

## School of Mathematics and Physics Women in Mathematics Day

### The confidence tightrope by Dr Sophie Raynor

#### **Abstract:**

Rather than telling you about my research (which is related to operad theory), I will tell you about something that has recently been distracting me from it even more than usual: namely, some disturbing demographic discrepancies that emerged when I introduced a new assessment model for a second-year subject. I will draw on conversations with students and colleagues, and my own experiences and observations (and perhaps some aspects of my research — which is related to operad theory) to highlight some of the complexities around mathematical participation and confidence, particularly in relation to demographic factors: for example, the protection (good!) that imposter syndrome (bad!) can provide, and the aggression (bad!) that mathematical confidence (good!) can provoke.

Of course, I will also tell you what happened when we approached the assessment issue head-on! Audience comments and ideas are very welcome.