



Name: Louise Weller
Employer: Epsom College
Role: Secondary School Teacher

“As a physics teacher I feel so lucky to be able to talk about physics all day long. The best days are when a student says ‘oh I get it now’, or when they have a huge grin on their face because they’ve done well in a physics examination.”

Can you describe your journey to becoming a physics graduate?

My journey towards studying Physics with Nuclear Astrophysics at Surrey – and my current role as a secondary school physics teacher – wasn’t a typical one. I was a single mum, working as a hairdresser but getting bored and wanted to do a job I found interesting. Over the years, I’d surrounded myself with books and recordings about astrophysics and quantum mechanics but, having been out of education for a long time, I knew that I had a long road ahead if I wanted to study at degree level. After taking GCSEs and A levels, I arrived at Surrey. I was a mature student in my 30s and at first I was mistaken for a professor but this didn’t stop me making friends with my fellow students. I often asked them for help as they were very clever and far more computer literate than me!

I suppose my age made me more conscientious towards my work and the fact that I had teenage children at home was difficult at times but the university gave me plenty of support.

How did you get on at university?

The academic staff in the Department of Physics were fantastic. The facilities were out of this world and the library had endless resources and online databases. The degree was challenging but I was passionate about physics so I found it rewarding. While the nuclear astrophysics and general relativity modules interested me the most, I really enjoyed the whole course. The achievement of my physics degree can never be taken away from me. That’s the wonderful thing about education: you get out as much as you put in and it’s yours forever.

Why did you decide to become a teacher?

I wanted to inspire other people to study this wonderful subject so continued my career journey with a PGCE to enable me to teach physics at secondary school. With a shortage of physics teachers in the UK I had the pick of jobs once qualified and found a wonderful independent school for girls near my home where I blossomed as a teacher.

This September I will begin teaching at Epsom College where I’m aiming to inspire more girls to take physics at A level. As a teacher I feel so lucky to be able to talk about physics all day long.