A Dorset man, Steve read French and German at Aston University, remaining there for his doctorate. Previously Lecturer in French Studies at the University of Manchester, he was appointed to Bath in 1990, and researches issues around perceptions and portrayals of homosexuality in Britain and France; comparative contemporary LGBT activism; and French history. Author of a monograph on documentary as propaganda and a number of book chapters, papers and review articles, he contributes regularly to print and broadcast media. His teaching covers contemporary French Politics and Society (persuasion, propaganda, and political marketing), international marketing, and technical translation.

Deputy Head of the Department of Politics, Languages and International Studies, and Director of Language Learning and Teaching, Dr Wharton is a former Chair of Academic Assembly and has served on numerous University, Faculty, and Departmental committees. He is co-Director of Routes into Languages South West, based at the University, Chair of Directors of Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, and Secretary of the Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France. He has served on the Executive of the Association of University Professors and Heads of French, as National President of the AUT in 2005/06, and of UCU 2006/07, and has also served on the Advisory Committee of the Universities Superannuation Scheme.

Dr Wharton was made Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Palmes Académiques by the French government in 2012 for services to French culture.