Elizabeth Winstanley from the University of Sheffield, UK – Semester 1 2016.

Where you have come from and what do you teach?

I have come from the School of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Sheffield in the UK, where I am Professor of Mathematical Physics. In recent years, I have taught a wide variety of courses there, including Vectors and Mechanics, Core Mathematics, Mathematics to Engineers and Career Development Skills to undergraduates and Topical Science to students on a masters' course in Science Communication. My research area is black holes.

What interested you in the Erskine Programme/Why did you want to come to UC?

What particularly attracted me about the Erskine Programme was the opportunity to teach at a different university. Communicating our subject, whether through teaching, publishing research papers, or giving talks, is at the heart of what it means to be an academic, and the Erskine Programme combines all these elements. The excellent reputation of UC and the Department of Physics and Astronomy was also a key factor. I've visited New Zealand a number of times on holiday and wanted to contribute to the academic life of the country.

What have you been doing at UC?

Here at UC, I have been teaching PHYS326/456 Classical Mechanics and Symmetry Principles to undergraduates and masters students in the Department of Physics and Astronomy. This is a 15-point course and I've been fortunate to teach the whole semester. I have also given a seminar in the Department and a public lecture to the Canterbury branch of the Royal Society of New Zealand.

I've had time to pursue my research into classical and semi-classical black holes. It's been great to be part of the Cosmology and Astro-Particle Physics group here, who have an active Journal Club programme. I'm also giving a colloquium at the University of Otago in Dunedin. During the mid-semester break, I took the opportunity to travel.

What have you most enjoyed about your time here at UC/Christchurch?

Index gymnastics (the PHYS326/456 students will know what I mean!). Seriously, working with a fantastic group of students, teaching a wonderful subject, and being part of a friendly and welcoming department. I've really appreciated having some space and time to think about my subject and my research, away from the everyday pressures of academic life. It has been fantastic to spend an extended period in a wonderful city and beautiful country. I've also enjoyed watching a superior class of rugby!