meiosis and mitosis) and sexual reproduction in both plants and animals.



Systemic RNAi and its relevance to defense & development

Remarkably, once RNAi is initiated, it spreads systemically throughout the plant to confer systemic resistance against homologous viruses. Using a GFP reporter (see left), we have identified *Arabidopsis* mutants that are defective in systemic RNAi, and many of these mutants also show epigenetic and/or developmental defects. This project will involve further characterization of these systemic RNAi mutants, including their interaction with plant viruses.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Genetic analysis, genetic mapping and map-based gene cloning, plasmid construction and production of genetically modified plants (GM plants) including CRISPRs, micrografting of plants, plant pathogen assays, confocal microscopy, cell sorting, genetic diagnostics, genomics, bioinformatics.

Useful Majors/Minors: Genetics / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Microbiology



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR CHEONG XIN (CX) CHAN



Phone: 07 3365 3829

Email: c.chan1@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/6318/cheong-xin-chan>

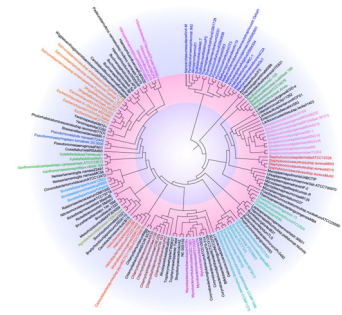
Genomics, Computational and Evolutionary Biology

We use advanced computational approaches to investigate genome evolution. Our broad aims are:

- to understand evolution of diverse genomes in changing environments; and
- to develop highly scalable approaches for comparative genomics.

Genome evolution and innovation

We study how eukaryote genomes evolve and innovate as organisms adapt to diverse ecological niches, including extreme environments. Through comparative genomics, we identify genome features, genes, functions, and pathways that are unique to specific conditions, including symbiosis, stress tolerance, and venom production. To answer these questions, we generate and analyse genome-scale data using a range of high-throughput sequencing technologies. Our research spans a wide variety of organisms from bacteria, protists, algae to plants, corals, and jellyfish; some of these genomes are highly complex with idiosyncratic features.

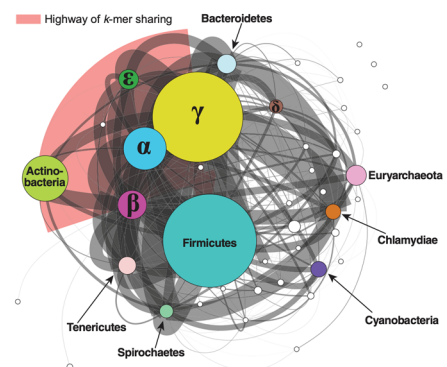


Hologenomics of symbiosis

We use metagenomic approaches to explore how symbiotic partners work together to sustain a functional ecological unit, known as a holobiont. A key focus is on corals, which rely on a delicate partnership between the coral animal, symbiotic dinoflagellates, and other microbes. When this partnership breaks down, it leads to coral bleaching. Our research investigates the genome evolution of these symbionts and how it influences coral reef health. We also study how microbiomes contribute to heavy metal accumulation in drought-resistant plants and their potential role in rehabilitating mined lands.

Scalable phylogenomics

Scalable approaches are essential for analysing genome-scale sequence data. Conventional approaches based on multiple sequence alignment assume that homologous sequences are contiguous in full-length, which is biologically unrealistic. This approach is also computationally demanding. To overcome these limitations, we develop and apply alignment-free methods (e.g. based on k-mers) to study genome evolution at scale. These approaches also allow us to infer evolutionary relationships as networks, moving beyond the conventional tree-like view of evolutionary history.



Techniques you learn in our group may include: genomics, bioinformatics, scripting (Python/R), high-performance computing, comparative genomics, phylogenetics, phylogenomics, molecular evolution

Useful Majors/Minors: Bioinformatics / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Computational Science / Genetics / Microbiology

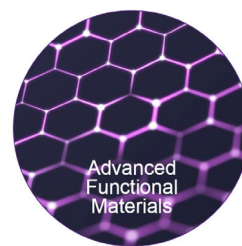


PROFESSOR JACK CLEGG

Phone: 07 3365 4384

Email: j.clegg@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/jack-clegg>

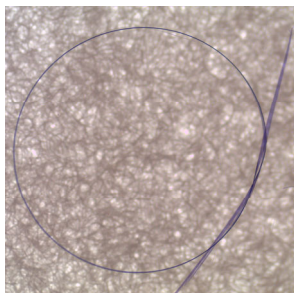
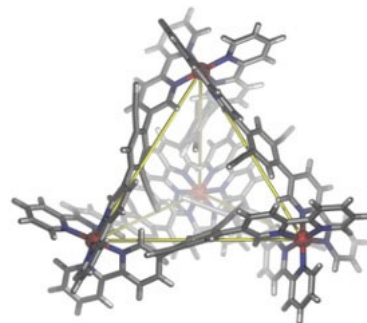


Supramolecular Chemistry

My research is in the field of metallo-supramolecular chemistry and bridges the traditional fields of organic and inorganic chemistry. I use a self-assembly approach and by combining the inherent physical and chemical properties of metals with organic (ligand) components I can design and synthesis new materials with central cavities that are capable of selectively binding smaller molecules. The resulting nanoscale structures can be either discrete or polymeric (framework) in nature. The potential applications for these compounds are diverse including drug delivery, catalysis, sequestration, separation and gas storage. Many of my compounds are characterised by X-ray diffraction methods. Due to their large size, somewhere between average “small” molecules and biological macromolecules (and challenging diffraction properties), I often employ synchrotron radiation for analysis.

Metallo-supramolecular capsules and cages

Careful consideration of the geometrical properties of metals and organic components allows for the construction of a variety of discrete “supermolecules” formed from the spontaneous aggregation of numerous predesigned components. These structures, often with central cavities, take numerous forms from two-dimensional architectures such as triangular and square architectures to elaborate and beautiful three-dimensional species such as tetrahedra and cubes. Changing the size, shape, properties and charge of the architecture allows for the selective encapsulation of different materials inside them. Anions, cations, multiple solvent molecules, gases, drug molecules and pyrophoric substances have all been shown to be bound inside the larger self-assembled molecules.



Flexible Crystals

Single crystals are typically brittle, inelastic materials that crack, shatter or deform irreversibly when they are struck or bent. We have recently discovered a series of materials that possess the characteristics of both crystallinity and significant flexibility including single crystals of a metal-organic complex that exhibit sufficient elastic flexibility that they can be tied in a knot and are in the process of working out how and why this is the case.

Techniques used in our group include: Synthesis, PXRD, SCXRD, NMR, M/S, IR, Gas Sorption, DFT

Useful Majors/Minors: Chemistry / Computational Science / Engineering majors / Physics



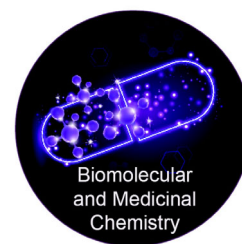
PROFESSOR JAMES DE VOSS

Head of School

Phone: 07 3335 3825

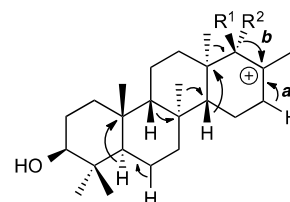
Email: j.devoss@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/james-de-voss>



Biological and Synthetic Chemistry

My group is concerned with *biological* and *synthetic* chemistry and in particular with the application of chemical principles to the understanding of biological processes. While some projects are purely synthetic in nature, most are a blend of the range of disciplines that make up modern bio-organic chemistry: molecular biology, protein purification and characterisation, synthesis and structure determination.

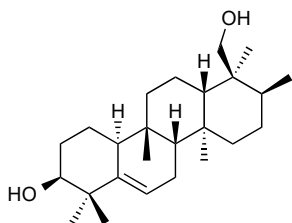


Our goals are to:

- Understand the mechanism of enzyme catalysed oxidations
- Discover the bioactive constituents of herbal medicines
- Synthesise herbal constituents and small molecule probes of enzyme mechanism

Cytochromes P450

The cytochromes P450 are a superfamily of oxidative haemoproteins that catalyse an amazing variety of oxidative transformations, ranging from simple alkene epoxidation all the way through to oxidative carbon-carbon bond cleavage. P450s are of interest as they (i) are often unique enzymes in a biosynthetic pathway and as such represent new targets for therapeutic agents or (ii) are extremely efficient biodegradative/biosynthetic catalysts that offer the potential of developing tailored oxidative catalysts for synthetic transformations. We are interested in understanding the mechanism of action of P450s that catalyse interesting and unusual biosynthetic and biodegradative reactions. This may eventually allow prediction of the types of reactions catalysed by P450s and their use in organic syntheses.



Phytochemical Characterisation of Constituents of Medicinally-Used Herbs

Whilst herbal medicines are widely used within the general community and have a long history of such use, their chemical constituents are often poorly characterised. This makes assessment of the true biological activity of many of these preparations extremely difficult. In collaboration with a local herbal medicine company (Integria) we have embarked upon a program of phytochemical characterisation of a number of therapeutically prescribed herbs with the aim of (i) determining the

structure of their constituents and (ii) understanding the way in which these molecules are biosynthesised.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Organic synthesis, enantiospecific synthesis, (enantioselective) chromatographic purification, structure determination (especially via NMR), site directed mutagenesis, protein expression and purification.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biophysics / Chemistry

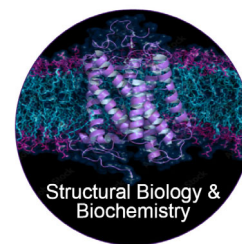


DR EVELYNE DEPLAZES

Phone: 07 336 54 180

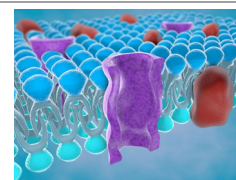
Email: e.deplazes@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/1443/evelyne-deplazes>
<https://researchers.uq.edu.au/researcher/8833>



How do small molecules interact with cell membranes?

Our lab studies the interaction of small molecules with biological membranes. This includes endogenous substances like steroids that are essential to cellular function, as well as organic molecules and peptides that might be used in drug development. We collaborate with peptide chemists, microbiologists, and cell biologists to link our model systems to cell-based systems. This [video](#) and our [recent outreach article](#) tell you more about why cell membranes are important for understanding biological processes or developing new drugs.



Our lab is unique in that it combines biophysical chemistry experiments and computer simulations in the same research group. To find out how computer simulations are used to understand chemical systems, have a look at this [video](#). Techniques you can learn in our lab include fluorescence UV-vis or Raman spectroscopy, fluorescence microscopy, ellipsometry, dynamic light scattering or zeta potential measurements, molecular dynamic simulations.

We welcome students from various academic background including chemistry, biochemistry, molecular biology, physics or computer science. Students should have an interest in biophysical chemistry, biophysics or structural biology. Most importantly students need to be curious, highly motivated and interested in learning something new.

Ex-vivo and in-silico structural models of fungal cell membranes and cell walls.

Targets for developing antifungal drugs are limited due to the similarity between fungal and human cells and most antifungal drugs work by interfering with the cell wall or cell membrane. Lipid vesicles or other model membrane systems are regularly used to study drug-membrane interactions, but these model systems are too simplistic to capture the complexity of cell membrane or wall. This project aims to develop ex-vivo membrane models that better capture drug-membrane interactions. We do this using both biophysical chemistry and computer simulations (in-silico) approaches.

Antifungal peptides

Invasive fungal infections are difficult to treat, and many current drugs are toxic to human cells. This project studies the membrane-altering properties of peptides or steroid drugs that have antifungal activity or that increase the potency of existing anti-fungal drugs. Understanding the mechanism of action of these compounds will help develop less toxic antifungal treatments. This project is a collaboration with fungal biologists and combines biophysical chemistry and cell-based experiments.

What drives the haemolytic activity of antimicrobial peptides AMPs

The rise of antibiotic resistance has renewed the interest in antimicrobial peptides with complex, membrane-based mechanisms. While AMPs have potent antibiotic activity, most of them are also haemolytic (they rupture red blood cells). This project aims to use lipid extracts from cells to develop membrane models that more accurately mimic the haemolytic activity of AMPs and help identify what properties give a peptide potent antibiotic activity yet would be safe to use in humans.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: fluorescence and UV-vis spectroscopy, isothermal calorimetry, Tethered lipid bilayer membranes (see this [video](#)), molecular dynamics [simulations](#). **Useful Majors:** Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemical Sciences / Chemistry / Computational Science



DR PAUL EVANS

Phone: 07 3365 3948

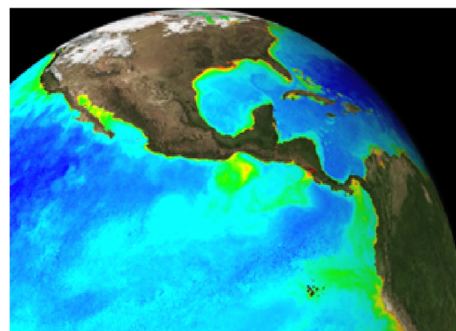
Email: p.evans3@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/1167/paul-evans>



Applied Environmental Microbiology

Microorganisms are important in many global nutrient cycles; they transform inorganic elements into bioavailable compounds that are essential for life. They also degrade biomass to the same inorganic compounds to complete this cycle. Despite microorganisms being important to life on Earth, many remain poorly characterised due to our inability to culture and characterise these recalcitrant organisms. The recent development and use of high throughput DNA sequencing technologies has allowed us to now study the metabolism of these microorganisms in greater detail.



For this reason, my research team uses a combination of DNA sequencing and cultivation-based techniques to understand the genetic basis for the metabolism of compounds by microorganisms.

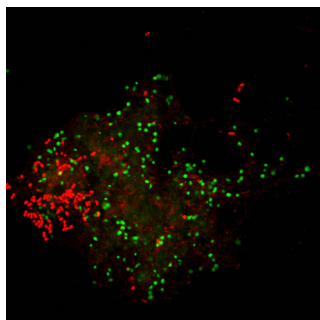
Our goals are to use classical microbiology and high-throughput DNA techniques to:

- Identify the microorganisms cycling these nutrients
- Understand the metabolic pathways these microorganisms utilise
- Identify genes and processes that could be utilised in biotechnological applications

Nutrient Cycling by Microorganisms in Diverse Environments

The development of high-throughput sequencing and bioinformatic techniques has allowed metabolic capabilities from novel and uncultivated microorganisms that are novel to be inferred.

Now, the challenge is to cultivate these recalcitrant microorganisms from their native environments. Many of these novel organisms are found in hydrothermal vents, hot springs, coal seams, seeps or industrial waste streams that are rich in hydrocarbons. The implication is that there is a dependence of these species on non-traditional growth substrates in these environments. This project aims to identify non-traditional mechanisms of growth using cultivation-based techniques.



Bioprospecting for Enzymes in Nature

Thermal environments contain a wealth of enzymes associated with the biosynthesis and degradation of large macromolecules and complex compounds in these environments. The metabolic features of these thermally tolerant microorganisms could be adapted to industrial processes either for the formation or catabolism of biomolecules.

This project aims to characterise from thermal environments relevant microorganisms that have the metabolic capabilities associated with processes such as polyhydroxyalkanoate biosynthesis, hydrolysis of aromatic compounds or degradation of long chain alkanes.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Computational Science / Microbiology

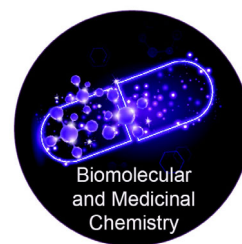


PROFESSOR VITO FERRO

Phone: 07 3346 9598

Email: v.ferro@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/600/vito-ferro>

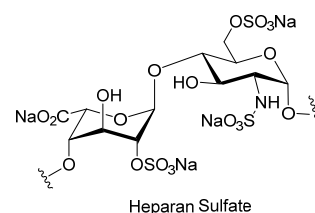


Carbohydrate and Medicinal Chemistry

We are focused on synthetic carbohydrate chemistry and medicinal chemistry. Of major interest is the synthesis of derivatives and mimetics of heparan sulfate (HS), a complex polysaccharide involved in numerous diseases.

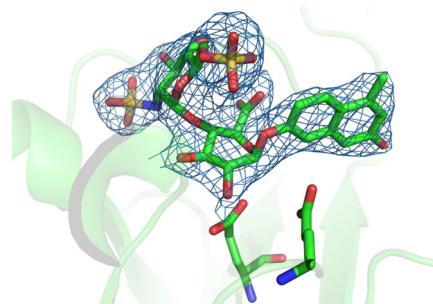
Our goals are to:

- Develop new methods to synthesise biologically relevant carbohydrates and their derivatives
- Design and synthesise compounds to probe and/or inhibit carbohydrate-protein interactions involved in disease processes



Pharmacological chaperones for MPS disorders

Mucopolysaccharidosis (or MPS) disorders, such as Sanfilippo syndrome, are rare genetic diseases caused by mutations in HS-degrading enzymes, resulting in accumulation of undegraded HS in cells and ultimately fatal brain damage. We aim to design and synthesize small molecules as “chaperones” to protect the defective enzyme from degradation and restore enzyme activity to sufficient levels to alleviate symptoms.



Heparan sulfate mimetics

Many viruses use HS as an entry receptor or co-receptor to initiate infection. We have recently shown that HS mimetics such as pixatimod (aka PG545) are potent inhibitors of SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. We aim to build on this work by designing and synthesizing novel HS mimetics that block infection and cell to cell spread of SARS-CoV-2 and other viruses. The enzyme heparanase mediates HS catabolism and is of considerable interest due to its prominent role in cancer, inflammation, and viral infections. Building on our structural insights into heparanase catalysis, we aim to synthesize novel probes and inhibitors to study heparanase biology and to develop new therapeutics. Additionally, we are developing new radical-based chemistry to efficiently synthesize rare L-sugars found in HS and on the surface of pathogenic bacteria.

Antibacterial glycoconjugates

We aim to design and synthesize novel glycoconjugates for various antibacterial applications. For example, multivalent structures to block the attachment of pathogenic bacteria to host cells to prevent infections; or adjuvants to stimulate the immune system, or to recruit pre-existing antibodies to kill bacteria; or glycoconjugates to more effectively target antibiotics to bacterial pathogens.

Techniques you learn in our group may include organic synthesis, NMR spectroscopy, mass spectrometry, flash chromatography, TLC, IR, molecular modelling

Useful Majors/Minors: Chemistry / Chemical & Nano Biotechnology / Medical Biotechnology / Nanotechnology



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MARINA FORTES



Phone: 07 3365 4258

Email: m.fortes@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/1272/marina-fortes/>

Genetics, Genomics and Livestock Biotechnologies

In the Livestock Genomics Group, we conduct research that contributes to the development of sustainable livestock industry practices. Our projects range from basic to applied science and entail a mixture of fieldwork, laboratory work and data analyses.

Our goals are to:

- Identify mutations, genes and pathways associated with livestock traits.
- Understand the genetic basis of traits that impact livestock sustainability.
- Create biotechnologies that help cattle producers enhance productivity and sustainability.

The 'Omics' of fertility traits

Understanding the physiology of mammalian reproduction has broad implications, from human fertility clinics to livestock productivity. In our group we use genetics and genomics as avenues to discover genes, gene networks and pathways associated with various aspects of mammalian reproduction, using cattle as a model.



Enteric methane emissions and cattle pregnancy

Ruminants emit methane, a potent greenhouse gas, as a byproduct of ruminal fermentation. To mitigate this important environmental problem, we must first understand its biological constraints. We are currently investigating the impact of pregnancy on the cows' metabolism, feed intake, feeding behaviour, rumen and faecal microbiomes, and thus the methane emissions. This project is in partnership with QAAFI, the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation, and funded by Meat and Livestock Australia.

Puberty: identifying the most productive heifers

The age of puberty is a heritable trait. Early puberty is desirable in tropical beef cattle because it is associated with the lifetime production of breeding cows. Identifying on farm which females are going to be early pubertal is a challenge. We are investigating genetic markers and biomarkers that could aid cattle farmers in their task of identifying the most productive females for their herds.

Techniques you learn in our group may include quantitative genetics, molecular genetics, bioinformatics, genome sequencing, SNP genotyping, real-time PCR, data analyses, scientific writing, fieldwork with cattle, etc.

Useful Majors: Genetics / Biotechnology / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemistry / Computational Science / Microbiology / Parasitology



PROFESSOR JAMES FRASER

Phone: 07 3365 4868

Email: j.fraser1@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/james-fraser>

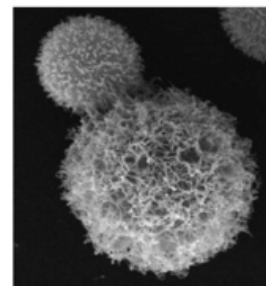


Fungal Pathogens of Humans

As immunosuppressed patient populations grow, the incidence of secondary infections from fungal pathogens has risen sharply to become a significant cause of death. Research in the Fungal Pathogenesis Laboratory focuses on species including *Cryptococcus neoformans*, the cause of one of the leading life-threatening infections in AIDS patients.

Our goals are to:

- Create new drugs for treating life-threatening fungal infections
- Identify how fungi evolve during infection to become more pathogenic
- Understand how primary metabolism and virulence are linked



Cryptococcus neoformans, an encapsulated pathogenic yeast.

Antifungal Development

Cryptococcosis is one of the top three killers of AIDS patients worldwide, in part due to the absence of an adequate array of antifungal drugs. We are addressing this need by pursuing the development of novel antimycotic agents active against *C. neoformans* and other fungal pathogens. Our current focus is on targets in the purine biosynthetic pathway, where we have been using mutagenesis, virulence models, crystallisation and high throughput screens to identify novel lead compounds upon which to base new therapeutic agents. This project is the focus of a collaboration with the groups of Prof. Bostjan Kobe and Assoc. Prof. Ulrike Kappler.



CT scan of brain lesions (indicated) caused by *C. neoformans* infection.

Microevolution of a Pathogen during Infection of Humans

Even if a patient survives an infection by *C. neoformans*, they often suffer relapse infections that are even more deadly. We have shown that while in the human host the strains causing these recurrent infections have accumulated mutations that are associated with virulence, facilitating relapse. Using next-generation sequencing of the genomes of series of isolates from individual patients, we are developing a deeper understanding of this process. By combining our bioinformatic studies with molecular genetic techniques, we are revealing weaknesses in the pathogen that we hope to exploit in our antifungal development program.

A New Era of Molecular Genetic Tools

The molecular genetic manipulation possible in an organism is limited by the toolkit of techniques available. In order to enable studies of ever-growing complexity investigating drug targets and mechanisms of virulence, we have developed a range of constructs and techniques that enable powerful genetic engineering of *Cryptococcus neoformans* that range from CRISPR and inhibitors of non-homologous end joining to facilitate targeted genetic manipulations, to a spectrum of fluorescent markers, a variety of tandem affinity purification tags and repurposed selectable markers. We continue to develop new technologies that empower our research, making more complex experimental design and greater discoveries possible.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Cloning, gene deletion, genomics, protein purification, crystallisation, eukaryotic virulence models, next-generation sequencing, antifungal testing, karyotyping.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemistry / Computational Science / Genetics / Microbiology

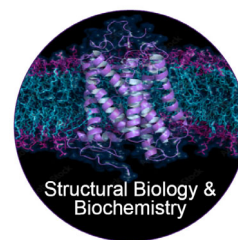


PROFESSOR ELIZABETH GILLAM

Phone: 07 3365 1410

Email: e.gillam@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/219/elizabeth-gillam>

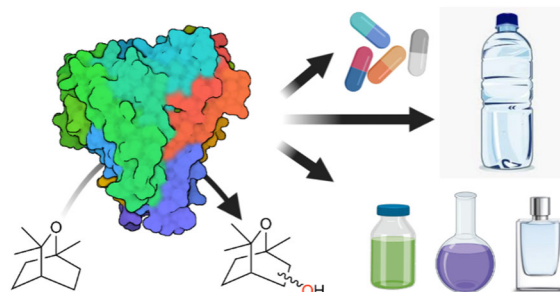


Synthetic Biology, Biocatalysis and Enzyme Evolution

Cytochrome P450 enzymes catalyse more than 60 different chemical transformations on a structurally diverse substrates, making them one of the most versatile groups of biocatalysts known. They are ancient enzymes distributed through all domains of life and carry out diverse roles such as in the synthesis of hormones, the utilisation of carbon sources, the production of defensive molecules such as antibiotics, and the clearance of drugs and toxins.

Our goals are to:

- Determine what factors drive P450 evolution
- Create novel enzymes and systems that use P450s in clever ways for useful purposes



P450s for green, solar-powered chemistry in drug development and bioremediation

We have developed extremely thermostable P450s that are very useful in industry since they can withstand long incubations at elevated temperatures. They can be used as 'off-the-shelf' reagents to catalyse useful chemistry, such as in drug discovery, fine chemical synthesis, and cleaning up the environment. Working with drug companies, we are exploring the structural features that make them efficient, robust and specialised, and how they can be best deployed in chemical processes. To make such processes cheaper and more sustainable, we are using synbio to immobilise P450s in protein cages and power P450 reactions for clean, green biocatalysis in algae.



Ancestral reconstruction of P450s, enzymes evolved to deal with the unknown in animal-plant-microbial chemical warfare

P450s metabolise ~ 95% of all drugs as well as innumerable environmental chemicals. This is an extraordinary range of substrates, many of which have not been present during evolution. We are studying how P450s have evolved to deal with such novel substrates by reconstructing ancestral precursors and evolutionary pathways. We are exploring such questions as how did the koala evolve to live on eucalyptus leaves, a toxic diet for most mammals.

Engineering P450s to improve food security and agricultural productivity

P450s are involved in the biosynthesis of strigolactones (SLs), plant hormones that control plant architecture, nutrient uptake and responses to parasitic weeds that cripple food production in the third world. Applying synthetic SLs to infested soils could clear arable land of parasitic weeds and enhance food production. We are engineering P450s to make novel, 'designer' SLs to counter parasitic weeds, improve nutrient uptake from poor soils and boost agricultural productivity.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: protein engineering, artificial evolution, synthetic biology approaches, enzymology, high throughput screening, bioinformatics, ancestral sequence reconstruction, fundamental methods of molecular cloning, protein purification and LC-MS analysis of small molecules.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biophysics / Chemistry / Chemical Biology / Biotechnology / Genetics / Microbiology / Biomedical Science / Plant Science

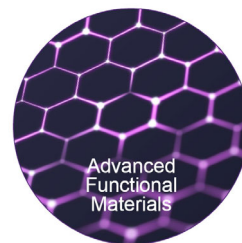


PROFESSOR LISBETH GRØNDAHL

Phone: 07 3365 3671

Email: l.grondahl@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/lisbeth-grondahl>

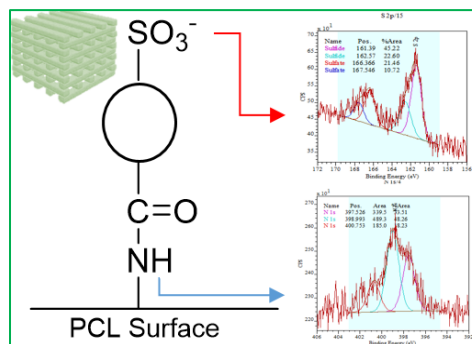


Bio-interface Science

The primary research area of the Grøndahl Group is in materials design and evaluation. All projects build on Physical, Analytical and Materials Chemistry fundamentals. We investigate methods of improving the interface between biomolecules, cells, and biological tissues considered living with biomaterials that are manufactured. Our focus areas are surface modification of polymeric materials, chemical modification of polysaccharides, fabrication of stimuli responsive hydrogels, and assembly of micron- and nano-sized materials. We target applications in biomolecule delivery for tissue repair.

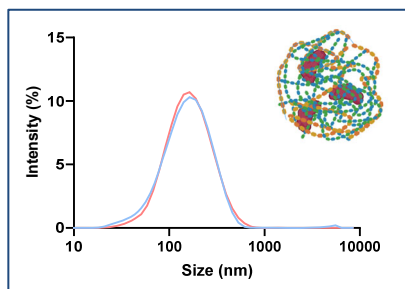
Surface modification of polymeric biomaterials

Polymeric materials such as 3D printed scaffolds for tissue engineering are optimised with regards to their bulk properties but for many applications the surface properties are not ideal. This project will involve surface modification of polymeric substrates using chemical treatments. The modified materials will be evaluated with respect to surface chemistry, surface energy, surface roughness and viscoelastic properties were appropriate for the application. In addition, the modified materials will be tested for their performance in the intended application, e.g. in vitro mineralisation, protein interactions, cell interactions. The figure shows chemical characterisation of a polymer (PCL) surface.



Delivery of biomolecules

Delivery of biomolecules with therapeutic action at an appropriate rate and with high bioactivity retained can be achieved by using a polysaccharide matrix material. Depending on the biomolecule of interest and its intended application the polysaccharide matrix can be chemically modified to manipulate intermolecular interactions with the biomolecule. This in turn allows tuning of the encapsulation efficiency and rate of release. The material may be nano- or micron-sized particles that are characterised for their size distribution and surface charge while the modified polysaccharides are characterised using NMR techniques. Applications include delivery of growth factors or miRNA to assist in regeneration of damaged tissue. The figure shows size distribution of sub-micron particles encapsulating a therapeutic protein.



Techniques you learn in our group may include: NMR (^1H , 1D and 2D DOSY), FTIR, X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy, Atomic Force Microscopy, Dynamic Light Scattering.

Useful Majors: Chemical Sciences / Chemistry

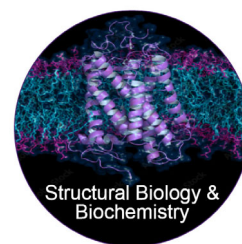


PROFESSOR LUKE GUDDAT

Phone: 07 3365 3549

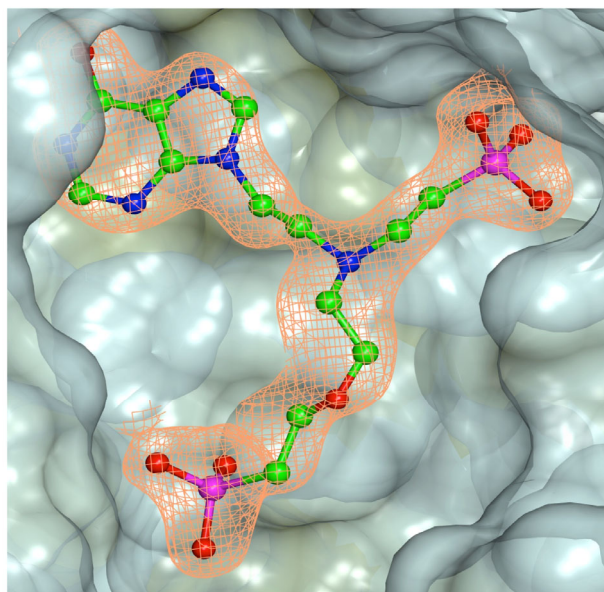
Email: luke.guddat@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/luke-guddat>



Research Focus: X-ray crystallography and Drug Design

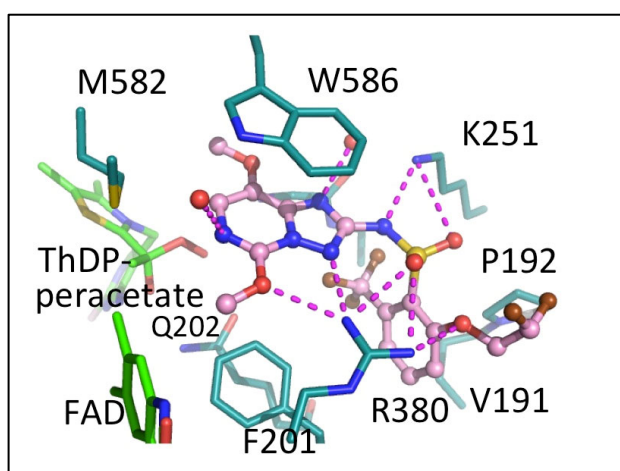
Our research is focused on understanding the structure, function and inhibition of enzymes that are essential to life. In particular, we are interested in studying enzymes involved in the synthesis of (i) RNA and DNA via the salvage pathway and (ii) the branched chain amino acids (BCAAs). These pathways are essential to the survival of many human pathogenic bacteria, parasites and fungi. For drug design this is a big advantage because humans and other animals either do not possess these pathways (*i.e.* BCAA pathway) or have alternative pathways (*i.e.* the *de novo* pathway for the biosynthesis of nucleoside monophosphates that are incorporated into RNA and DNA).



Our goals are to:

- Use X-ray crystallography to understand the structure and function of enzymes
- Use rational structure-based drug design to develop potent enzyme inhibitors that can be tested as antimicrobial therapeutic drugs

Research Projects are available in a number of areas and can be tailored for honours, masters, masters by coursework and PhD students. Projects can range from protein expression, purification and characterization to biological assays (e.g. testing for antimicrobial activity), to computer based drug design, chemical synthesis and X-ray crystallography. X-ray crystallography is the major technique used in this laboratory, but through collaborations with other research scientists (at UQ and overseas) we encourage multidisciplinary projects.



Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemistry / Computational Science / Genetics / Microbiology



PROFESSOR PHIL HUGENHOLTZ

Phone: 07 3365 3822

Email: p.hugenholtz@uq.edu.au

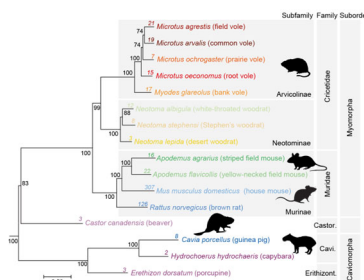
Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/philip-hugenholtz>



Ecogenomics

Most microorganisms have not been grown in the laboratory and, until fairly recently, we have been unaware of their existence. At the Australian Centre for Ecogenomics (ACE; <https://ecogenomic.org>), we explore and study this microbial dark matter in its ecological and evolutionary context using a culture-independent molecular toolbox, which includes metagenomics, single cell genomics, metatranscriptomics and imaging. Almost any microbial ecosystem can be characterised in this way and we have applied the molecular toolbox to a wide range of environmental and clinical habitats, some of which are described below. We also invest time and energy classifying microorganisms through phylogenetic analysis of their genomes (<https://gtdb.ecogenomic.org>) as this is a fundamental requirement for characterising microbial communities.

Marsupials and rodents



Australia is home to some of the most iconic animals on the planet, but surprisingly they have not been greatly investigated in terms of their microbiomes. We have a number of projects in this space including characterisation of the koala gut microbiome to assist in translocation of animals to new habitats with different types of eucalyptus leaves, characterisation of prominent uncultured taxa in the rodent gut microbiome and evolutionary surveys of diprotodont marsupials and rodent families.

Marine ecosystems

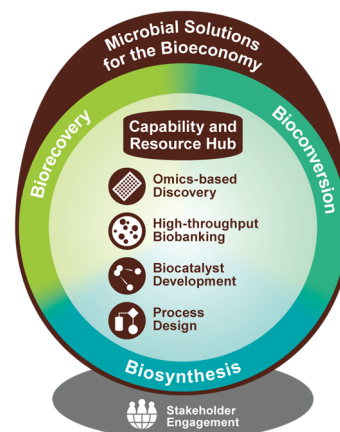
Marine microorganisms drive the ocean's major biogeochemical cycles and play vital roles in maintaining ecosystem health and resilience under environmental stress. Our aim is to combine molecular methods with experimental validation to unravel the marine microbial world. Projects in this space span a range of fields; from marine ecotoxicology and climate change impacts on ecosystem functioning, to symbiosis in marine invertebrates and harnessing microbial biofilms for coral reef restoration.

Microbial solutions for the Bioeconomy

The world is transitioning to renewables as part of a global push towards circular bioeconomies. Microorganisms and their enzymes are a vast untapped reservoir of biocatalysts which can help to establish the bioeconomy. We are probing this resource for industrially useful biocatalysts for a range of applications including recovery of rare earth elements from mining waste and biosynthesis of fine chemicals.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: metagenomics, metatranscriptomics, single cell genomics, comparative genomics, phylogenetics, fluorescence in situ hybridisation, bioinformatics, taxonomy

Useful Majors/Minors: Microbiology / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Computational Science / Genetics / Biophysics





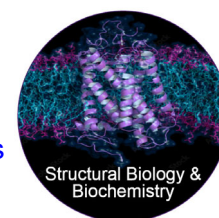
DR MATHEW JONES

Email: mathew.jones@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/11541/mathew-jones>

Research Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVxjxkX-4Y&t=1s>



Research Focus

Jones laboratory studies the cellular processes that control how healthy and cancerous cells grow and divide. We use a range of advanced microscopy techniques (*high content imaging & timelapse microscopy*), DNA sequencing methods (*nanopore sequencing*) and genome engineering tools (*CRISPR/Cas9*) to study the human cell cycle and identify new druggable vulnerabilities that are selectively toxic to cancers.

Our goal is to improve the specificity of cancer treatments by making fundamental discoveries about how cancer cells replicate their genome.

These discoveries can be translated into chemotherapy treatments by

1. Targeting pathways that allow cancer cells to grow uncontrollably.
2. Exploiting genetic vulnerabilities that disrupt the ability of cancer cells to copy their genome or repair damaged DNA.

Improving cancer treatment by targeting DNA replication and repair

DNA replication is the fundamental mechanism of genetic inheritance and an essential process for all cellular life. In cancer cells, replication is corrupted and replication forks frequently stall and collapse causing DNA damage and copying errors that drive tumorigenesis. As a result, cancer cells are heavily dependent on the pathways that protect and repair stalled replication forks. Disrupting these mechanisms can be selectively toxic to cancer cells. A key player in the regulation of DNA replication and repair is DDK (Dbf4-dependent kinase also known as Cdc7). DDK is frequently overexpressed in cancer, but its role during DNA replication and the repair of stalled replication forks by homologous recombination has not been well characterised. Our research uses chemical genetic approaches to selectively target DDK and gain valuable insights into its requirements and molecular targets. We have two projects for students.

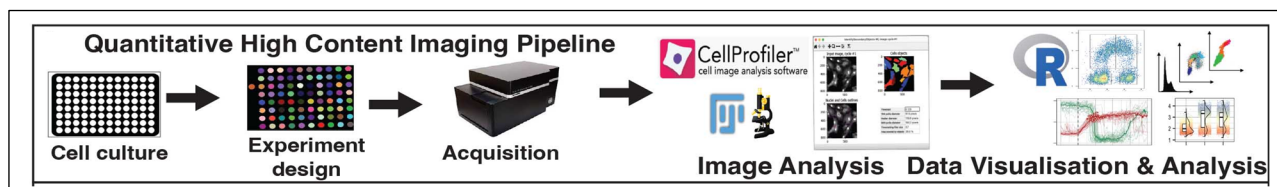
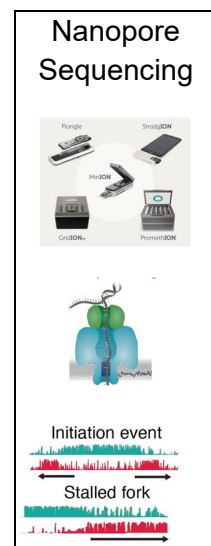
Project 1: aims to understand how DDK coordinates DNA replication and repair to help develop new therapeutic strategies to target these processes in breast cancer cells.

Project 2: aims to study how stalled replication forks are repaired by homologous recombination in BRCA1/2 mutant breast cancer cells.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Advanced confocal, widefield and super-resolution microscopy methods for imaging fixed and live human cell lines. Quantitative image analysis approaches that use machine learning software to segment and analyse images and tools for plotting extremely large datasets. Genome editing approaches to disrupt genes and nanopore ultra-long DNA sequencing methods to study DNA replication fork progression across the genome.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Computational Science / Genetics / Cell Biology

Useful Skills (not required): Experience in coding and programming languages including R, Python and Matlab. A genuine interest and enthusiasm for science, discovery and learning new methods.





PROFESSOR ULRIKE KAPPLER

Phone: 07 3365 2978

Email: u.kappler@uq.edu.au

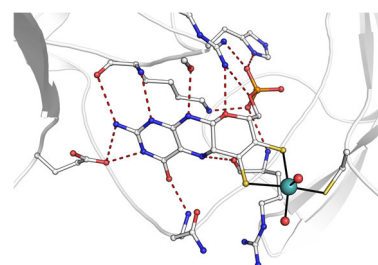
Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/ulrike-kappler>



Research Area

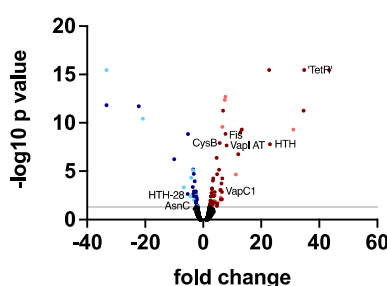
I have always been fascinated by microbes and especially their ability to shape any environment they inhabit, including the human body. These interactions include the manipulation of host cells to reduce responses to infection, but also the development of specific processes that increase resistance to host produced antimicrobials, such as bleach and hydrogen peroxide. Using a wide range of techniques my group tries to understand

- How bacteria and host cells interact via the exchange of chemical signals
- Roles of bacterial (metallo-)enzymes in repairing and preventing fatal damage from antimicrobials
- The contribution of bacterial metabolism to survival in the host organism



How do bacteria manipulate host cells? - Interactions between *Haemophilus influenzae* and the human host

H. influenzae (Hi) can cause respiratory tract infections of varying severity as well as invasive disease (septicaemia) but is unable to survive outside the human host. As a result, Hi is able to manipulate host metabolism and immune responses to enable it to 'stay alive' in its favourite niche. We are investigating how protein effectors, metabolites and specialized growth substrates contribute to Hi - host interactions in a range of clinical isolates by altering host cell metabolism and Hi host cell colonization.



Molecular determinants of resistance to natural antimicrobials

This project aims to unravel how *Haemophilus influenzae* can resist a range of natural antimicrobials that are either produced by the human host (bleach, N-Chlorotaurine) or derived from plants such as allicin. Key questions are which enzymes and regulators are required to reverse cellular damage caused by these compounds and the mechanisms by which the antimicrobials affect the integrity of the bacterial cell.

Metalloenzymes and their roles in bacterial physiology

Metalloenzymes are highly versatile and underpin essential reactions in all living cells, however, many of these enzymes are little studied, and even less is known about their role in the physiology of various bacteria. We have several current projects available looking to identify novel metalloenzymes & pathways involved in reactive sulfur compound detoxification in various species of bacteria, and we also study proteins involved in the regulation of these enzymes.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: molecular microbiology, bacterial genetics & physiology, RNA techniques, protein purification, enzyme kinetics, systems biology techniques, phylogenetic analyses

Useful Majors/Minors: Microbiology / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Chemistry / Genetics



DR EFFIE KARTSONAKI

Phone: 07 3365 3615

Email: e.kartsonaki@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/819/effie-kartsonaki>



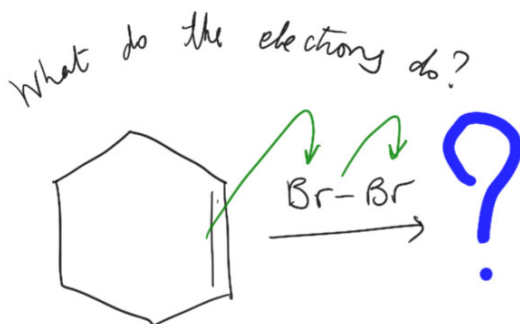
Chemistry Education Research

My interests and research focus mainly on how students learn new concepts in chemistry and how chemistry educators use this information to create learning tools to support their students. My research draws on constructivism, that is on the idea that students construct new knowledge by putting together pieces of their prior knowledge and the new material they are immersed in through their learning experiences. This makes learning an active process and students active agents in their learning journey.



Specific areas I am exploring currently include:

- How first year students learn in an introductory organic chemistry context
- How peer support and interactions help students develop a sense of community and belonging and how this affects their learning experiences and outcomes.



Understanding and representing organic reaction mechanisms

Students start learning about chemical reactions in high school. As they begin studying chemistry in their first year at UQ, they are introduced to organic reaction mechanisms. Reportedly, this is a topic a large number of students find hard. The aim of this project will be to investigate how our students think about reaction mechanisms, and what parts of this process they find hard.

Student peer support in learning

In the last two years, as a large portion of our learning activities has been moved online, many students feel disconnected from the university and student life. The objective of this project is to work with students to firstly try and define their emotion of disconnect as well as the effect it has in their learning and student experience overall. Lastly, the aim is to create a volunteer peer support and mentoring program in chemistry that will enable us to give our students a sense of belonging, while being part of a supporting learning community.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Quantitative and qualitative research methods, including statistical analysis of psychometric data and interview skills. Information and communication technology skills and instructional design using new media and online tools.

Useful Majors/Minors/Programs: Chemistry / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Psychological Sciences / B Education + B Science Dual program



PROFESSOR ALEXANDER KHROMYKH

Phone: 07 3346 7219

Email: a.khromykh@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/alexander-khromykh>



Research Area

We study molecular mechanisms of virus replication, virus-host interactions, and viral pathogenesis of the mosquito-transmitted flaviviruses West Nile virus (WNV) and Zika virus (ZIKV) as well as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). We use a combination of classical molecular biology and virology approaches as well as modern state-of the art molecular methodologies.

Our goals are to:

- Identify viral and host determinants of WNV, ZIKV and SARS-CoV-2 replication and virulence
- Understand mechanisms by which the identified virulence determinants influence outcome of infection
- Apply obtained knowledge to development of effective vaccines and antivirals

The role of viral and host noncoding RNAs in flavivirus-host interactions

Flaviviruses including WNV, ZIKV and insect-specific flaviviruses (ISFs) produce several non-coding RNAs from their 3' untranslated region, including subgenomic flavivirus RNA (sfRNA) that play vital roles in virus replication and virus-host interactions. Infection with flaviviruses also alters host non-coding RNAs. The projects aim to determine the role and mechanisms of action for viral and host non-coding RNAs in flavivirus-host interactions. The projects will employ RNAseq, bioinformatics, quantitative RT-PCR, RNA interference, small RNA detection, RNA-protein interactions, and proteomics to generate comprehensive networks of processes in infected cells regulated by viral and host non-coding RNAs.

Dissecting SARS-CoV-2 evolution

We have developed a reverse genetic system for SARS-CoV-2 allowing rapid manipulation of the SARS-CoV-2 genome. The projects aim at using this system along with deep mutational scanning of viral proteins to identify viral determinants of escape from host immune responses that drive SARS-CoV-2 evolution. The obtained knowledge could be applied to design new vaccines and antivirals.

Self-amplifying (sa)RNA platform for vaccines and therapeutics

We have developed an saRNA platform derived from the Australian flavivirus Kunjin that allows to significantly reduce RNA dose required for effective vaccinations and therapies. The projects aim at optimising RNA and LNP formulations to further enhance saRNA performance in vitro and in vivo targeted for specific vaccine and therapeutic applications.

Techniques you learn in our group include: Molecular cloning, DNA and RNA transfections, RNA isolations, quantitative RT-PCR, generation of viral infectious cDNA clones and large libraries of mutant and recombinant viruses, protein expression and detection, RNA interference, small RNA detection and functional analyses, CRISPR knock-out, recombinant lentivirus gene delivery, Next Gen sequencing, bioinformatics.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemistry / Computational Science / Genetics / Microbiology / Microbiology, Infection & Immunity



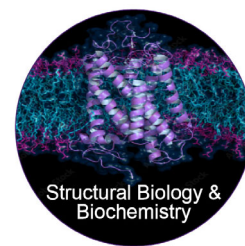
PROFESSOR BOSTJAN KOBE

NHMRC Investigator

Phone: 07 3365 2132

Email: b.kobe@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/bostjan-kobe>

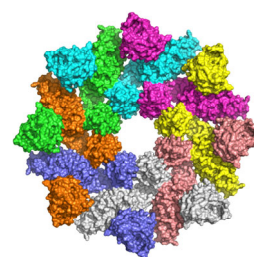


Structural biology of infection and immunity

The group's research theme involves protein structure and function, with an emphasis on understanding the structural basis of interactions formed by these macromolecules, and inferring function from structure. The biological focus is on proteins involved in infection and immunity. The main techniques are X-ray crystallography and cryo-electron microscopy, combined with molecular biology, biophysical and computational approaches.

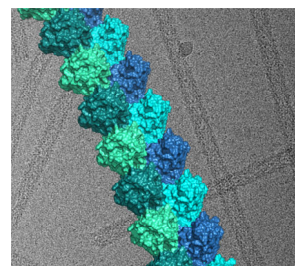
Our goals are to:

- Use structural and molecular information to understand the molecular and cellular functions of proteins
- Validate proteins as therapeutic targets or biotechnological products
- Design new therapeutics and biotechnological applications



Molecular and structural basis of innate immunity

The biological focus of the research has been on innate-immunity pathways, which represent the first line of defence to infection by pathogens. These pathways are present in all organisms from humans through plants to bacteria. We have been studying innate-immunity proteins from different organisms to find unifying themes. As an example, TIR (Toll/interleukin-1 receptor domains) feature in Toll-like receptors and adaptors in humans, NLRs (nucleotide-binding leucine-rich receptors) in plants and anti-bacteriophage proteins in bacteria. We found that all TIR domains signal by forming open-ended filamentous signalling assemblies, but that these assemblies differ in arrangement and that some TIR domains feature enzymatic activity (cleavage of NAD⁺, nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide). We are continuing to uncover similarities and differences in the signalling assemblies in different organisms, at the same time providing a foundation for developing anti-inflammatory therapeutics and improving resistance of plants to disease.



Techniques you learn in our group may include: Recombinant protein expression and purification, X-ray crystallography, cryo-electron microscopy and other structural biology methods, protein interaction analyses and biophysical characterization, molecular biology, bioinformatics and computational biology.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biophysics / Chemistry / Computational Science / Microbiology

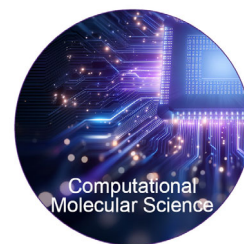


PROFESSOR ELIZABETH KRENSKE

Phone: 07 3365 4632

Email: e.krenske@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/999/elizabeth-krenske>



Computational Modelling, Chemical Reactivity, and Drug Design

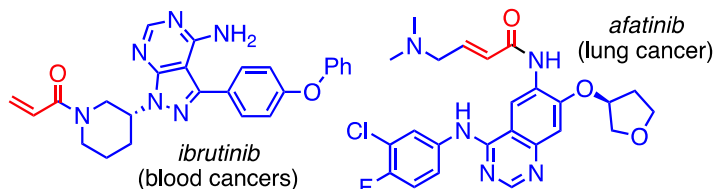
My laboratory uses sophisticated computer simulations to study chemical reactions. We focus on understanding reaction mechanisms by using computer modelling to generate atomic-level insights about how molecules react. We study a wide variety of important chemical questions, ranging from how drugs interact with their therapeutic targets inside the body, to how complex synthetic molecules can be made more efficiently in the laboratory using designer catalysts.

Our research involves:

- Mapping reaction pathways
- Understanding reaction outcomes
- Designing new drugs, reactions and catalysts

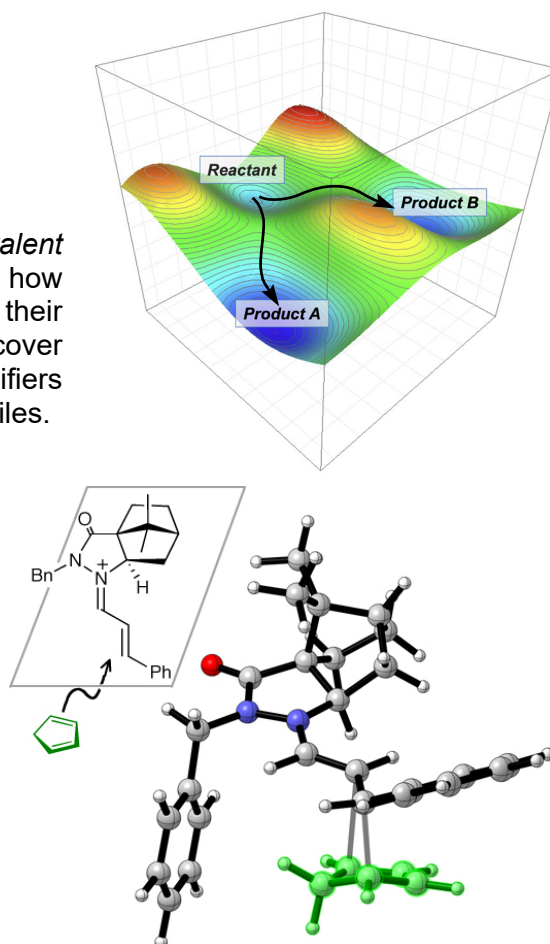
Exploring Drug–Target Interactions

We are interested in a special class of drugs called *covalent modifiers*. Using molecular modelling, we are studying how these drugs interact with biomolecules and what controls their chemical behaviour. Our simulations are helping to uncover the ways in which the structures of covalent modifiers influence their therapeutic activities and their safety profiles.



Designing New Catalysts

We also study *designer catalysts* that enable new kinds of chemical reactions to be carried out. Using computer modelling, we develop detailed pictures of the transition states of the catalytic processes, uncovering the hidden features that control the reactions' outcomes. These insights help guide the discovery of more efficient and selective catalysts.



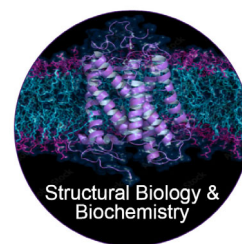
We collaborate with many other researchers from UQ and from other universities around the world.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Molecular modelling including density functional theory (DFT) calculations, *ab initio* calculations, molecular mechanics and molecular dynamics simulations. Analysis of reaction mechanisms and transition states. High-performance computing.

Useful Majors: Chemistry / Chemical Sciences / Computational Science



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MICHAEL LANDSBERG



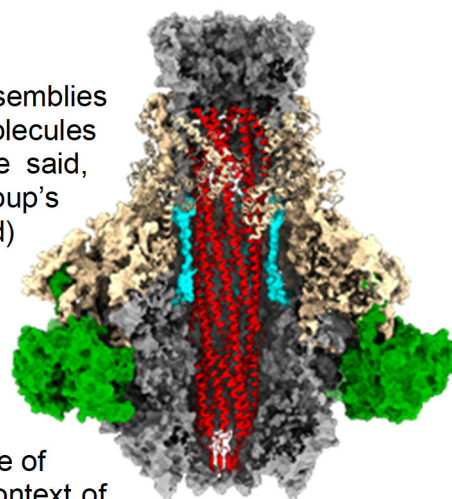
Phone: 07 3365 3756

Email: m.landsberg@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/96/michael-landsberg>

Structure and function of molecular machines

Our group studies molecular machines; large, biomolecular assemblies that are formed when proteins and other biological macromolecules interact. The well-known theoretician Richard Feynman once said, “*What I cannot create, I do not understand*” and our group’s philosophy is that it is difficult to create (and thus understand) something without first knowing what it looks like. To this end, we use structural biology techniques, primarily electron cryo-microscopy to investigate the structure (and ultimately understand the function) of molecular machines.



Our goals are to:

- Determine novel structures of protein complexes that are of fundamental biological importance, particularly in the context of microbial pathogenesis and disease
- Elucidate biological mechanisms and establish new insights into function
- Develop novel, protein-based therapeutics and biotechnologies based on these discoveries

Structure and function of pore-forming bacterial toxins

Pore-forming toxins (PFTs) are molecular machines that compromise the impermeability of cellular membranes by quite literally punching holes in them. Our lab has played a key role in the discovery of a new family of bacterial PFTs, known as ABC toxins. These toxins function by specifically recognising receptors on the surface of targeted cells, and deliver a highly potent, cytotoxic enzyme through the membrane pore. We are particularly interested in learning more about how ABC toxins recognise cell surfaces, as well as understanding in more detail the mechanism of toxin translocation and the role ABC toxins play in bacterial pathogenesis.

Multienzymes and multifunctional protein complexes

We are also interested in using structural biology techniques to uncover the complex and often unexpected mechanisms that result when Nature combines multiple enzymatic activities into a single, large protein or protein complex. Such “functional aggregation” usually confers an efficiency dividend for the cell or organism, driven by evolution in response to a high cellular demand. It thus follows that mutations in human multienzymes are often closely associated with severe diseases including cancer, while inhibitors of multienzymes in pathogenic microorganisms are often effective antimicrobials.

Our expertise in cryo-EM also sees us contribute towards a variety of projects involving the structural characterisation of virus particles, viral proteins, and candidate viral vaccine antigens.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Protein expression, purification and characterization, electron cryo-microscopy, single particle image processing, 3D structure interpretation and modelling, novel molecular imaging methodologies, bioinformatics.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biophysics / Bioinformatics / Chemistry / Computational Science / Microbiology



PROFESSOR GWEN LAWRIE

Phone: 07 3346 7848

Email: g.lawrie@uq.edu.au

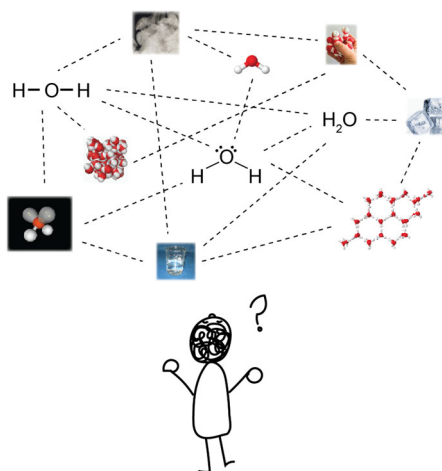
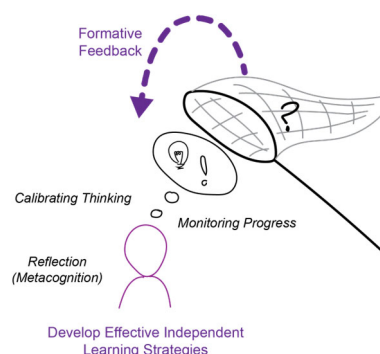
Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/gwendolyn-lawrie>



Science & Chemistry Education Research

Science education research enables us to develop richer and more responsive environments to support student learning. Instructional design informed by research involves evidence of how students construct their understanding of chemistry concepts as well as the factors that motivate and engage them in learning. Our current research explores:

- how multimodal external representations of concepts can be effectively integrated to construct student understanding of concepts in digital learning environments.
- the effectiveness of online assessment approaches that aim to authentically capture student thinking, informing the provision of formative feedback.



Development and evaluation of multimodal resources

Learning chemistry (and science) requires that students develop accurate internal mental models of concepts; hence instructors often use multiple external representations (MERs) in their teaching. MERs are typically adopted to provide complementary information; more strategic approaches involve integration of MERs to promote students' construction of deeper understanding. Our research explores how the translation, combination and sequencing of external representations across multiple modes can improve student learning. Our work has investigated several aspects of student learning including their visuospatial skills and the cognitive load introduced through multimedia representations. Current research aims to gain deeper insights into effective pedagogies and practices in teaching chemistry involving the combination and creation of virtual and tactile (including 3D printing) resources.

New approaches to assessment in digital learning environments.

This research investigates the format and timing of formative feedback on student learning in hybrid learning environments. Instructional strategies, informed by research and evaluation findings, have been designed that make students' thinking explicit, as well as capturing their actions in response to formative feedback. The role of instructional scaffolding to support students' development of critical reasoning and metacognitive skills is under exploration applying discourse analysis as a methodological framework. The aim of this project is to design authentic online assessment tasks requiring the design of stimulus resources that involve complex real-world chemical systems.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Quantitative and qualitative research methodologies including statistical analysis of psychometric data and interview skills. Information and communication technology skills and instructional design involving multimodal and digital resources/tools.

Useful Majors/Programs: Chemistry / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Psychological Sciences / B Education + B Science Dual program



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GRAHAM LEGGATT

Frazer Institute/SCMB

Phone: 07 3443 6961

Email: g.leggatt@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://di.uq.edu.au/profile/913/graham-leggatt>



Immunotherapy for non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC)

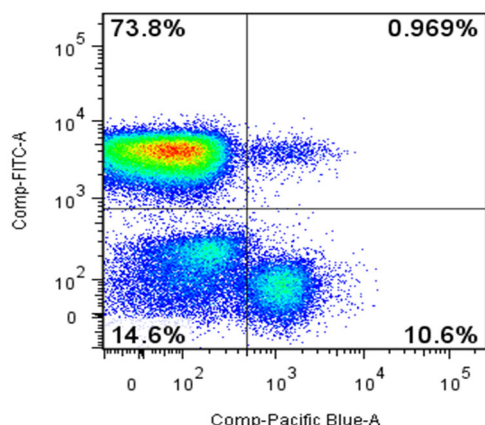
In Australia, approximately 2% of the population is diagnosed with a non-melanoma skin cancer each year. In Queensland, we are particularly susceptible given that sunlight is the causative agent for skin cancers and we lead an outdoor lifestyle. Our current research is focused on understanding the immune response against non-melanoma skin cancers and developing immunotherapies for treatment of these tumours. Currently, the most common treatment for NMSC is surgical removal which can be disfiguring to the patient. A subset of these cancers are also aggressive and move from the skin to form cancers at other sites in the body. It appears that the cancers develop the ability to avoid or inhibit our natural immune response and understanding this process is the central focus of my lab. We are also interested in the types of immune cells required to attack the cancer and how best to activate and maintain their activity over time.

Our goals are to:

- Promote CD8 T cell function in NMSC by reducing tumour-induced immunosuppression
- Study the development of CD8 T cell memory within precancerous and cancerous skin tissue

Immunotherapy of NMSC and their precursor lesions during lymphopenia

We have previously shown that precancerous skin lesions invoke an immunosuppressive local tumour environment through the actions of natural killer T cells (NKT). This project is focused on eliminating these suppressor cells through lymphodepleting drugs or irradiation followed by reconstitution of anti-tumour immunity. The project looks at different combinations of lymphodepleting regimes and the timing of immune cell transfer.



Memory CD8 T cell subsets in NMSC

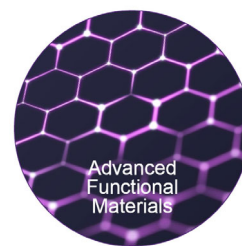
Long-lived, memory T cells are a key goal of any vaccination strategy for cancer. This project studies the development of different memory CD8 T cell subsets within skin precancers and tumours including the recently described tissue-resident memory T cells. Both the function and longevity of these T cells are analysed to determine how we can enhance their anti-tumour efficacy.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: flow cytometry, ELISPOT, ELISA, tissue culture, T cell proliferation assays, immunofluorescence microscopy.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Microbiology



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SHIH-CHUN (LAWRENCE) LO



Phone: 07 334 67 657

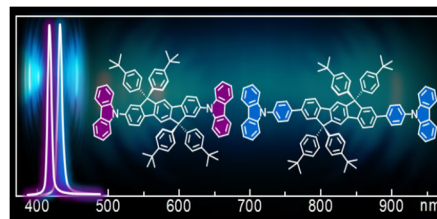
Email: s.lo@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://about.uq.edu.au/experts/1998>; <https://amio.net.au/>;
<https://tin.al/62sHh>

Research Area

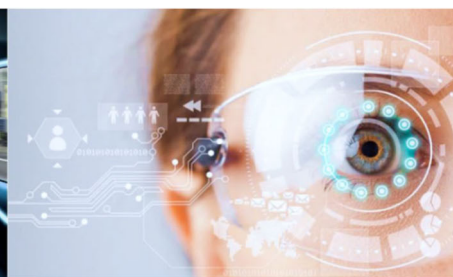
Organic semiconductor materials have been instrumental in the progress of photonics, electronics, and nano-/bio- and quantum-technologies. My research group is dedicated to the design, synthesis, and characterisation of advanced organic materials with the goal of:

- gain new understandings of structure-property relationships;
- create new classes of high-performing materials and devices.



Luminescent materials for displays, lasers & augmented realities*

Highly luminescent organic chromophores have been employed as the active components for premium displays (e.g., high-end mobile devices and TVs). The key aim of the programs is to design, create and characterise advanced light-emitting

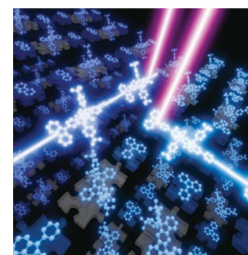
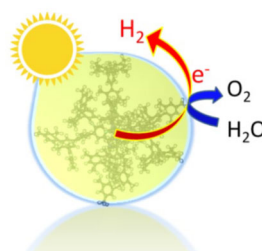


<https://www.wheels.ca/news/augmented-reality-inroads-auto-industry/> & au.pcmag.com/pokemon-go-foriphone/46578/feature/is-augmented-reality-ready-for-mainstream-business

materials for transparent light-emitting displays, transistors, bio-sensors, lasers and augmented realities, utilising low-cost processing like printing.

New materials for clean energy generation

Search for renewable clean energy is urgently required to address the rising global energy demands. This program focuses on the design of innovative light-absorbing dyes through molecular engineering to enhance our understanding of photophysical properties, leading to improved performance in solar electricity generation and/or clean hydrogen fuel production.



Bio-nanomaterials for imaging and cancer treatment

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) offers non-invasive (cf. conventional surgery) and less side effects (cf. chemotherapy) for cancer treatment. PDT can be accurately targeted, and repeatedly administered without total-dose limitations related with radiotherapy, resulting in little or no scarring after healing. We are developing high-resolution 3D imaging agents and PDT agents for deep tissue treatment.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: state-of-the-art material design principles, cutting-edge material synthesis, advanced purification and characterisation; understanding of fundamental photophysical/electrochemical/thermal properties; device characteristics for applications like clean energy creation, organic light-emitting diodes, transparent light-emitting field-effect transistors, bio-sensing, detectors, photodynamic therapy, 3D

Useful Majors/Minors/Programs: Synthetic organic (organometallic) chemistry / physical chemistry / material chemistry / sustainable energy / nanotechnology / biotechnology / quantum technology / semiconductors / electronics



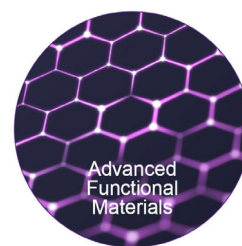
PROFESSOR MICHAEL MONTEIRO

AIBN/SCMB

Phone: 07 3346 6164

Email: m.monteiro@uq.edu.au

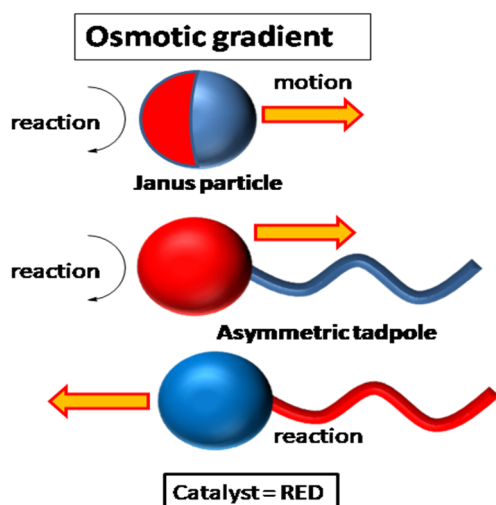
Web: <https://aibn.uq.edu.au/profile/2125/michael-monteiro>



Research Area

Professor Monteiro has established an international reputation in the field of 'living' radical polymerization to create complex polymer architectures, including dendrimers, cyclic polymers and polymer nanostructures. His work focuses on building designer polymers for various biomedical applications, including vaccines, drug delivery and stem cells.

Our goals are to create new polymers with 'smart' and responsive behaviour for applications in biomedicine.



Designer Polymer Nanomotors

The aim of the project is to understand and then mimic the function of specialised, efficient and powerful biological molecular motors; this represents a grand challenge in the field of nanotechnology. Nature has recognised that controlling movement using molecular machines allows completion of complex tasks, such as active cargo transport, response and adaptation to environmental cues, regulation and transcription of RNA and DNA, cell fate and many more. Fuels (e.g. ATP) that drive biological motors and keep the system out-of-equilibrium are a key requirement for motion or motility. Directed motion for active transport has the distinct advantage that it overcomes the limitation of Brownian diffusion, providing nanoscale motors with faster and thus greater target-receptor selectivity, sampling of significantly larger volumes and decision options (i.e. logic functions).

My group devised an innovative method that utilises thermoresponsive polymers and *in situ* polymerization to make block copolymers. We were the first to create stable nanostructures directly in water at high weight fractions of polymer with multifunctional and orthogonal chemical groups on the surface through a one-step process. Thus formed block copolymers have a very low PDIs (<1.1), allowing reproducibility in forming the nanostructure.

Producing such nanostructures directly in water with surface chemical functionality will provide a facile method to covalently attach catalysts for fuel driven reactions. Further, producing these nanostructures at high weight fractions will allow scale-up for future applications.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Organic and Polymer Chemistry, Kinetics, Thermodynamics, Cell transfection in tumour sphere models.

Useful Majors/Minors: Chemistry / Computational Science / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Biophysics



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR EVAN MOORE

Phone: 07 3365 3862

Email: egmoore@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/evan-moore>

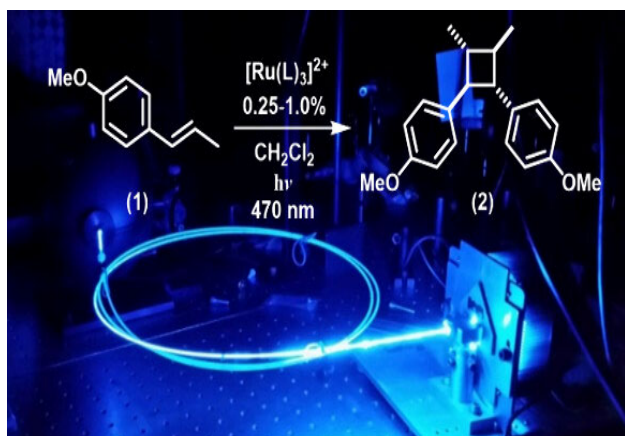


Photochemistry and Ultrafast Spectroscopy

Our research is focused on exploring the typically unique photophysical properties of inorganic metal complexes, using both transition metal and/or lanthanide complexes. We synthesise a variety of different metal complexes which have various applications, ranging from biological imaging to the catalysis of organic reactions. In particular, we use ultrafast laser spectroscopy techniques, including time resolved photoluminescence (TRPL) and transient absorption (TA) spectroscopy to study the evolution of different excited states over timescales ranging from the femtosecond to millisecond regime.

Lanthanide Luminescence

The lanthanide metal ions have well known luminescence with characteristic emission profiles that are specific to each element. Due to the nature of the 4f orbitals involved, their emission is also long-lived (μsec to msec). Our current research projects involve understanding sensitised emission in terms of the different Electronic Energy Transfer (EET) steps involved. In particular, we are interested in developing complexes of Yb(III) and Nd(III), which show emission in the Near Infra-Red (NIR) region.



Photoredox Catalysis

Photoactive inorganic metal complexes including $[\text{Ru}(\text{bpy})_3]^{2+}$, $[\text{Ir}(\text{ppy})_3]$ and $[\text{Cu}(\text{dap})_2]^+$ are well-known catalysts for a many organic reactions, which often proceed via Single Electron Transfer (SET) reactions. However, despite their use, little is often known about the mechanism of the underlying organic reactions. Our current research projects involve investigating different classes of organic reactions using spectroscopic techniques to identify short-lived reaction intermediates.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Organic and Inorganic Synthesis, Coordination Chemistry, NMR Spectroscopy, Absorption and Emission Spectroscopy, Time Resolved Spectroscopy (TRPL and TA)

Useful Major: Chemistry



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DAVID MULLER

Phone: 07 07 3365 3089

Email: d.muller4@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/1014/david-muller>



Vaccine development, delivery and molecular virology

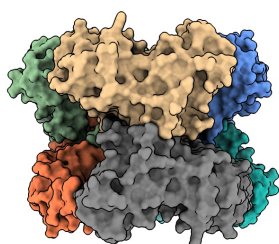
The major focus of our research is to understand virus-host interactions with a particular focus on 3 viruses; dengue virus - a serious mosquito-borne disease in many tropical countries, poliovirus - a disabling and life-threatening disease on the verge of eradication, and more recently SARS-CoV-2 – the virus responsible for the current pandemic. This research extends from virus-host interactions at the cellular level through to understanding virus immune system interplay and how to exploit this for novel vaccine and therapeutic design. To maximise the immunological impact of vaccine candidates our team uses a High-density Microarray patch skin delivery platform. This platform delivers vaccine to the layers of the skin rich in antigen presenting cells. This targeted delivery produces enhanced immune responses with a fraction of a dose when compared to traditional needle-based vaccine delivery systems.



HD-MAP & applicator

Ongoing projects involve:

- Needle-free, microarray patch delivery to the skin of a range of both established (influenza, measles and Rubella) and novel (dengue, polio, SARS-CoV-2, breast cancer vaccines) with enhanced potency.
- Needle-free delivery of nucleic acid encoded antibodies to protect against viral infection
- Investigating the molecular signatures immune response to HD-MAP vaccination using spatial transcriptomics.
- Understand the role the NS1 protein plays in dengue virus replication.



Dengue virus NS1 protein

High-Density Microarray Patch delivery of vaccines and therapeutic antibodies.

Our current work focuses on developing subunit and mRNA vaccine approaches for many serious human pathogens including SARS-CoV-2 and dengue virus. We are also investigating the potential of HD-MAP delivered mRNA encoded antibodies as therapeutic agents to fight infectious diseases.

Understanding the role of the dengue virus NS1 protein in virus replication.

This project aims to identify the structural and mechanistic role played by NS1 in the flavivirus replication complex formation. This project will use virological, reverse genetics, cellular, biochemical and advanced imaging approaches to identify (1) how the NS1 protein engages with membranes (including various lipid components) and (2) how these membrane contacts influence NS1's role in viral replication complex formation.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Virus growth and cell culture, protein biochemistry, recombinant protein expression and purification, immunological techniques, immunofluorescence, confocal microscopy, animal handling techniques and vaccines studies.

Useful Majors: Microbiology / Biomedical Science / Cell Biology / Biochemistry and Molecular Biology / Immunology

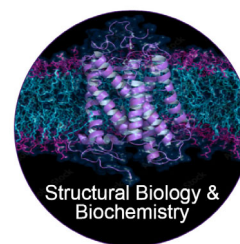


ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MARLOES NITERT DEKKER

Phone: 07 3365 4633

Email: m.dekker@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/2122/marloes-nitert-dekker>



Metabolism, microbiome and pregnancy complications

Pregnancy is a time of many, large physiological changes to allow for the growth and development of an infant. Maternal metabolism is first geared toward storing energy and then moves to using stored energy to ensure sufficient nutrient supply to the infant. In addition, pregnancy is associated with significant shifts to the gut microbiome and these have been linked to the metabolic changes observed in healthy pregnancy. We investigate the links between the maternal microbiome and metabolism to understand how these are related to complications of pregnancy.

Our goals are to:

- Identify the links between changes in maternal metabolism and microbiome composition and function and the risk of pregnancy complications.
- Use our knowledge of these links to design and test interventions to prevent pregnancy complications from occurring.



Gut microbiota composition in pregnancy after bariatric surgery

Bariatric surgery is surgery to reduce the size of the stomach and leads to significant weight loss. It is associated with large changes to dietary intake and potentially with vitamin and mineral deficiencies. These changes have an effect on the composition of the gut microbiota. Pregnancy also alters the composition of the gut microbiota, and it is not clear how the gut microbiota is altered by pregnancy in women who have had bariatric surgery. In this project, you will compare the gut microbiota in pregnant women who have had bariatric surgery to those who have not and link this to pregnancy outcomes, glucose and lipid parameters and microbial metabolites.

Glucose and lipid metabolism and gut microbiota composition in pregnancy

We are also engaged in a number of research projects focused on understanding how glucose and lipid metabolism are altered in pregnant women who have pre-existing diabetes or are at high risk of developing gestational diabetes. We specifically investigate the changes in the gut microbiota and how these are related to microbial metabolites and to dietary intake. We also study if bariatric surgery alters these relationships. We work mostly with human samples and in close collaboration with physicians and dietitians.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Molecular biology, microbial genetics, bioinformatics, proteomic analysis.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Microbiology



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JODY PETERS



Phone: 07 3365 4648

Email: j.peters2@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://researchers.uq.edu.au/researcher/1503>

Research Area

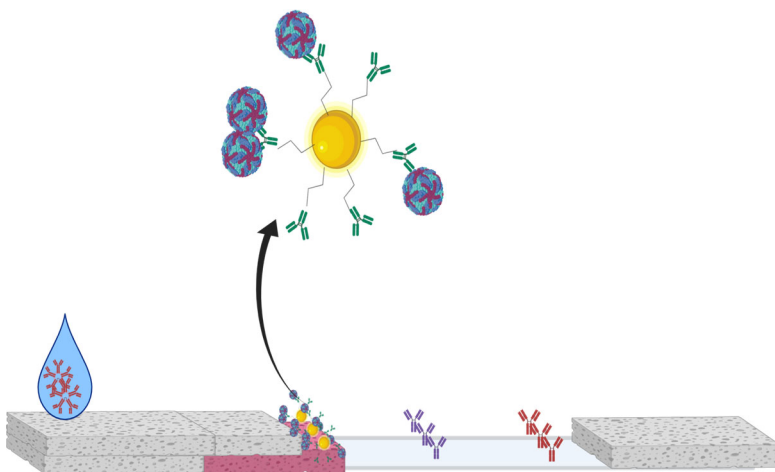
Insect-specific viruses are present in mosquito populations worldwide. Despite being genetically related to human and animal pathogens, these insect-specific viruses cannot grow in vertebrate cells. My research focuses on the discovery of new mosquito-borne viruses, understanding the host restriction of these viruses and exploiting the safe properties of insect-specific viruses to develop innovative chimeric diagnostic and vaccine platforms. The work also encompasses the development of new methods for recombinant protein bioprocessing.

My research is translation-driven, with many collaborations with commercial companies and institutes. However, fundamental research is also occurring in my lab to understand evolutionary characteristics of insect-specific viruses and how they relate to known and emerging pathogens.

Possible Hons, MSc, intro to research projects

Possible projects will focus on:

- the application of chimeric, insect-specific virus-based antigens to diagnostic assays, such as rapid, point-of-care lateral flow assays and other laboratory-based assays.
- Modulation of chimeric antigens to increase diagnostic accuracy.
- The development of new reverse genetics systems to expand the insect-specific virus-based antigen pipeline
- Develop and characterise novel monoclonal antibodies as tools to study insect-specific viruses and for the use in diagnostic assays against emergent pathogens.
- insect-specific virus host-restriction studies.
- Development of new vaccine platforms.



Techniques you learn in our group may include: Virus and cell culture, immunological techniques (IFA, ELISA, Western blot, hybridoma technology), molecular techniques (viral RNA manipulation, PCR, construction of infectious viral clones, cloning and expression of recombinant proteins), next generation sequencing.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Microbiology (virology)/Biotechnology



DR JUSTIN RIDGE

Phone: 07 3365 7320

Email: j.ridge@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/309/justin-ridge>

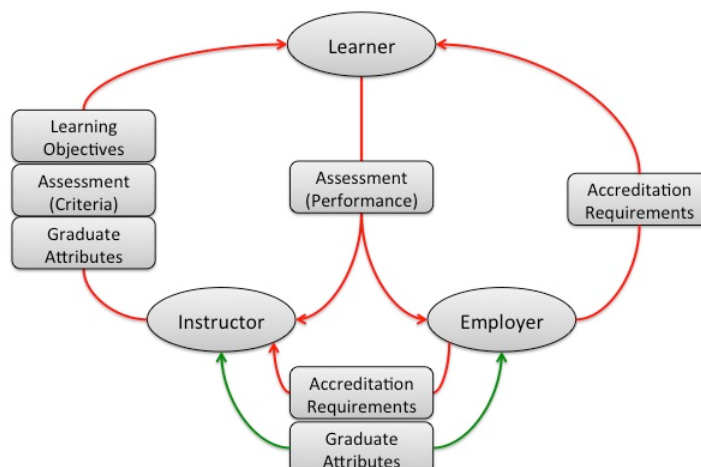


Science Education

My research focuses on the expectations of the key stakeholders (learners, instructors and employers) in the education of work-ready graduates. The basics of the relationships between the three stakeholder groups, and the means of communicating expectations, are shown below. There are three significant issues around these relationships: we do not fully understand the expectations of each group; we do not know if the expectations are being communicated effectively; and much of the communication is unidirectional (red arrows).

Our goals are to determine:

- What these expectations are for each of the stakeholders;
- How these expectations are communicated between stakeholders; and
- How we can seek to improve communication and manage expectations.



What skills should we teach (and how do we teach them)?

Students are often perceived to be poorly prepared to enter the research laboratory. To address this requires a multi-faceted approach to answer key questions: What skills do laboratory heads desire? Do students value the same skills? Are those skills being taught and assessed adequately? We hope to go on to revise and improve learning objectives; and develop a research-skills portfolio for students. This project involves interviewing and surveying stakeholders to establish the rationale for change and the subsequent evaluation of changes we implement.

Engaging students in the learning design process

Academic staff go to considerable effort to create learning objectives that are aligned with graduate attributes, learning activities and assessment. However, students often fail to engage with, or understand learning objectives. This has negative impacts on student expectation and learning gains. This project will develop a series of workshop that will: improve student understanding of learning objectives and provide a mechanism for iterative and collaborative improvement of these objectives.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Mixed-methods research including: design and implementation of surveys; quantitative and qualitative data analysis; ethnography; and grounded theory.

Useful Majors/Minors/Programs: All Science and Biomedical Science Majors and Minors / Education



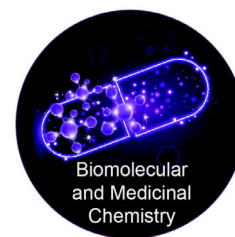
PROFESSOR AVRIL ROBERTSON

Phone: 07 3346 2204

Email: a.robertson3@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/3177/avril-robertson>

<https://uniquet.com.au/landmark-deal-for-uq-trinity-inflammation-startup/>

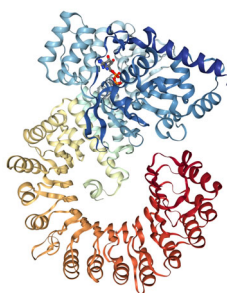


Research Area

Our research is in drug discovery where we design and develop new therapeutics for areas of unmet medical need. We design, synthesise and test our molecules for activity then assess drug-like properties (absorption, distribution, metabolism, excretion, toxicity, pharmacokinetics) before progressing to proof-of-concept models of the disease. These multidisciplinary projects often include collaboration at national and/or international level. We currently have two main focus areas:

- Modulating inflammation through targeting the innate immune response for therapeutic effect in diseases such as Parkinson's disease, Motor Neuron Disease, steroid resistant asthma, treatment resistant depression etc.
- Antifungal drug discovery targeting deadly pathogenic fungal species.

Inflammasome inhibitors



NLRC4 protein
(PDB:4KXF)

Inflammasomes are multimeric protein complexes which form as part of the innate immune response. They act as platforms to process pro-inflammatory cytokines interleukin (IL) -1 β and IL-18 to their active form and also trigger a pro-inflammatory cell death called pyroptosis.

Inflammasome dysregulation underlies an astounding array of disease states including therapeutic potential of inflammasome modulation has led to keen commercial and academic interest. NLRP3 inflammasome is the most well understood and our molecules are in the clinic. Other inflammasomes, such as AIM2 and NLRC4, remain underexplored with no potent, selective inhibitors. We have multiple projects in this area.

Antifungal drug discovery

Human-pathogenic fungi are spreading intercontinentally at an unprecedented rate. There has been an explosion in occurrence of life-threatening drug resistant and multidrug resistant fungal infections, and for some there is no available treatment. People with a weakened or underdeveloped immune system such as newborns or the elderly, patients undertaking chemotherapy for cancer, receiving organ transplant, or with HIV/AIDS are particularly at risk. Infections caused by yeasts (*Candida* and *Cryptococcus spp.*) and moulds (*Aspergillus*) are the direct cause of >2.5M deaths p.a., surpassing the combined global mortality rate for tuberculosis and malaria. There is urgent need for new broad-spectrum antifungals to prevent increased mortality. We are working in collaboration with Prof Fraser to design and develop new antifungal drugs.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: medicinal chemistry, isotopic labelling, tests for drug-likeness, organic synthesis, chromatographic purification, structure determination.

Useful Majors/Minors: Chemical & Nano Biotechnology / Medical Biotechnology / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Chemistry / Computational Science



DR ANNE SAWYER

Phone: 07 3365 4871

Email: a.sawyer@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://researchers.uq.edu.au/researcher/23842>



Research Area

I am developing RNA vaccines to protect Australian crops and native plants from aggressive fungal pathogens. Unlike conventional fungicides that suffer from issues of resistance, run-off, lack of specificity, residues and toxicity to humans and the environment, RNA vaccines are a sustainable, environmentally-friendly, cost-effective plant protection platform. They involve pathogen-specific dsRNA being exogenously applied to host plants to trigger RNA interference (RNAi) and silence targeted genes. To date, most work on RNAi-based crop protection relies on genetic modification (GM). RNA vaccines are a new, non-transgenic strategy that has the potential to revolutionise crop protection. The platform allows a more rapid response to new plant diseases and is free from the stringent regulation and costs GM crops are subject to, creating massive value. It offers a clean green safe control for invasive plant diseases, safeguarding Australian agriculture and providing long-term benefits for conservation and biodiversity.

Our goals are to:

- Understand the mechanism of RNAi-mediated plant protection
- Improve the efficiency of the RNA vaccines
- Provide systemic protection to plants in the field



Control of myrtle rust

Myrtle rust is a highly-invasive fungal disease threatening about 400 native Australian Myrtaceae species (paperbarks, tea-trees, eucalypts, and lillipillies). The causal pathogen, *Austropuccinia psidii*, arrived in Australia in 2010 and has pushed species to the brink of extinction. Critically endangered species are at risk, as are species of significance to indigenous culture and industry (native forestry, cut flower, essential oils, honey, native foods). We have developed dsRNA that is effective against myrtle rust and are now trying to achieve systemic plant protection.



Control of Phytophthora root rot

Phytophthora is the most dreaded pineapple pathogen in Queensland and worldwide, infecting plants throughout production, impacting productivity and profitability. It is also one of the main factors limiting avocado yields in Queensland, with Phytophthora-affected trees producing small, poor-quality fruit. We have designed dsRNA molecules targeting *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and are currently testing them on avocados, pineapples and lupins.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: PCR, qPCR, *in vitro* dsRNA synthesis, northern blotting, aseptic techniques, fluorescent microscopy, plant pathology assays.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Genetics / Microbiology



PROFESSOR MARK SCHEMBRI

Phone: 07 3365 3306

Email: m.schembri@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/mark-schembri>

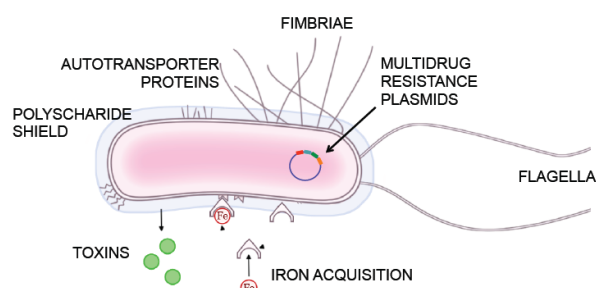


Molecular characterisation of multidrug resistant uropathogenic *E. coli*

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are one of the most common infectious diseases of humans and a major cause of morbidity. Uropathogenic *E. coli* (UPEC) cause the majority (>80%) of UTIs and are a major contributor to global antibiotic resistance. UPEC are also a major cause of sepsis. Research in my lab aims to understand the virulence of multidrug resistant (MDR) UPEC, and to develop new approaches to treat and prevent UTI. The outcomes will address the enormous challenge of combating antibiotic resistance.

Our goals are to:

- Understand the virulence of MDR UPEC.
- Develop new methods to treat and prevent UTI.
- Characterize molecular mechanisms of adhesion, aggregation and biofilm formation utilized by MDR UPEC.



UPEC virulence factors

Molecular characterisation of UPEC clones

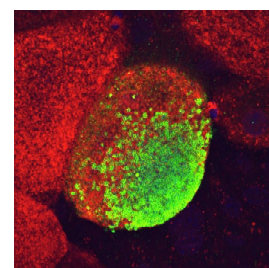
MDR UPEC strains from predominant clonal groups, including the globally disseminated MDR *E. coli* ST131 clone, exhibit important differences in virulence gene content and expression compared to other well-characterised non-resistant UPEC strains. We aim to understand the molecular mechanisms of MDR UPEC virulence using genomic, epigenetic and high throughput gene function analyses. We will study *E. coli* ST131 and other common MDR *E. coli* sequence types, including carbapenem-resistant strains and MDR strains of animal origin.

Development of new methods to treat and prevent UTI

New approaches are urgently needed to treat and prevent UTI caused by MDR UPEC. We aim to (i) identify and characterise novel UPEC vaccine targets, (ii) test novel anti-adhesive molecules for their ability to prevent UPEC adhesion and bladder colonisation, and (iii) develop the asymptomatic bacteriuria *E. coli* strain 83972 as a novel therapeutic agent for the prevention of UTI.

Molecular characterisation UPEC adhesins and biofilms

Aggregation and biofilm formation are critical mechanisms for bacterial resistance to host immune factors and antibiotics. Fimbriae and autotransporter proteins represent adhesins that contribute significantly to these phenotypes. Most UPEC strains produce multiple adhesins. We aim to study the regulation, function and structure of UPEC adhesins, and to determine their role in aggregation, biofilm formation, interaction with epithelial and immune cells, and colonization of the urinary tract.



UPEC intracellular biofilm

Techniques you learn in our group may include: PCR, cloning, SDS-PAGE, Western blotting, advanced genetic and proteomic techniques, TraDIS, RNAseq, cell culture, biofilm model systems, animal models.

Useful Majors/Minors: Microbiology / Microbiology, Infection & Immunity / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Genetics

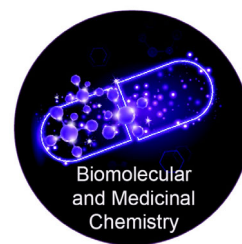


PROFESSOR GERHARD (GARY) SCHENK

Phone: 07 3365 4144

Email: schenk@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/gary-schenk>



Biocatalysts for the Bioeconomy

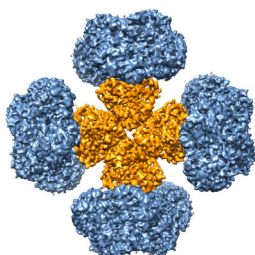
The main research focus of my group is the discovery, characterisation and optimisation of enzymes (*i.e.* biocatalysts) for processes that are relevant for applications in the bioeconomy. Specifically, we are interested in establishing enzyme-based reactions that enable the conversion of renewable feedstocks or waste streams into valuable products. In parallel, we are also interested in developing specific inhibitors for enzymes that contribute to major health problems, including the resistance to antibiotics, infections and bone-related disorders

Our goals are to:

- Use omics methods to discover novel enzymes, and characterise their properties.
- Use rational (*i.e.* structure), combinatorial and bioinformatics-based approaches to optimise catalytic properties of enzymes for applications relevant to the bioeconomy.
- Discover novel inhibitors for enzymes to develop new chemotherapeutics.

Enzyme-based biomanufacturing processes

Synthetic biology has emerged as a powerful methodology to engineer bio-based processes for the manufacture of valuable chemicals (including pharma- and nutraceuticals, biofuels and bioplastics). In my group we focus on the optimisation of cell-free enzyme cascades that enable the conversion of renewable feedstocks (*e.g.* sugar) into platform chemicals (such as isobutanol). In collaboration with colleagues from the AIBN we also optimise the corresponding metabolic pathways in some microorganisms to facilitate the conversion of waste streams into such platform chemicals.



Enzyme-catalysed bioremediation

Enzymes are not only useful to make valuable chemicals from renewable feedstocks or waste streams. They can also be employed to degrade pollutants from the environment. My group has a strong interest in optimising enzymes and building application platforms for the detoxification of pesticide- and antibiotics-contaminated habitats (such as water ways, agricultural and industrial environments).

Enzyme inhibition to combat antibiotic resistance and infectious diseases

Enzyme-catalysed reactions provide the foundation of all living organisms. However, many of these enzymes also play a role in a plethora of human ailments. My group focuses on enzymes that contribute to antibiotic resistance, infectious diseases (*e.g.* tuberculosis) and bone-related disorders. We aim to develop specific inhibitors for these enzymes as a strategy for novel chemotherapeutics.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Molecular biology, protein expression and purification, structural biology and modelling, enzyme kinetics and engineering, bioinformatics.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemistry / Computational Science / Microbiology

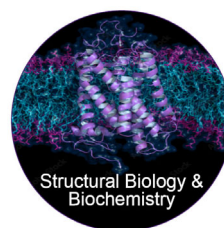


PROFESSOR BENJAMIN SCHULZ

Phone: 07 3365 4875

Email: b.schulz@uq.edu.au

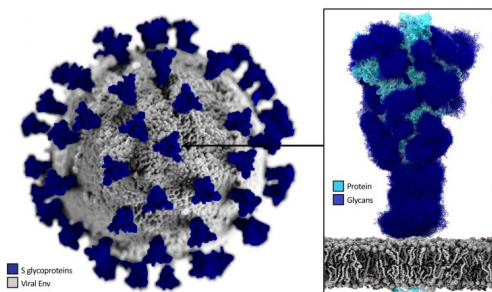
Web: <https://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/ben-schulz>



Molecular Systems Biology

The research in my group focuses on the mechanisms, biological roles and applications in biotechnology of glycosylation, the most abundant and complex post-translational modification of proteins. Glycosylation is important in biological processes such as viral infection, cancer, and development. This is because glycosylation is essential in biological activities as diverse as protein folding, fine-tuning protein enzymatic activity and determining protein-protein interactions. Half of all proteins are glycosylated, and a single protein can be modified by hundreds of different sugar moieties.

The diversity of glycoproteins therefore requires that we take a systems biology approach in our research. All our projects use a core set of methods in molecular biology, genetic manipulation, protein biochemistry, protein analysis and mass spectrometry. We aim to understand the mechanisms controlling glycosylation in these various systems to develop diagnostics, therapies, vaccines and applications in biotechnology.

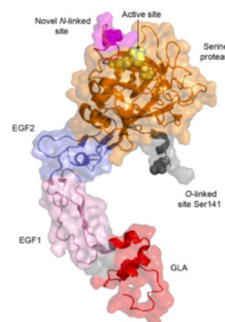


Viral glycobiology

Glycosylation shields viruses from the immune response and is critical for many of the functions of viral proteins. This is especially important for the respiratory pathogens Influenza virus and SARS-CoV-2. We aim to understand the mechanisms controlling these processes using cell-based infection systems, protein structural and biochemical analyses, mass spectrometry glycoproteomics, and bioinformatics to determine their impact on viral biology and vaccine design.

Engineering glycoprotein biopharmaceuticals

Many important biopharmaceuticals are glycoproteins, such as monoclonal antibodies and vaccines. The glycosylation and other post-translational modifications of these proteins are critical for their function, but recombinant proteins produced from mammalian cell culture are often different to the native proteins. We use mass spectrometry for detailed structural analysis of biopharmaceuticals, and cell-line and protein engineering to improve their quality.



Beer, wine, and yeast

Beer brewing and wine making are perhaps the most ancient biotechnologies. We use modern analytical techniques to investigate and improve these complex and important processes, and to investigate the metabolic diversity of wild yeasts.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Mass spectrometry, proteomics, glycoproteomics, molecular biology, protein expression and purification, bioinformatics, fermentation.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemical Biology / Chemistry / Food Science & Nutrition / Food Technology / Genetics / Microbiology



DR PHILIP SHARPE

Phone: 07 3365 9149

Email: p.sharpe@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/57/philip-sharpe>



Chemistry Education

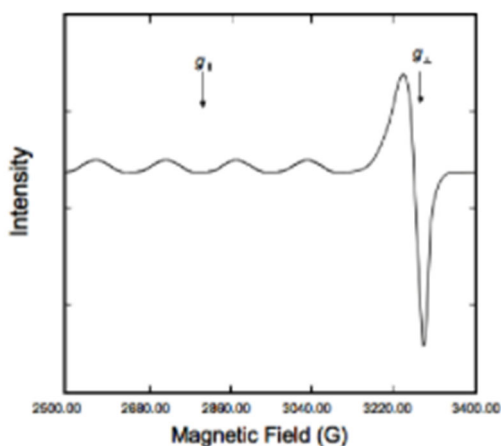
My research concentrates on how students learn in the Chemistry laboratory. Other interests include the development of ethically aware Chemistry students and incorporation of green chemistry principles into undergraduate courses.

Our goals are to:

- Acquire a deeper understanding of how students learn in the Chemistry laboratory, in order to assist their learning.
- Improve the environmental friendliness of undergraduate Chemistry experiments, while maintaining or enhancing the educational benefits.

“Greening” undergraduate laboratory experiments

Creation of interesting, robust, “greener” experiments for the Chemistry teaching laboratories and testing their educational effectiveness against traditional experiments. This is suited to undergraduate project students.



A concept inventory for EPR Spectroscopy

Electron Magnetic Resonance (EMR) Spectroscopy is a useful spectroscopic technique for chemists. The way that students learn EMR spectroscopy and common misconceptions has not been investigated in the Chemistry education literature. This project would involve surveying academics to investigate how EMR spectroscopy is taught and constructing a consensus expert concept map of the subject area and then develop a student concept inventory. This will aid in defining the best teaching approach. For example, does prior knowledge of NMR spectroscopy hinder or help students? This project is suited to an Honours or Ph.D. level student.

Chemistry ethics – a longitudinal study

Many undergraduate chemistry curricula include a mandatory ethics component. There are few studies that have investigated how students view their studies in ethics over the long term. A longitudinal study using structured interviews will investigate student views on the usefulness and appropriateness of explicit teaching in ethics as part of an undergraduate chemistry curriculum and how this has shaped the thinking and approaches of post-graduate researchers.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Mixed methods research design, including conducting guided interviews, survey design, use of coding software, quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

Useful Major: Chemistry

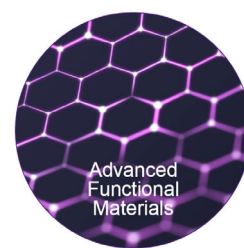


ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PAUL SHAW

Phone: 07 336 52782

Email: p.shaw3@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/561/paul-shaw>



Organic Semiconductors for next generation optoelectronics

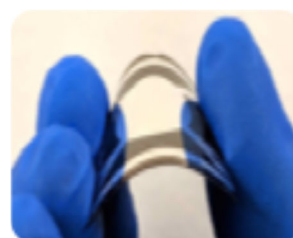
Organic semiconductors are revolutionising the design and fabrication of optoelectronic devices such as solar cells, displays, lighting, sensors, transistors, lasers and photodiodes. My group is part of the multidisciplinary Centre for Organic Photonics & Electronics (COPE) and there are projects available in all branches of chemistry, spanning across materials synthesis, structural characterisation, ultrafast spectroscopy, device fabrication and testing.

Our goal is to apply organic semiconductors towards achieving the next generation of:

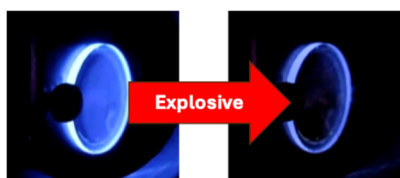
- Solar cells
- Chemical sensors
- Lighting and displays

Solar Cells

Solar cells are the leading source of renewable energy. We work on organic solar cells and perovskite solar cells which can be high efficiency, flexible and lightweight. We are also exploring ways of integrating multiple solar cell technologies into a single tandem device, which is essential for pushing efficiencies beyond what is possible with silicon alone. We have projects on the synthesis of solar cell materials, understanding of material properties via structural characterisation and ultrafast spectroscopy, solar cell fabrication and testing.



Flexible organic solar cell



Quenching of a fluorescent film by explosive vapours

Fluorescence-based chemical sensors

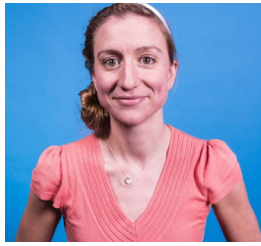
Fluorescence-based sensing provides a way of rapidly detecting chemicals with a low-cost and truly portable device. We develop sensing materials for the detection of a wide range of chemicals, including, explosives, chemical warfare agents, drugs, and toxic industrial chemicals. Notably we also develop detection hardware for the testing and evaluation of the sensing materials as well as detection algorithms based on the latest machine learning methods.

Organic light-emitting diodes (OLEDs)

Organic semiconductors are used in the OLED displays found in your phone. The emissive layer is typically a mixture of two materials and its morphology and how this influences device performance is not well understood. We employ device fabrication and performance characterisation, charge transport measurements, time-resolved luminescence measurements and molecular dynamics simulations to address this challenge.

Techniques you may learn in COPE include: material design and synthesis, material characterisation, ultrafast-spectroscopy, charge-transport measurements, morphology and thin-film characterisation [ellipsometry, X-ray scattering techniques], mass diffusion into thin films [quartz crystal microbalance], device fabrication [working in a clean room] and testing [efficiency, lifetime].

Useful Majors: Chemical Sciences / Chemistry / Computational Science



PROFESSOR KIRSTY SHORT

Phone: 07 3365 3732

Email: k.short@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/4618/kirsty-short>



Chronic medical conditions & severe influenza virus infections

Influenza A virus typically causes an acute and self-limiting infection characterised by symptoms such as muscle ache, fever and a dry cough. However, in patients with one or more underlying medical conditions, influenza A virus can cause severe, and even fatal, disease. This interaction between chronic medical conditions and severe influenza was particularly evident after the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic. Specifically, this pandemic highlighted that people with diabetes, asthma and obesity suffered from more severe influenza than people with no underlying medical condition. Our research seeks to identify the role of host impairments in the anti-viral response (asthma), chronic inflammation (obesity) and hyperglycaemia/glycaemic variability (diabetes) plays in the pathogenesis of influenza virus.

Ongoing projects involve:

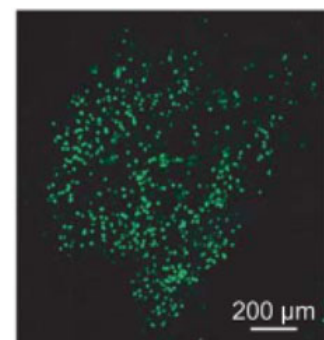
- Defining the role of obesity and asthma in the emergence of influenza virus variants
- Investigating the ability of asthma to facilitate influenza virus reassortment
- Identifying the role of obesity in driving the extra-respiratory complications (cardiac and neurological) complications of influenza
- Assessing the ability of influenza vaccination to prevent the microvascular complications of diabetes
- Determining the role of diabetic glycaemic variability in severe influenza virus infections

The role of endothelial cells in avian influenza

Birds are the natural reservoirs of influenza virus. However, amongst different avian species there are marked differences in influenza virus pathogenesis. In particular, whilst highly pathogenic influenza viruses target the endothelial cells that line the blood vessels in chickens, the endothelial cells of wild bird species are rarely infected. This project involves the culture of primary avian endothelial cells and next-generation sequencing to identify the species-dependent differences in the pathogenesis of avian influenza.

Fluorescent imaging of influenza virus

Fluorescent influenza A viruses offer new opportunities to study influenza virus replication, tropism and pathogenesis. To date, several influenza A reporter viruses have been described, each with their own pros and cons. This project involves optimising a novel strategy for creating virulent, replication competent fluorescent influenza viruses that can be ultimately used to study *in vivo* viral transmission.



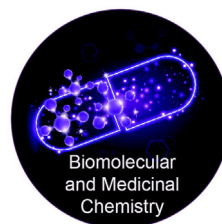
Fluorescent influenza virus in the lungs of infected mice

Techniques you may learn in our group include: Virus growth and cell culture, primary cell culture (human, mouse and avian), murine infections, FACS, immunofluorescence, confocal microscopy, *in vivo* imaging, influenza virus deep sequencing, RNA Seq, Sanger sequencing, high-resolution melt analysis, qPCR, *in vivo* imaging (Carestream), *in vitro* co-culture models, PCR mutagenesis, cloning, immunohistochemistry and high-resolution imaging.

Useful Majors/Minors: Microbiology / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Computational Science / Genetics



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MARIUSZ SKWARCZYNSKI



Phone: 07 3346 9894

Email: m.skwarczynski@uq.edu.au

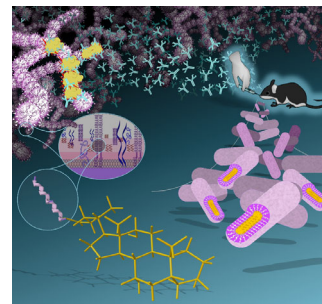
Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/1254/mariusz-skwarczynski>

Nanotechnology in vaccine delivery

Our major interest is the development of delivery systems for subunit vaccines. We are developing vaccines against *Streptococcus pyogenes*, hookworm, cervical cancer, *Schistosoma mansoni*, liver fluke, COVID-19, malaria, tuberculosis, to control the fertility of wild animals, etc.

Our goals are to:

- Develop synthetic nanovaccines against emerging diseases.
- Develop new safe immune adjuvants
- Investigate oral delivery route for vaccine administration

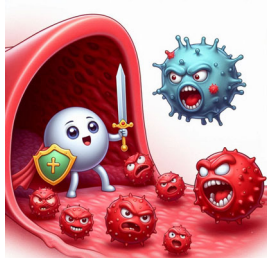


Self-adjuvanting peptide nanovaccines

Many adjuvants are toxic, not biodegradable; they invariably invoke adverse reactions. We demonstrated that a peptide antigen can be coupled to poly(hydrophobic amino acid) or other polymers and then self-assembled into nanoparticles. Following immunization in mice, these nanoparticles induced the production of opsonic antibodies without the need of an adjuvant. This project aims to further explore the natural polymers composition, conformation, size and morphology on the efficacy of vaccines against variety of diseases.

A nanovaccine against invasive Group A Streptococcus and rheumatic heart disease

Group A Streptococcus (GAS) infection is responsible for deadly invasive infections and rheumatic heart disease, which is the most common cause of cardiac mortality in children and young adults. No GAS vaccine is available on the market. The project will produce vaccine candidates against GAS that will be able to induce robust immune responses against all strains without triggering adverse effects and can be delivered orally allowing self-administration.



Vaccine against hookworm Infection

Hookworm infection affects 400 million people, worldwide, each year and costs the global economy billions of dollars. There is no commercial hookworm vaccine. This project will produce vaccine candidates against hookworm that are safe, potent against a variety of hookworm species, and induce strong, long-term immune responses after single immunisation. Ultimately, the project will lead to the development of the first highly effective vaccine candidate against hookworm for clinical trials.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Chemistry/nanotechnology: SPPS, macromolecules conjugation, HPLC, ESI-MS, nano self-assembly, metal nanoparticles, DLS, TEM, CD. Biotechnology/immunology: immunization techniques, in vivo, in vitro, ex-vivo, ELISA, ELISpot, opsonization.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Chemical Sciences / Chemistry / Microbiology / Parasitology / Biotechnology / Immunology



PROFESSOR KATE STACEY

Phone: 07 3365 4640

Email: katryn.stacey@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/katryn-stacey>



Pathogen recognition by innate immune cells

How does the immune system actually tell that things are foreign? This is one of the most fundamental questions in immunology. The last 20 years have seen an explosion of information on the recognition of "pathogen-associated molecular patterns" (PAMPs). These are characteristic conserved microbial molecules that activate innate immune cells through receptors such as toll-like receptors (TLR) or inflammasome initiators. This innate immune cell activation is essential for generation of subsequent T and B cell responses. PAMP recognition is thus a key to discrimination between self and foreign, and has enormous importance in initiating the response to infection. Innate immunity can also be initiated by some self-molecules that indicate danger or damage to cells. These are called "damage associated molecular patterns" (DAMPs) and they activate some of the same receptors that respond to PAMPs. Our lab works on PAMP/DAMP recognition, particularly by TLR4 that is the receptor for bacterial lipopolysaccharide (LPS).

Our goal is to characterise PAMP and DAMP signalling pathways. This will promote development of therapies to prevent the inflammatory damage that underlies a great variety of disease states.

Cytosolic DNA as a danger signal

DNA, if it is well-behaved, stays in the nucleus and mitochondria. DNA in the cytosol indicates danger to the cell - infection or damage to the genome. Cell death is an appropriate response. Our ongoing work seeks to characterise an unknown pathway of DNA-induced cell death that involves membrane pore formation within 2 minutes of introduction of DNA.

Stress molecules activating TLR4

We find that under certain stresses cells can release molecules that activate TLR4 to give a potent inflammatory response, similar to bacterial LPS. We propose this is a key to the involvement of TLR4 in a wide range of non-infectious pathologies such as atherosclerosis, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and stroke-related damage. We are working to identify the molecules responsible.

TLR4 signalling mechanism

We are characterising in detail the molecular interactions involved in TLR4 signalling. We test the function of mutated signalling molecules in cellular responses to validate structural assumptions.

Dengue virus and gut pathology

The mosquito-borne dengue virus is an increasing problem in tropical and subtropical areas, and can cause life-threatening haemorrhagic disease and shock. We are characterising the development of gut inflammation in dengue infection, that may be important in triggering severe manifestations of dengue disease.

Inflammasome structure and function

Inflammasomes are large complexes that function to activate the protease caspase-1. Caspase-1 is involved in processing and release of inflammatory cytokines as well as rapid lytic cell death. Inflammasomes are activated in a similar wide variety of pathologies to TLR4 discussed above. We are characterising the molecular interactions required for caspase-1 activation.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Flow cytometry, live cell fluorescence microscopy, ELISA, cell culture, molecular biology, real time PCR, protein purification, mass spectrometry, mouse models

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Microbiology / Chemistry / Biomedical Science

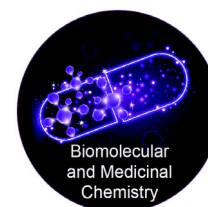


DR RACHEL STEPHENSON

Phone: 07 3346 9893

Email: r.stephenson@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/1521/rachel-stephenson>

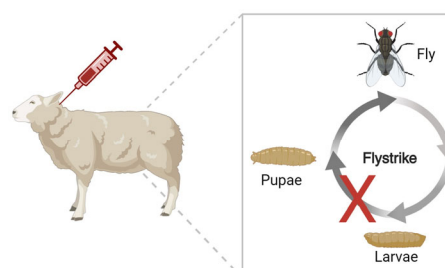


Research Area

Our research group is dedicated to the development of innovative synthetic vaccines and vaccine adjuvants, with applications spanning both human and animal research. Positioned at the intersection of health and medical research, our work has applications in infectious diseases, drug addiction, and cancer, as well as agricultural biotechnology, targeting fertility control in cattle, flystrike prevention in sheep, and boar taint reduction in pigs. These multidisciplinary projects are often conducted in collaboration with local, national, and international partners, including industry stakeholders.

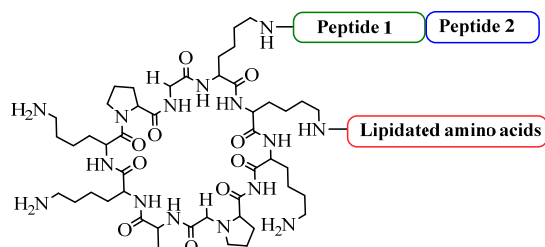
From lab to pasture: flystrike vaccine development

Flystrike, caused by the larvae of *Lucilia cuprina*, is a major welfare issue for Australian sheep. With increasing resistance to insecticides, alternative control methods are urgently needed. In collaboration with CSIRO, we are designing and developing targeted vaccines to provide sustainable protection against flystrike, improving animal health and reducing reliance on chemical treatments.



Breaking the cycle: advancing vaccines against substance abuse

Cocaine addiction remains a chronic and relapsing condition with no approved pharmacotherapies. While antibody-based treatments show promise, previous vaccine efforts, including one that reached clinical trials, have been hindered by inconsistent antibody responses. Our research aims to overcome these limitations by developing more effective adjuvants and vaccine formulations to enhance immunogenicity. We are actively pursuing multiple projects to establish a viable vaccination strategy that supports recovery from cocaine addiction.



Our research aims to overcome these limitations by developing more effective adjuvants and vaccine formulations to enhance immunogenicity. We are actively pursuing multiple projects to establish a viable vaccination strategy that supports recovery from cocaine addiction.

Strep-A defence: revolutionising immunity with subunit vaccines

Group A Streptococcus (Strep A) is responsible for a wide spectrum of diseases, from mild infections to life-threatening conditions like rheumatic heart disease. With hundreds of thousands of deaths annually attributed to reoccurring or untreated Strep A infection, an effective vaccine is critical. Our group is developing cutting-edge subunit vaccines using liposome and emulsion adjuvant technologies to enhance immune responses and reduce the global burden of Strep A infections.

Techniques you learn in our group may include medicinal chemistry; organic synthesis; peptide synthesis; chromatographic purification; mass spectrometry; NMR; cell culture; immunology assays.

Useful Majors: Chemical & Nano Biotechnology / Medical Biotechnology / Chemical Sciences / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MIŠO TANURDŽIĆ

Phone: 07 3365 2045

Email: m.tanurdzic@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/11646/milos-tanurdzic>

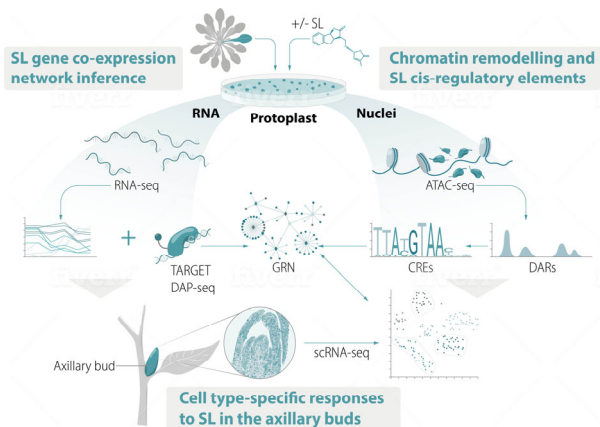
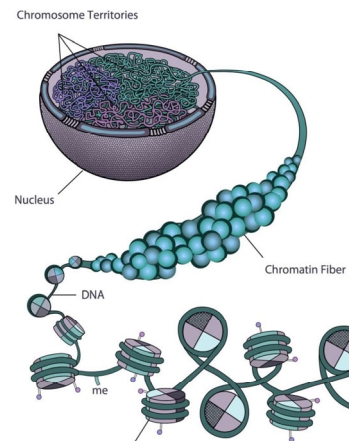


Molecular genetics and genomics of plant developmental plasticity

The research effort in my group is focused on harnessing transformative genomics technology to understand the genetics of plant development, and to discover regulatory mechanisms coordinating plant growth and development. We utilize a variety of plant species in our research, from the model plant organism *Arabidopsis* to grain and horticultural crops like wheat, mango, avocado and macadamia. We employ a range of techniques based on high throughput DNA sequencing to explore gene expression, chromatin accessibility and modifications from single cell to whole plant levels, bioinformatics and computational biology tools to infer genetic components of gene regulatory networks, as well as gene editing technology to evaluate phenotypic consequences of perturbations in gene regulatory networks.

The role of chromatin regulation in plant development

We are interested in how chromatin accessibility and changes to histone modifications control gene expression and, subsequently, development of an organism. Several projects using high throughput sequencing coupled with a variety of analytics methods to profile histone modifications and chromatin accessibility to discover cis-regulatory genetic elements and their trans-acting counterparts are available.



Single cell analyses of plant dormancy

Our research into the molecular and genetic basis of plant dormancy has taken us into the realm of single cell analyses applied to plant developmental biology. Several projects are available into gene expression and chromatin accessibility changes between active and dormant axillary buds (plant vegetative organ primordia and stem cells) geared towards understanding cell-type specific responses to dormancy signals.

Functional genomics of fruit trees

We continuously work on translating our basic research findings and genome profiling technologies to improve and intensify crop production in collaborative research with government and industry partners. Currently, research projects of various length and research focus are available on the functional genomics of tree architecture in mangos, avocados, macadamia and citrus.



Techniques you learn in our group may include: Molecular genetics, functional genomics, bioinformatics, gene cloning, transgenics, CRISPR.

Useful Majors: Genetics / Bioinformatics / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Computational Science



PROFESSOR MATT TRAU

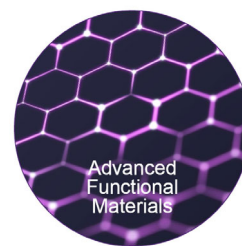
AIBN/SCMB

Phone: 07 3346 4173

Email: m.trau@uq.edu.au

Website:

<https://aibn.uq.edu.au/profile/3633/matt-trau>

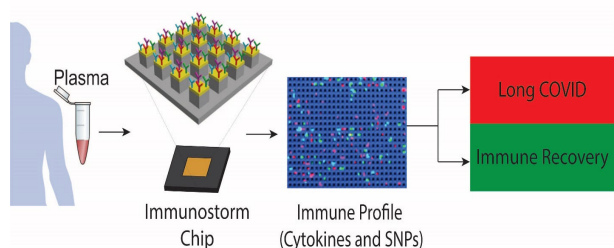


Research Area

Understanding nanostructured assembly and manipulation of matter in order to produce novel materials and devices, with a specific focus on innovative liquid biopsy technology and precision medicine. Our goals are to:

- Make advances on important practical problems such as the application of biomarkers and nanotechnology to the early detection of preventable diseases
- Find effective paths to translate the technology toward clinical and / or commercial sectors.

Counting single molecules to unravel long COVID



An increasing number of COVID-19 patients continue to have a deteriorated health post-infection, which are now referred to as long COVID patients. Long COVID is not well understood but is believed that low level chronic inflammation is a driver of the disease. The detection of an inflammation signature is extremely challenging due to the low abundance of biomarkers in blood and patient specific variations in these markers.

This project develops an ultra-sensitive nanotechnology, the Immunostorm Chip, to investigate the role of low-level inflammatory markers in long COVID patients. The aim is to develop a blood-based screening test for patients at risk to develop long COVID.

Investigating tumour immune evasion in lung cancer by nanotechnology-enabled deciphering of exosomal cargo.

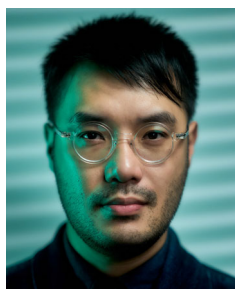
Significant improvements in the overall survival of lung cancer have been achieved since the introduction of immune checkpoint inhibition (ICI). However, continuous treatment response to ICI is only observed in a small group of patients, while a considerable number of patients show negligible prolonged responses to ICI. Although not yet fully understood, evasion of the tumour from the ICI-activated immune system by secretion of immune-suppressive cargo and display of specific antigens on tumour cells are thought to be the main drivers of the immune-manipulative process. This project uses an in-house developed nanotechnology to investigate the role of extracellular vesicles carrying immune-manipulative molecules in-vitro and in-vivo.

Catching Lung Tumour Relapse before it happens.

A high proportion of lung cancer patients suffer from tumour relapse after surgical resection. This process is mediated by minimal residual disease, whereby cancer cells that remain in the patient after treatment build metastatic niches for future disease progression. Due to the extremely low abundance of cancer cell secreted markers for minimal residual disease and the need for highly sensitive technology, the clinical implementation of patient screening methods after curative surgery remains vastly underexplored. This project will develop a sensitive and multiplex nanotechnology suitable for detecting minimal residual disease in lung cancer patients after tumour resection.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: PCR, DNA/RNA extraction, qPCR, cell culture, protein analysis, Western blotting, Genomics applications and next generation sequencing technologies.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Chemistry / Nanotechnology / Biotechnology



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JACK WANG

Phone: 07 3365 4611

Email: t.wang1@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/jack-wang>



Science Education

I am a Teaching-focused academic in Microbiology, and my research revolves around innovative strategies and technologies in Science Education. This research relies upon interacting with large networks of people – namely the students, academics, and administrators in Higher Education – to extract trends and develop new technology in teaching and learning. These projects may be useful if you are interested in careers in secondary or tertiary teaching, learning design, and Science Communication:



Science Communication 2.0 – Technology-enabled Storytelling



Building on the traditional model of Science Communication 1.0 (press releases, TV, radio), Science Communication 2.0 leverages social media and online platforms to expand the global reach of innovation and discovery. This project will teach you how to apply best practice guidelines towards creating science multimedia and how to communicate to different stakeholders. The impact of these multimedia assets in Science Education will be explored in detail.

Innovations in blended and online learning in Science Education

The rapid expansion of online learning has highlighted the need to transform the technology requirements and learning strategies for teachers and students alike. This project will create screencasts, videos, animations, and podcasts to enrich the learning experience at UQ and evaluate their effectiveness for internal and external delivery. This includes surveying and interviewing students and instructors and triangulating the findings with in-depth learning analytics from online platforms.



Techniques you learn in our group may include: Survey design and analysis, focus group interviews, generating and analysing video and multimedia content, coding and thematic analyses of qualitative and quantitative data, communicating with a variety of audiences.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Genetics / Microbiology



PROFESSOR DANIEL WATTERSON

Phone: 07 3365 46146

Email: d.watterson@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/723/daniel-watterson>



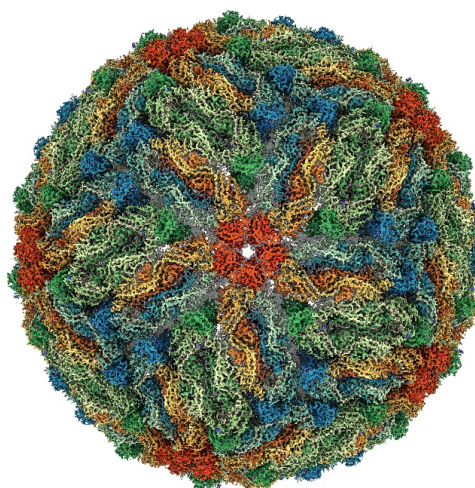
From virus structure to vaccines

Our lab focuses on understanding the 3D structure of viruses to help guide new vaccines and therapies for important human pathogens, such as dengue virus, Nipah virus and SARS-CoV-2.

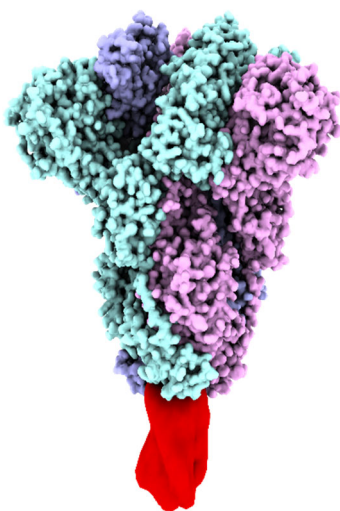
In order to study these often highly pathogenic viruses we utilize powerful but safe viral antigen platforms.

The molecular clamp is a rapid response vaccine platform that stabilizes the “Spike” protein of a wide range of viruses including SARS-CoV-2, Ebola, Nipah and a potential “Disease X”.

A chimeric flavivirus that repurposes a benign Australian mosquito-restricted flavivirus allows us to grow and study viruses normally restricted to the highest level containment facilities.



Whole dengue virion solved by cryoEM to unprecedented resolution reveals new targets for vaccines.



Platform technologies including the molecular clamp help us make new vaccines and study emerging virus structure rapidly and safely.

Visualizing viruses and antibodies that recognize them

Enveloped viruses such as SARS-CoV-2, Influenza and dengue enter cells by first engaging with cellular receptors and then deliver their genomes via membrane fusion. These processes are driven by specific sites on the viral proteins and require large-scale structural rearrangement. Our group studies the architecture of these viral proteins and how our antibodies block these functions to protect us.

Structure based vaccine design

Once virus structure and function is understood at the molecular level it is possible to generate “designer” vaccines that can exploit critical viral components that make vaccine escape more difficult and increase the breadth of protection. Our lab is assessing several structure based strategies in preclinical models with the aim of developing better vaccines.

New antibody treatments

Understanding viral structure also reveal sites of vulnerability on the virus that can be targeted by antibodies. Our lab is using this approach to develop new antibody-based therapies for important human pathogens including flaviviruses dengue & Japanese encephalitis virus and coronaviruses like SARS-CoV-2.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Virology, Molecular biology, protein expression and purification, cryo-EM, single particle image processing, structural modelling, animal models of disease.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Microbiology / Biophysics / Computational Science



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR NICK WEST

Phone: 07 3365 4093

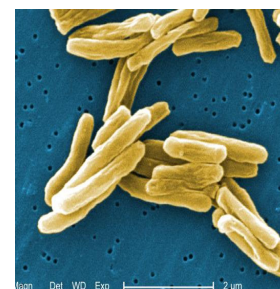
Email: n.west@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/1440/nick-west>



Tuberculosis (TB)

TB continues to kill more people in the world each year than any other bacterial pathogen and is also a major cause of HIV-related death. In the West Lab we study the pathogenesis of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (*Mtb*), the bacterium responsible for TB. Our lab is fully equipped for the study of *Mtb*, from its microbiology, interaction with host cells, through to pre-clinical drug and vaccine trials; making us the only lab in Qld with such capabilities.



Our goals are to:

- Identify disease causing bacterial genes and gene products
- Develop new, potent anti-TB drugs
- Create novel efficacious vaccines
- Produce effective point-of-care diagnostics

The following are examples of the projects offered to students:

Characterisation of proteins essential for survival in the host.

We have identified a series of bacterial factors which are dispensable for growth in laboratory media but which are in-dispensable in the host. This project will define the role of three of these essential virulence determinants by modern molecular and proteomic approaches to characterise *when* and *where* they are expressed and to what end.



Essential gene regulation in *M. tuberculosis*.

Our genetic screening identified a series of transcriptional regulators essential to the bacterium *in vivo*. In this project you will clone, express and purify two novel regulators. To define the role of these regulators the influence of these mutations will be assessed by mammalian cellular infection studies and transcriptomic/ DNA binding analysis.

Next Generation Anti-TB Vaccine

We have identified proteins of *Mtb* which are only expressed during the latent phase of TB. These proteins would therefore not be expressed in the current vaccine, i.e., BCG. These proteins therefore represent attractive targets for inclusion as subunit vaccine antigens. You will assess these antigens as purified protein vaccines and also as inclusion in live recombinant vaccine strains.

Techniques you will learn in our group may include: Microbiological techniques. Gene cloning, protein and/or DNA vaccinations, immunological assays, macrophage cell culture and mycobacterial infection, PCR and molecular analysis. DNA binding assays and small molecule inhibition.

Useful Majors/Minors: Microbiology / Microbiology, Infection & Immunity / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Computational Science / Genetics

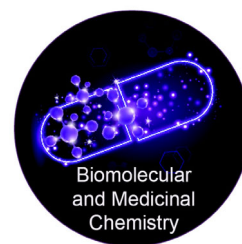


PROFESSOR CRAIG WILLIAMS

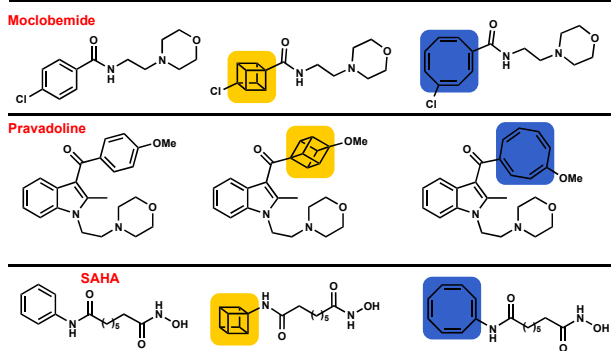
Phone: 07 3365 3530

Email: c.williams3@uq.edu.au

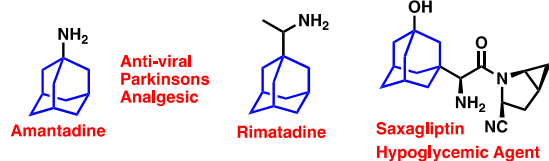
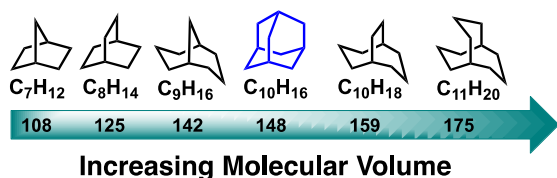
Web: <https://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/craig-williams>



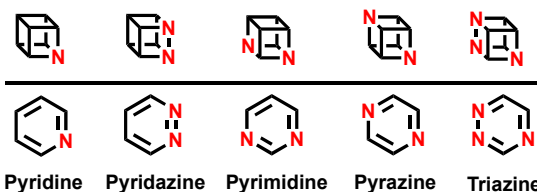
Research Programs: Prof. Williams' research group focus and expertise is orientated around hard core organic chemistry. These projects instil high-level chemical competency and training.



but have never previously been prepared. These molecules have potential application as bioisosteres of a range of heterocycles that commonly appear in pharmaceuticals and agrichemicals. Therefore, the aim is to rejuvenate tired drug templates and develop highly novel non-natural amino acids in



1) Fundamental molecules for pharmaceutical, agrichemical and materials development: Projects in this area build on our fundamental and highly publicised cubane (yellow) and cyclooctatetraene (blue) for phenyl (black) bioisosterism research. Current efforts are taking this program to the next level by attempting to make nitrogen derivatives of cubane i.e. the so-called aza-cubanes. These are reported to be stable by the theoreticians,



collaboration with biologists.

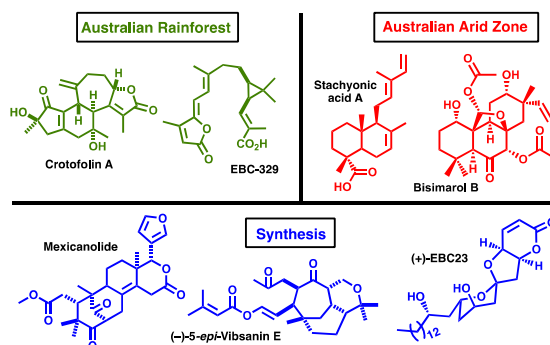
We are also exploring the synthesis of novel cage hydrocarbons to develop a range of fundamental Chemical Building Blocks to advance discovery chemistry. The general approach currently involves evaluating the subtleties of molecular size constraints. Although, this program is focused on materials design, e.g., computer chip lithographic patterning and energy storage for batteries, we are also applying these structures to drug development (e.g. anti-virals, TB).

2) Natural product isolation and synthesis:

Research in this area first started on the elucidation of novel natural products from the Australian rainforest, and then to plants from the Australian desert. Synthesis of complex natural products is also an area of extensive expertise.

3) Drug discovery: A range of collaborative rational drug design and discovery programs are currently on-going in the group (e.g., antifungal, anticancer, analgesics, scabicides).

Useful Majors: Chemical Sciences / Chemistry / Computational Science / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology



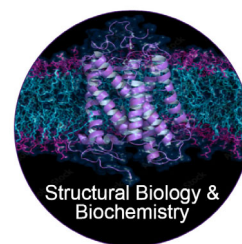


DR SIMON WORRALL

Phone: 07 3365 4626

Email: s.worrall@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/simon-worrall>



Mechanisms of Drug-Induced Tissue Injury

Liver, muscle, heart and brain injury have long been associated with the abuse and clinical use of drugs. My predominant research interest focuses on ethanol, the most commonly abused drug in Western societies. Ethanol is widely tolerated but induces a wide variety of tissue injury in a small number of individuals. Thus, my main research focus is the investigation of immunological and genetic phenomena associated with alcohol-induced tissue injury.

The metabolism of ethanol, a relatively benign substance, produces a series of highly reactive, more toxic, compounds that interact with cellular molecules to produce chemical modifications known as adducts. Such modifications generated by high levels of blood glucose in diabetics are now used as a measure of the blood glucose concentration over extended periods. Our aim is to discover analogous adducts which will allow clinicians to estimate blood alcohol concentrations over periods of weeks and months.



Protein Modification in the Alcoholic Brain

One of the major targets of alcohol toxicity is the brain, leading to a variety of forms of injury. We are concentrating on one form called alcoholic cerebellar degeneration to see whether adducts of alcohol metabolites can be used as a marker of the severity of injury.

Protein Modification in the Alcohol-exposed Foetus

Alcohol consumed by pregnant women can harm their unborn babies. Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) refers to a group of conditions that can occur in a person whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. Problems that may occur in babies exposed to alcohol before birth include low birth weight, distinctive facial features, heart defects, behavioural problems and intellectual disability. We are looking for biomarkers that will indicate how much alcohol the foetus was exposed to in the uterus, and will also determine whether such modifications play a role in the pathological process occurring in these individuals.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Protein purification, raising mono- and polyclonal antibodies, immunological techniques such as western blotting and ELISA, mass spectrometry; UV-visible and fluorescence spectroscopy.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Chemistry



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

ROWAN YOUNG

ARC Future Fellow

Email: rowan.young@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/11537/rowan-young>

Group page: <https://rowdychemist.com/>

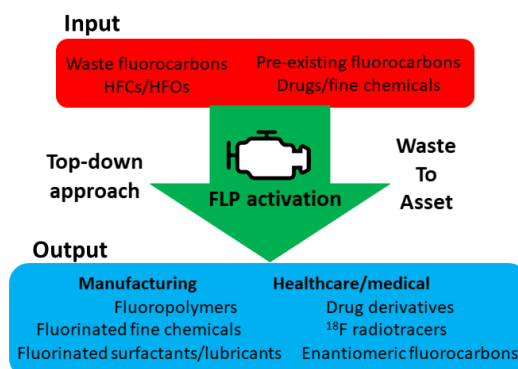


Research Area

My group is focused on developing new methods for converting cheap and unreactive starting materials into valuable complex molecules. To do this, we use a combination of main group frustrated Lewis pairs, transition metal pincer complexes and acidic metal hydrides.

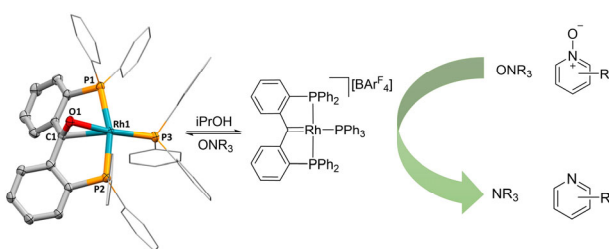
Our goals are to:

- Develop new catalytic systems
- Discover new reactions/reactivity that allows us to do unique chemistry
- Understand how it all works



Main group frustrated Lewis pairs for C-F bond activation

The development of main group frustrated Lewis pair (FLP) chemistry over the last 15 years has focused on mimicking existing transition chemistry. However, we have found that we can utilise such catalytic systems to activate fluorocarbons in a unique and controlled manner. This has allowed us to utilise waste fluorocarbons as feedstocks to generate more valuable fluorinated products. The applications of this chemistry are far reaching (from radiopharmaceutical development to materials manufacturing) and something that we are continuing to explore.



Transition metal PC_{carbene}P complexes

Most metal catalysed chemical transformations are heavily reliant upon a small group of rare and expensive noble metals (e.g. Pt, Pd, Ir, Rh). In contrast, cheap and abundant base metals (e.g. Fe, Co, Ni) are much less reactive for difficult bond activations. We have developed methods to access a class of pincer ligands that enhances the reactivity of base metal complexes through metal-

ligand cooperativity. The basis of this enhanced reactivity revolves around the presence of a metal-carbon double bond anchoring the pincer ligand to the metal. We have explored the coordination chemistry of a range of these ligands with Fe, Co, Rh and Ir complexes and are beginning to explore their application in catalytic processes.

Umpolung reactivity of acid metal hydrides

Metal hydrides are generally thought of as basic complexes, where the hydride acts as a base. However, metal hydrides can be engineered such that the hydride is very acidic in nature. We have been exploring the chemistry of such metal hydrides to determine if we can access new (umpolung) reaction pathways that allow divergent reactivity (as compared to basic metal hydrides). We have also utilised the conjugate bases of such metal hydrides in frustrated Lewis pair chemistry, allowing enhanced reactivity of otherwise inert base metal complexes.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Organometallic and organic synthetic techniques, detailed chemical analysis (NMR and IR spectroscopy, X-ray diffractometry, mass spectrometry), inert chemistry skills

Useful Majors: Chemical Sciences, Chemistry

RESEARCH FELLOWS



DR SEWERYN BIALASIEWICZ

Senior Research Fellow

Email: seweryn@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://researchers.uq.edu.au/researcher/4549>



Research Area

Our research investigates the microbial ecosystem, its key players, and how to manipulate or exploit those connections to achieve particular outcomes, with a major focus on the microbial ecosystem of the human. Part of this focus is to use a combination of existing and emerging technologies and techniques to explore the hidden diversity of microorganisms which may not have been well characterised in particular body sites or have been missed due to limitations of traditional techniques. The primary scope of our work is in chronic bacterial infections, particularly those which are difficult to treat, and how the microbiome relates to health and disease. Within this area, we are currently working on:

- Characterisation of bacteriophages in chronic *Pseudomonas* infections in Cystic Fibrosis patients and their role in modulating disease severity.
- Discovery and characterisation of microbially-derived antimicrobial therapy candidates to combat chronic otitis media (ear infection) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Computational Science / Microbiology



DR NAPHA MODHIRAN

Phone: 07 336 52485

Email: n.modhiran@uq.edu.au

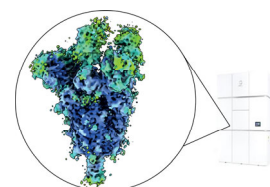
Web:

<https://researchers.uq.edu.au/researcher/16219>



Virus-Host immunity interaction and structural-based vaccine design

Our research focuses on understanding how the immune system responds to infection with a special emphasis on emerging and re-emerging enveloped viruses. This includes flaviviruses (Dengue, Japanese Encephalitis virus), alphaviruses (Chikungunya virus), Coronaviruses (SARS-CoV-2), Henipaviruses (Nipah virus). This work directly informs vaccine development programs. Our lab uses various methods to answer questions ranging from structural analysis (cryogenic Electron Microscopy, cryo-EM), fluorescent-activating cell sorting, protein design and expression to mouse models of virus infection.

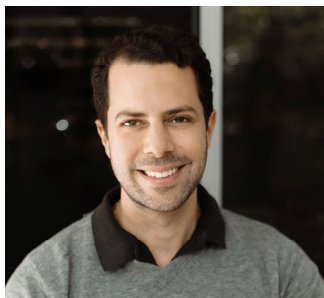


Visualising SARS-CoV-2 spike using cryo-EM

Research Project

Projects are available in a number of areas and can be tailored for honours, masters, masters by coursework and PhD students. Projects can range from vaccine design, protein expression, purification and characterization, to biological assays (e.g. testing for antiviral activity), to structural analysis, to study virus pathogenesis using molecular and *in vivo* model of virus infection. We encourage multidisciplinary projects.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemical Sciences / Chemistry / Computational Science / Genetics / Microbiology



DR ARIEL ISAACS

Email: a.isaacs@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/2094/ariel-isaacs>



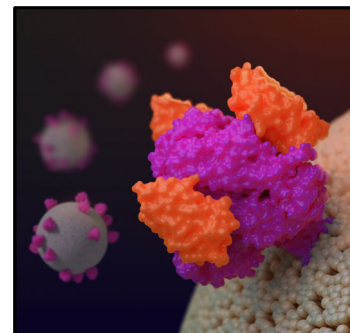
Vaccine and therapeutic development for emerging viruses

Working with Prof Daniel Watterson, I design vaccines and antibody-based therapies to combat high-threat respiratory viruses, including henipaviruses, coronaviruses, influenza and RSV. Using advanced structural biology techniques, I determine viral protein structures to guide the design of broad-spectrum interventions that strengthen global pandemic preparedness. Our team also employs diverse discovery platforms to identify antibodies for therapeutic development against both emerging and endemic viruses.

Possible research projects

Students in our team gain hands-on experience in vaccine design, viral protein engineering, and therapeutic discovery - contributing directly to real-world solutions for infectious diseases. Projects are available in a number of areas and can be tailored for Honours, Masters and PhD students. Techniques include: molecular cloning, protein characterisation, virus production, vaccine and antibody testing, animal models.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Microbiology



Nipah virus fusion protein (pink) bound by a novel nanobody therapeutic (orange)



DR CHRISTOPHER MCMILLAN

Phone: 07 3365 4629

Email: c.mcmillan1@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/786/chris-mcmillan>



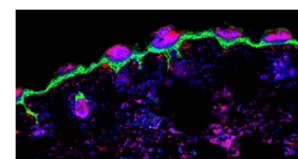
Vaccine development and immunology

Our research focuses on development of novel vaccines using a range of modalities, including protein, virus-like particles, DNA and RNA (including self-amplifying RNA). The main focus of our vaccine development is against emerging and re-emerging viruses, including flaviviruses (e.g. Dengue), poliovirus, influenza and SARS-CoV-2. We deliver these vaccines using a high-density microarray patch skin delivery platform, delivering vaccines and therapeutics directly to the skin. Recent work has expanded into spatial transcriptomics to gain an in-depth understanding of the immune responses induced by our vaccines.

Possible research projects:

Projects are available in a number of areas, and can be adapted for Honours, Masters and PhD students. Possible projects will combine vaccine design, molecular virology and immunology techniques to assess the efficacy of a range of vaccine candidates. Techniques will include PCR, cell culture, protein expression, mRNA production, protein analysis, animal models, as well as bioinformatics (transcriptomic analysis).

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Microbiology



Microscopy of the skin after microarray patch vaccination



DR NATALEE NEWTON

NHMRC Emerging Leadership Fellow

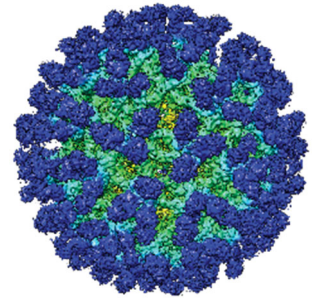
Email: natalee.newton@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://scmb.uq.edu.au/profile/3549/natalee-newton>



Flaviviruses

My research is focused on studying the structure and molecular makeup of highly pathogenic tick- and mosquito-borne flaviviruses, such as dengue virus, with implications for viral evolution, rational vaccine design and therapeutic antibody development. In collaboration with Assoc Prof Daniel Watterson, I utilise cutting-edge structural biology in combination with a chimeric flavivirus platform which allows us to safely explore viral emergence and evolution at the molecular level. My aim is translate these findings into new vaccines and strategies to overcome current epidemics and counter emerging flaviviral threats.



Possible Research Projects

Possible projects will combine molecular and structural virology techniques to understand pathogenesis, structure and antigenic profile of urban, sylvatic and ancestral flaviviruses. Techniques will include PCR, *in vitro* antibody analysis, virus purification and protein analysis.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Microbiology

SCMB AFFILIATE STAFF



PROFESSOR SASSAN ASGARI

Phone: 07 3365 2043

Email: s.asgari@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://environment.uq.edu.au/profile/22946/sassan-asgari>



Research Area

Insects and their pathogens are engaged in an evolutionary arms race, with hosts developing antiviral traits and pathogens evolving immune evasion strategies. Our research focuses on mosquito-virus interactions, investigating host pro- and antiviral factors, the roles of non-coding RNAs, and the influence of the insect microbiome on viral replication.

***Wolbachia*-mosquito interactions**

Wolbachia, a common insect endosymbiont, not only influences host reproduction but also prevents replication of various RNA viruses. We aim to explore the molecular mechanisms behind this virus-blocking effect in mosquitoes, given its potential to lower virus transmission and disease burden.

MicroRNAs in insect biology and host-pathogen interactions

MicroRNAs (~22 nt) regulate diverse processes such as development, immunity, and viral infections. We study how pathogens alter host miRNA profiles and the roles of differentially expressed miRNAs in host-pathogen interactions and insect development, with potential applications in pest and arbovirus control.

Techniques you learn in our group may include: Cell culture, DNA/RNA transfection, nucleic acids extractions, reverse transcription quantitative PCR, virus infection, protein expression and detection, RNA interference for gene silencing, bioinformatics, and possibly culturing mosquitoes.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Genetics / Microbiology

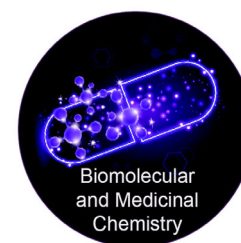


DR CRAIG BELL

Phone: 07 3346 0322

Email: c.bell1@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://aibn.uq.edu.au/profile/9896/craig-bell>



Research area

Our group focuses on the development of polymer devices for imaging, tracking of disease and cellular processes, therapeutic and separation applications through the use of a tool-kit of controlled polymerisation techniques along with post polymerisation functionalisation chemistries. These allow controlled production of a range of material architecture, while the incorporation of degradable moieties into these constructs also allows for enzymatic and hydrolytic degradation for complete body clearance of these constructs and tracking of these devices in vivo upon degradation to help elucidate cellular processes.

Production of radiopharmaceutical nanomedicines

This research area involves the synthesis of a range of polymeric and proteinaceous materials as carriers for functionalization with chelators to develop polymer/protein hybrid materials that will be radiolabelled and applied as diagnostic and radiotherapeutic nanomaterials. Pharmacokinetics and biodistribution as a function of nanomaterial properties will be assessed to allow targeted design of platforms with , pharmacokinetics to enable cell receptor targeting of therapeutics at sufficiently high concentrations. Physical (Gel Permeation Chromatography, Dynamic Light Scattering, Radiochemistry) and biological (flow cytometry, preclinical biodistribution) characterisation techniques will be employed to elucidate structure/biology interactions.

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Chemical Sciences / Chemistry / Microbiology



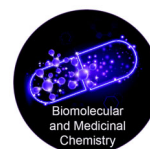
PROFESSOR MARK BLASKOVICH

INSTITUTE FOR MOLECULAR BIOSCIENCE

Phone: 07 3346 2994

Email: m.blaskovich@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://imb.uq.edu.au/profile/929/mark-blaskovich>



Superdrugs vs Superbugs!

Antimicrobial resistance is increasingly recognised as one of the greatest global threats to human health. Our group takes a multidisciplinary approach to find new therapies to treat drug-resistant infections and develop new diagnostics to detect them. Anchored by core expertise in organic and medicinal chemistry, our research methodology extends into microbiology, chemoinformatics, microbial genetics and pharmacology through many national and international collaborators.



Possible research projects

We have developed a core research platform based on derivatising existing antibiotics and adding additional functionality, with a wide range of potential applications.

- Design of new antibiotic derivatives and antibiotic conjugates with dual-modes of action
- Development of fluorescent and PET probes to image bacterial cells and infections in mice
- Development of diagnostics that selectively capture bacteria with magnetic nanoparticles

Useful Majors/Minors: Chemistry / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Computational Science / Genetics / Microbiology



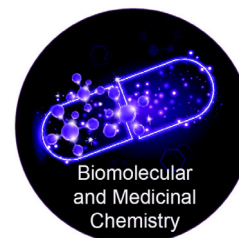
PROFESSOR ROBERT CAPON

INSTITUTE FOR MOLECULAR BIOSCIENCE (IMB)

Phone: 07 3346 2979

Email: r.capon@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://imb.uq.edu.au/profile/1097/rob-capon>



Biodiscovery: learning from nature

My research group focuses on the discovery and use of novel bioactive natural products from Australian marine and terrestrial biodiversity. These metabolites span all known biosynthetic classes and include many molecules that are new to science. Our research makes use of a range of sophisticated chemical technologies, and extends into the fields of microbiology, cell biology, pharmacology and biochemistry, supported by an extensive network of collaborators. Natural products uncovered during our investigations represent valuable new leads in the search for drugs in the fields of human and animal health and crop protection. They also have potential application as molecular probes to better interrogate, understand and manage living systems.

Possible research projects

- Marine biodiscovery
- Microbial biodiscovery
- Drug discovery: infectious diseases, cancer and pain
- Synthetic and medicinal chemistry
- Cane toad chemical ecology

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Chemistry



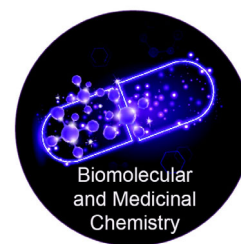
PROFESSOR DAVID FAIRLIE

INSTITUTE FOR MOLECULAR BIOSCIENCE (IMB)

Phone: 07 3346 2989

Email: d.fairlie@imb.uq.edu.au

Web: <http://fairlie.imb.uq.edu.au/>

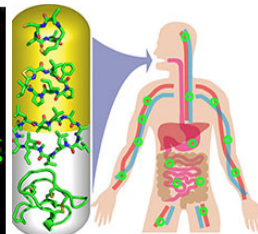
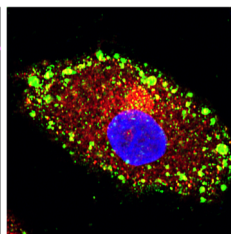
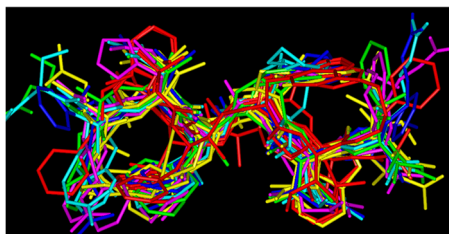
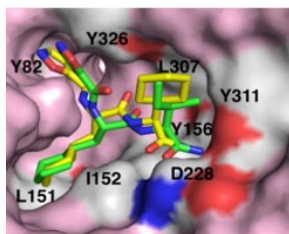


Organic Chemistry, Drug Design, Cell Biology, Immunology & Pharmacology

Our *chemists* design (computer modelling), synthesise (solution/solid phase reactions), and solve structures (NMR) for chemicals, drugs & proteins. Our *biologists* study drugs, proteins, enzymes, cells and mouse models of disease to identify new drug targets and interrogate mechanisms of action. We invent new drugs, chemicals and chemical reactions, solve new chemical and protein structures, and discover new mechanisms in inflammatory, metabolic and neurodegenerative diseases, viral infections and cancers.



●Chemistry ●Synthesis ●Structure ●Enzymology ●Cells ●Signalling ●Immunology ●Pharmacology



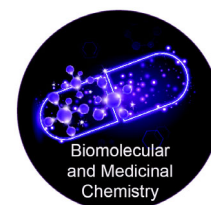
DR NATASHA HUNGERFORD

Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation (QAAFI)

Phone: 07 3443 2473

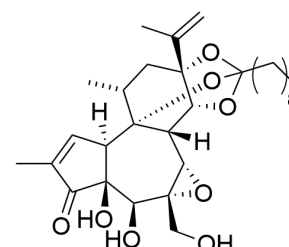
Email: n.hungerford@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://qaafi.uq.edu.au/profile/117/natasha-hungerford>



Natural toxins and bioactives

The identification and analysis of natural toxins and other bioactive natural products in plants and agricultural products is an applied area of organic chemistry and is important to reduce human and animal health risks, including to livestock production, food safety and market access. Bioactives of interest include pyrrolizidine alkaloids, indospicine and simplexin that are of risk to grazing animals and have the potential to form residues in agricultural products. Current projects also focus on bioactive compounds in stingless bee honey and the mitigation of methane production in cattle.



Possible research project

Native *Pimelea* plants contain simplexin, an unusual daphnane orthoester, poisonous to grazing cattle. This project will aim to understand potential metabolites that could be formed in grazing cattle by conducting exploratory chemical hydrolysis of the toxin. Instrumental techniques that could be employed include LC-MS/MS and NMR.



Useful Majors: Chemistry / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology



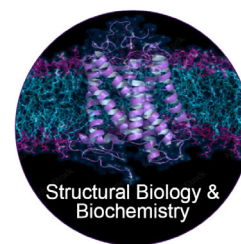
PROFESSOR GLENN KING

INSTITUTE FOR MOLECULAR BIOSCIENCE
(IMB)

Phone: 07 3346 2025

Email: glenn.king@imb.uq.edu.au

Web: <https://imb.uq.edu.au/bugs-and-drugs>



Research Area

More than 20% of all animal species on the planet are venomous. Our lab harnesses the extraordinary chemical and pharmacological diversity of venoms to develop eco-friendly insecticides, human therapeutics, and intraoperative imaging agents. Our research is highly translational and has led to two spinout companies (Vestaron Corporation and Infensa Biotech). Current areas of therapeutic interest include chronic pain, epilepsy, heart attack, and stroke. We maintain the largest collection of venoms in the world, comprising venom from more than 500 species of ants, caterpillars, centipedes, scorpions, spiders, wasps and other invertebrates, and we replenish and augment this collection through regular field trips.

Projects are available across a wide range of topics ranging from fundamental studies of animal venoms to commercial development of bioinsecticides, therapeutics, and imaging agents. We use a wide range of advanced techniques including cryoelectron microscopy, electrophysiology, genomics, proteotranscriptomics, and multidimensional heteronuclear NMR spectroscopy. We are passionate about communicating the results of our research to a broad audience, and consequently there are always opportunities for engagement with the media (print, radio, television, etc.) and general public.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemistry / Computational Science



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

JESSICA MAR

Email: jessica.mar@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://aibn.uq.edu.au/profile/3649/jessica-mar>



Bioinformatics Methods for All Things Single Cell Omics

Living cells exist in a variety of weird and wonderful contexts and it's the mission of the Mar Lab to learn as much about single cell biology as possible! To that end, our group has worked across a diversity of research topics – from modelling bone cells to investigate how astronauts experience microgravity in space, to elucidating the cellular composition of breast milk in humans, cows, and Australian camels.

Research Project Areas

My group is excited about the statistical methods that are used to interpret big data and new approaches that to improve biological and biomedical inferences. We collaborate widely including with labs that develop 3D biomimetic systems, build brain organoids, and study human conditions like cancer, ageing, and neurological disease. If you're passionate about a bioinformatics-centric question in science, I'd love to see if there is synergistic project so please get in touch!

Useful Majors: Bioinformatics / Statistics / Mathematics / Data Science / Genetics Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science



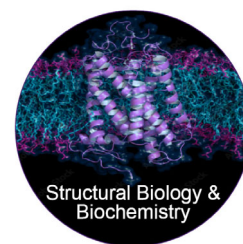
PROFESSOR MEHDI MOBLI

CENTRE FOR ADVANCED IMAGING (CAI)

Phone: 07 3346 0352

Email: m.mobli@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://www.cai.uq.edu.au/mobli>

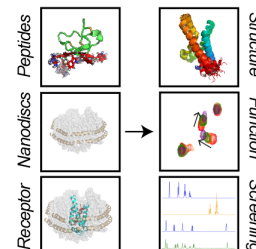


Structural Biology and Drug Discovery

The research in our group involves the study of bioactive disulfide-rich peptides. These molecules are ubiquitous in nature and have varied roles from being critical signalling molecules (e.g. hormones) to acting as lethal weapons (e.g. venom toxins).

Modulation of Neuronal Signalling

Our research focuses specifically on ligands that modulate neuronal signalling. This may be through the study of the **structure and dynamics of neuronal ion channels in development of novel analgesics** or **characterisation of novel neuronal enzyme modulators involved in the reward pathway**. We are also actively using in silico methods to mine disulfide rich peptides with novel neuromodulatory functions, with projects underway looking specifically at how **avidity is gained through domain duplication**. We routinely use a range of biophysical techniques including NMR, MS, EM and ITC to characterise proteins that we produce through recombinant gene expression.



Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biophysics / Chemistry / Computational Science



PROFESSOR MARK MORRISON

FRAZER INSTITUTE

Phone: 07 3443 6957

Email: m.morrison1@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://www.tri.edu.au/staff/mark-morrison>



Research Area



Our research focuses on “how what we eat becomes what we are” by examining the roles microbes play in health and gastrointestinal diseases like IBD, diabetes and cancer. We collaborate with clinicians, biomedical scientists, and other microbiologists to use microbiology and metagenomics to: i) characterise structural and/or functional changes in gut microbial communities; ii) isolate “new” bacteria from the human gut and; iii) use techniques in bacterial genetics, to better understand host-microbe interactions affecting health and disease.

Possible projects

- Food additives as modulators of host-microbe interactions and gut homeostasis
- Functional studies of the Crohn's disease mucosa-associated microbiota
- Microbes of the small intestine – the forgotten microbiome in digestive diseases and disorders
- Uncharted territory: Archaea x host interactions in health and disease

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemical Sciences / Chemistry / Computational Science / Genetics / Microbiology

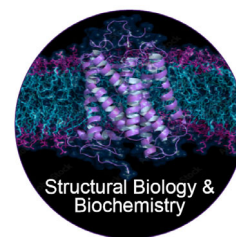


PROFESSOR MEGAN O'MARA

Phone: 07 3346 4591

Email: m.omara@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://staff.scmb.uq.edu.au/staff/megan-omara>



Multiscale simulation approaches for targeted therapeutics

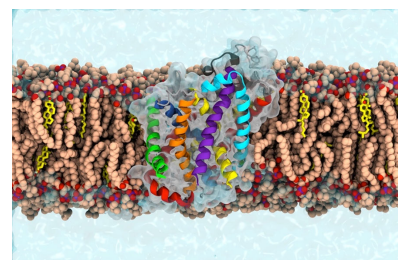
My research uses computational approaches to understand molecular function and physicochemical properties based on molecular structure and the chemistry of the surrounding environment. My group's research focuses on proteins and other biopolymers, biomolecules, drugs, and synthetic polymers. Projects span from investigating how biochemical changes in disease or inflammation impact protein function and drug efficacy, to exploring how polymer architecture influences functional and responsive behaviour. Applications of our work include precision medicine and the design of functionalized nanomaterials.

Possible research projects

Research projects focus on understanding how the chemical or biochemical environment influence function and properties. Possible projects include: the impact of lipid modifications on membrane and protein function; computational design of targeted therapeutics; membrane/polymer interactions and polymer functional responses. A full list of projects is available at:

<https://about.uq.edu.au/experts/2137>

Useful Majors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Biomedical Science / Biophysics / Chemical Sciences / Chemistry / Computational Science / Genetics / Microbiology



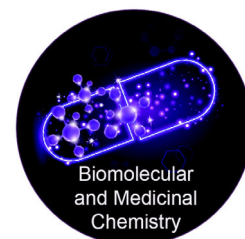
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR BRETT PATERSON

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR BIOENGINEERING AND
NANOTECHNOLOGY (AIBN)

Phone: 07 3336 0335

Email: brett.paterson@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://aibn.uq.edu.au/paterson>



Radiopharmaceuticals for Diagnostic Imaging and Therapy

Our group is investigating radioactive molecules called 'radiopharmaceuticals' for imaging and therapeutic applications. We design and synthesise the radioactive molecules using organic, inorganic and radiochemical synthesis techniques and then we investigate applications in molecular imaging, radiobiology and treating diseases such as cancer.

Targeted radiopharmaceutical imaging and therapy

Coordination chemistry and *bioconjugation* play essential roles in the development of metal-based radioactive agents for selective delivery of ionising radiation to sites of disease. Projects are available that will investigate: new chelators for stabilising alpha-emitting radionuclides; bifunctional chelators for attaching biologically active targeting molecules; and the cytotoxicity of targeted radiation. The labs are fitted with specialised capabilities including a cyclotron, hot cells and a molecular imaging facility.

Techniques: Inorganic/organic synthesis, radiochemistry, bioconjugations, spectroscopy (NMR), mass spectrometry, HPLC, peptide synthesis, cell culture, molecular imaging

Useful Majors: Chemistry / Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science





PROFESSOR MATT SWEET

INSTITUTE FOR MOLECULAR BIOSCIENCE (IMB)

Phone: 07 3346 2082

Email: m.sweet@imb.uq.edu.au

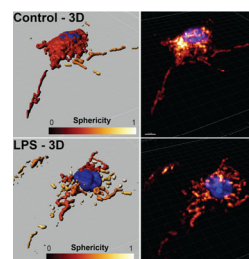
Web: <http://www.imb.uq.edu.au/matt-sweet>



Research Area

We study innate immunity, infection and inflammation, particularly with respect to the Toll-like Receptor (TLR) family of pattern recognition receptors. We characterize TLR-inducible antimicrobial pathways in macrophages and how bacterial pathogens such as *Salmonella* and uropathogenic *E. coli* subvert these responses. We also focus on TLR signalling and how this signalling contributes to dysregulated inflammatory responses in the context of acute and chronic inflammation-driven diseases. Our goals are to develop strategies to manipulate innate immune pathways to combat both infectious and inflammatory diseases.

(1) Targeting histone deacetylases as an anti-infective strategy; (2) Targeting TLR-inducible macrophage metabolism as an anti-inflammatory strategy; (3) Defining roles of mitochondria and lipid droplets in macrophage functions; and (4) Characterizing toll-like receptor-inducible zinc poisoning as an innate immune antimicrobial weapon. Approaches used span molecular and cellular biology, immunology and *in vivo* models of inflammation and infection.



Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Biomedical Science / Genetics / Microbiology



PROFESSOR ALA TABOR

QUEENSLAND ALLIANCE FOR AGRICULTURE
& FOOD INNOVATIONS (QAAFI)

Phone: 07 3346 2176

Email: a.tabor@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://qaaqi.uq.edu.au/profile/492/ala-tabor>



Research Area

Our group focusses on developing translational solutions for animal health associated with bovine venereal diseases, ecto-parasites and vector borne diseases. Bovine venereal diseases affect cattle in northern Australia causing decreased calf output and thus a reduction in breeding efficiencies. Our laboratory is developing novel diagnostic methods to differentiate pathogens and we are also examining the pathobiome of infected cattle to determine if this influences the development of bovine VD. Ticks and tick borne diseases affect humans, livestock and pets. The Tabor group has on-going research activities associated with vaccines (patents), molecular assays and biomarkers. We are interested in identifying host biomarkers for bovine fly and tick resistance (costing Australia ~\$290m p.a.). Currently we are exploring novel genomes and transcriptomes of neglected ecto-parasites and nematodes towards improved control strategies.

Opportunities exist for novel genome sequencing (MinION technologies in house), comparative genomics, bovine host metagenomics, molecular diagnostic assay development, tick host biomarker including proteomics, miRNAomes, RNA-Seq and bioinformatics. The angle of the project can be negotiated to suit the candidate.

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Bioinformatics / Microbiology



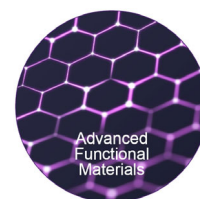
PROFESSOR ANDREW WHITTAKER

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR BIOENGINEERING AND
NANOTECHNOLOGY(AIBN)

Phone: 07 3346 3885

Email: a.whittaker@uq.edu.au

Web: <http://polymer-chemistry.group.uq.edu.au>

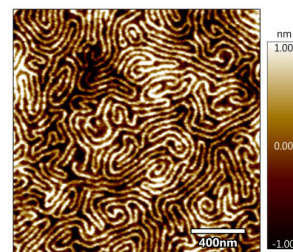


Research Area

Our goal is to translate fundamental research findings and knowledge into products and health-care protocols. We use knowledge in the field of physical and synthetic chemistry to design and synthesize novel materials for important applications. These are currently materials for photolithography and for medicine. The Whittaker Group consists of ~25 scientists working in a range of projects spanning fundamental physical chemistry to applied polymer chemistry. Our projects aim to impart detailed knowledge of important chemical systems, and provide training in modern scientific techniques.

Novel Biologically-Responsive MRI Agents: Polymers for imaging of diseased tissue; *Novel Polymers for Lithographic Applications:* Materials for advanced manufacture of computer chips; more at <https://polymer-chemistry.group.uq.edu.au/students/available-student-projects>

Useful Majors/Minors: Biochemistry & Molecular Biology / Chemistry / Computational Science



AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS

Projects may also be available in the following UQ Centres and Institutes that have strong links with the School of Chemistry & Molecular Biosciences:

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR BIOENGINEERING AND NANOTECHNOLOGY

Website: <https://aibn.uq.edu.au/>

Contact: reception@aibn.uq.edu.au

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

Website: <http://www.acweb.uq.edu.au/>

Contact: acweb@uq.edu.au

CENTRE FOR ADVANCED IMAGING

Website: <https://cai.centre.uq.edu.au/>

Contact: cai@enquire.uq.edu.au

CENTRE FOR CLINICAL RESEARCH

Website: <https://clinical-research.centre.uq.edu.au/>

Contact: information@uqccr.uq.edu.au

FRAZER INSTITUTE

Website: <https://frazer.uq.edu.au/>

Contact: fi.enquiries@uq.edu.au

INSTITUTE FOR MOLECULAR BIOSCIENCE

Website: <https://imb.uq.edu.au/>

Contact: imb@imb.uq.edu.au

QUEENSLAND ALLIANCE FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD INNOVATION

Website: <https://qaafi.uq.edu.au/>

Contact: qaafi@uq.edu.au

QUEENSLAND BRAIN INSTITUTE

Website: <https://qbi.uq.edu.au/>

Contact: collaborators@qbi.uq.edu.au

EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONS

QIMR BERGHOFFER MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

HOSPITALS COMPLEX, HERSTON

Website: <http://www.qimrberghofer.edu.au>

Contact: graduateeducation@qimrberghofer.edu.au

MATER RESEARCH

HOSPITALS COMPLEX, SOUTH BRISBANE

Website: <http://www.materresearch.org.au>

Contact: student.enquiries@mater.uq.edu.au