



The Athena SWAN (Scientific Women's Academic Network) Charter was established in 2005 with the aim of *"Encouraging and recognising commitment to advancing gender equality"* within STEM subjects, i.e., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The Athena SWAN agenda has grown overtime to promote equality in general. Scan the QR code opposite for more background about Athena SWAN at Heriot-Watt, including guidance and resources.



1. Huge Congratulations to the HWU STEM Inclusivity Network Team!



Mika Moriyama, Christie Etukudor, Gule Saman

Huge congratulations to **Gule Saman**, **Rhona Feist**, **Christie Etukudor**, **Beatrice Pelloni**, **Mika Moriyama**, and **Marta Romeo** for being **Highly Commended** for Heriot-Watt University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion Team Award 2025!



STEMinclusivity@hw.ac.uk



QR code for STEM IN





2. Women in Data Science in Dubai



On Saturday, 31 May, we proudly hosted the 6th Women in Data Science (WiDS) UAE 2025 conference.

With around 100 participants attending on campus and 20 joining online, the event featured a full day of presentations, panel discussions, and networking opportunities.

Our speakers were from the corporate sector such as Oracle and LinkedIn, from government such as DEWA and Dubai Police, from startups, and from academia. The sessions explored developments around data, and in data science and AI and the impact on operations across organisations. Within that context topics such as ethics and innovation also featured throughout the discussions.

Attendees joined us from across the UAE, including Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Ras Al Khaimah, creating a dynamic environment of shared learning and meaningful dialogue. Speakers also emphasised the importance of female representation in a fast-changing domain and encouraged active participation in shaping an inclusive, AI-driven future.





3. Women in Data Science in Edinburgh



🎉 HWU hosted the inspiring WiDS Edinburgh event on May 28th, 2025, with support from Athena Swan, SICSA, SPADS CDT and HWU STEM Inclusivity Network.

The program featured a keynote talk (Interdisciplinary Journey into Data visualisation), a business pitch workshop, Poster session and a panel discussion on a career in Data science.

The event concluded with awards 🏆 for the business pitch and poster session winners. The event received positive feedback from the participants.

Plans are already underway for another inspiring WiDS Edinburgh in 2026 (1st of October)!



Interested in collaborating for WiDS Edinburgh 2026?



Get in touch: [<https://lnkd.in/e-zTerTH>]





4. Technovation Challenge 2025 in Dubai



We got on board with Team Sidra in March for the global **Technovation Challenge 2025**. This experience truly proves that it's not about the number of months you put into something, but rather the effort you invest with the time you have. Here you can check out the next edition of the challenge <https://technovationchallenge.org/competition/>.

Working with these girls and their innovative, curious minds has been an incredibly rewarding mentoring experience for us. We've gained just as much from them as they have from us. The meetups, the calls, the Oracle meeting, and most importantly, the time we spent together, will always be among our most cherished memories!

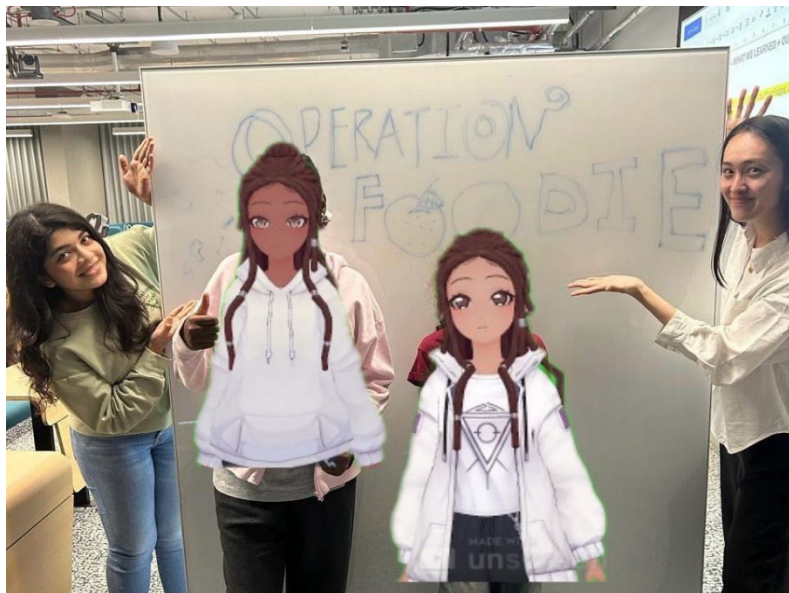
Wishing these girls all the very best and praying for their continued success and happiness.

Rachael Dias – MACS and **Maryann Fernandes** – SoSS
(Heriot-Watt University Dubai)





5. More Background on the Technovation Challenge 2025 in Dubai



When I first heard about **Technovation**

(<https://technovationchallenge.org/competition/>), I assumed it was just another hackathon. But after participating, I walked away with deep gratitude for a program that empowers girls to use technology to solve real-world problems.

At its core, **Technovation** is an all-girls STEM competition—but what makes it special is watching youth imagine, design, and build solutions that truly matter.

This season, I served as the technical mentor for a beginners' team called Operation Foodie—a food-waste recycling application. With **Hu Yingyi** from SoSS advising on the business side (we are both in the photo), the project didn't just address sustainability; it made all of us more mindful and grateful for the resources we often take for granted.

I entered as a computer science student and left with far more than I expected. Thanks to an incredible opportunity to work with Oracle, I gained insight into professional project frameworks, while sharpening my skills in pitching, presenting, and evaluating solutions as viable businesses.

Mentoring a team that included a brilliant 10-year-old was especially inspiring—their fresh perspective reminded me how powerful curiosity can be. Guiding their STEM journey was profoundly rewarding, and by the end, they had developed the same love for technology that first drew me in.

Beyond the learning, **Technovation** created meaningful opportunities for networking and community. It wasn't just a hackathon—it was an experience that grew our skills, broadened our outlook, and connected us with innovators passionate about building a better world.

And to top it off, Operation Foodie made it to the semifinals!

Areej Ahmed (MACS - Heriot-Watt University Dubai)





6. Ada Lovelace Day 2025 Events in Dubai and Edinburgh

Ada Lovelace Day 2025 Edinburgh Campus



Whose Gold? Re-imagining Alignment for Truly Beneficial AI



An Open Lunchtime Lecture by*
Verena Rieser

Research Scientist at Google DeepMind

1pm on Thursday 9 October 2025

Lecture Theatre 3

Hugh Nisbet Building

* This lecture is **open to all** staff and students at Heriot-Watt as well as the wider community. Seating is limited, so **Registration is REQUIRED**. Register **FREE** via the **URL** or **QR code** below:

<https://tinyurl.com/ALD-2025>

Registration OPENS on
Thursday 11 September



Abstract: Human feedback is often the “gold standard” for AI alignment, but what if this “gold” reflects diverse, even contradictory human values? This keynote explores the technical and ethical challenges of building beneficial AI when values conflict -- not just between individuals, but also within them. My talk advocates for a dual expansion of the AI alignment framework: moving beyond a single, monolithic viewpoint to a plurality of perspectives, and transcending narrow safety and engagement metrics to promote comprehensive human well-being.

Bio: Verena Rieser is a Senior Staff Research Scientist at Google DeepMind, where she founded the VOICES team (Voices-of-all in alignment). Her team’s mission is to enhance Gemini’s safety and usability for diverse communities. Verena has pioneered work in data-driven multimodal Dialogue Systems and Natural Language Generation, encompassing conversational RL agents, faithful data-to-text generation, spoken language understanding, evaluation methodologies, and applications of AI for societal good. Verena previously directed the NLP lab as a full professor at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, and held a Royal Society Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowship. She earned her PhD from Saarland University.



This event is organized by the
MACS Athena SWAN Team





Ada Lovelace Day 2025 Dubai Campus



Image taken from TechGig: *Ada Lovelace Day: Commemorating the world's first computer programmer (2020)*

A MACS Ada Lovelace Day 2025 event will take place in **October**. Ada Lovelace Day is celebrated every year on the second Tuesday of October month to celebrate the contribution of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in the memory of the world's first computer programmer.

Calling all current **Y4 Computer Science** students to step into the spotlight and share your passion, projects, and career goals in a dynamic format using the **PechaKucha presentation** style. Each presenter shows 20 slides, each for 20 seconds of their achievements as a Computing Heriot Watt student.

Join us for the electrifying **PechaKucha presentations** where creativity knows no bounds! Participate in our event, develop your soft skills and broaden your network.

Presenter slots are limited, please get in touch via the email address below to secure a place to showcase your work:

Organizer: **Drishty Sobnath**

D.Sobnath@hw.ac.uk





7. Carer Awareness Training



Thursday 2 October 10:00-11:00 (Teams)
[Book on ERP Learn](#)

Carer awareness: Identifying and supporting carers

This introductory session delivered by [VOCAL](#) aims to make carers more visible in the workplace and help those in senior positions reflect on the hidden impacts of caring, and how to identify and support unpaid carers in their organisation.

This session will explore how:

- to identify unpaid carers in the workplace
- to build an awareness of the impacts of caring and how this can affect carers at work
- employers can support carers who are working and the business benefits
- carer rights and underpinning legislation can better support carers in employment
- VOCAL can support working carers and employers.

The session will be interactive with opportunities to ask questions along the way.

*This training opportunity is part of **Heriot-Watt's Bronze Athena Swan Action Plan** and is being leveraged by the **MACS Silver Athena Swan Action Plan**.*





8. MACS Neurodiversity Network



neurodiversity

The recently started MACS Neurodiversity (ND) Network aims to foster a supportive environment where members can share experiences, ask questions, and collaboratively address common challenges.

There is an emphasis on supporting our students but there is also intention to forming a group for members of staff who identify as neurodivergent.

If you would like more information, or to join the MACS ND Network on Microsoft Teams, please contact:

Mateja Presern
m.presern@hw.ac.uk



If you have suggestions or questions related to Athena SWAN, or an event that you would like to advertise, then please send them to us via athena-macs@hw.ac.uk. In addition, if you would like to be part of the MACS Athena SWAN Team (a.k.a. the Self-Assessment Team (SAT)) then please do get in touch.



Audrey Repetti and Andrew Ireland
(MACS Athena Swan Coordinators)





AND FINALLY, DON'T FORGET ...

Coffee Time

EVERY MONDAY AT 10AM
MACS COMMON ROOM
EDINBURGH

