



Job description

Post	Research Finance Officer
Department	Department of Biology
Division	Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division (MPLS)
Location	11a Mansfield Road, Oxford, OX1 3SZ
Grade and salary	Grade 6: £32,332 - £38,205 p.a. up to a discretionary range of £41,732
Hours	Full time
Contract type	Permanent
Reporting to	Research Funding Manager
Application deadline	12 noon (GMT+1) on Friday 22 nd March 2024
Vacancy reference	170706
Recruitment contacts	HR: recruitment@biology.ox.ac.uk
Additional information	

The role

The Department of Biology was formed by the merger of Zoology and Plant Sciences in August 2022. This is a great opportunity to gain experience in a busy grants function that manages around 400 projects at any one time. We submit over 150 applications per year with a combined total value of around £70m. Biology projects are funded by a wide variety of funding bodies, and the nature of our work means there are numerous international collaborations, partnerships and consultancies.

You will be part of a team of Research Finance Officers, each of whom will manage a portfolio of grants. Each Research Finance Officer will look after their projects from application to completion, working closely with PIs to provide excellent service and working closely with the Research Funding Manager and Finance Manager.





Responsibilities

Manage all aspects of your assigned grants from pre-award to final close, including:

- Manage day to day pre-award activities, including preparation of, and accurate costings for, grant applications using the University's costing tool (currently X5). You will ensure compliance with sponsor rules and provide advice and support to the Principal Investigators and researchers in the preparation of sponsor applications, working with them to complete sponsor application forms and liaising with external sponsors.
- Coordinate with collaborating departments and institutions in the preparation of collaborative bids to ensure that all costings and justifications are completed in a timely manner to enable consolidation of the application.
- Ensure all applications meet the Department's criteria with respect to overheads and cost recovery, submitting all potential costs to the Department to the Research Funding Manager for consideration.
- Raising any potential additional space requirements to the Research Funding Manager through the approval process
- Co-ordinate funding support letters with the Head of Department's office to ensure that these are prepared in time for grant submission and include all supporting information required.
- Carry out initial due diligence assessments and ensure any ethical and Conflict of Interest issues have been considered and any necessary approvals and licenses are being sought.
- Be responsible for ensuring that grant applications are submitted to Research Services within the University's deadlines. You will check that they are accurate, comply with sponsor rules and have the necessary supporting documentation.
- Review award letters against application submitted and raise any variances with the PI or Research Funding Manager to confirm that the project can be accepted and the research can be carried out within the revised budgets.
- Ensure that Start certificates and grant activations are submitted in line with funder requirements and within the required deadline or coordinate requests for deferring the start of grants when required.
- Complete award costings in the X5 system to enable the project to be set up in the Universities Finance System (Oracle R12).
- Co-ordinate with Research Services to ensure that collaboration agreements are finalised and that collaborators budgets are correctly accounted for in the Oracle R12 system, including the preparation of RPF3's.
- Notify the PI of the setup of the project in the Oracle R12 system providing the project code, terms and conditions of the award and any specific/key conditions associated with the award;

brief PIs and any supporting project staff on their responsibilities with respect to record-keeping, timesheet submission, milestone recording, reporting and project sign-off.

- Ensure Principal Investigators are provided with monthly project status and activity reports. Deal with issues arising, analysing grant spend on a monthly basis, highlighting variances and taking follow-up action.
- Ensure all documentation related to spend is submitted to the Grants team, including timesheets, and that all comply with the funder requirements.
- Liaise with research groups and HR regarding vacant posts on grants to ensure that funding is available before recruitment processes are undertaken; use X5 to re-cost salaries on awards to identify any over or under spends on salary budgets.
- Monitor payments to collaborators and consultants, ensuring they are paid promptly in line with the agreements in place.
- Meet routinely with all of the Principal Investigators within the portfolio to review their financial position and provide solutions to problems including expenditure eligibility, reforecasts and guidance on budget virement on projects whilst maintaining the auditable standards on the project.
- Work with Research Accounts to prepare financial statements of expenditure, with ongoing monitoring of budgets in line with sponsor terms and conditions, and prepare financial reports for sponsors, PI's and other parties. Ensure items are coded correctly and any discrepancies or queries arising are resolved, posting journals as required.
- Monitor the need for uplifts and extensions, co-ordinate requests for no-cost extensions on awards. Check that these have been actioned appropriately and that once agreement granted, X5 and Oracle systems have been updated.
- Review monthly balances on research pre-award, suspense accounts, control accounts (i.e. XX9970), and clear as appropriate.
- Reviewing grants entering their final year to confirm if they are on track and liaising with the PI and funder if amendments are required. Regular reviewing of grants in the final six months of the award to ensure that maximum utilization is achieved within the funding guidelines; reconciling awards and raising any issues, under/over spends with the Research/Finance Manager.
- Ensure final reports are prepared promptly, certified by Research Accounts and complete audits promptly and in full (with support from Research Accounts).
- Support the PIs in preparation of their technical reports and ensure copies are filed on the Departmental server.

Other grant-related tasks:

- Maintain an active and in-depth knowledge of the funder terms and requirements, establish and maintain good working relationships with your key funders.



- Liaise with other Oxford departments and external institutions where a principal investigator is a collaborator/partner on a project to ensure the correct budgets are transferred.
- Ensure you follow Departmental policies and procedures, which are fully compliant with University Financial Regulations and other Sponsors requirements. Ensure any changes to the regulations are understood and effectively communicated to relevant parties.
- Assist the Finance Manager with financial year-end arrangements (Projects) ensuring that all material transactions relating to the financial year are properly recorded to Projects.
- Contribute to the continuous improvement of grant management processes by undertaking regular audit on current practice, identifying best practice and areas for improvement and implementing changes to procedures
- Develop and maintain strong networks with key contacts in the MPLS Division, Central Finance, Research Services and other academic departments and represent the department at the relevant cross-departmental working groups.

Teamwork

- Participate actively in the wider finance team helping to build cooperation by setting an example and showing a flexible approach to delivering team results, and being supportive and encouraging of others in the team.
- Provide guidance and training to PIs and the administrative support team on research grants.
- Attend regular Departmental Grants team meetings, preparing reports and helping to plan work effectively.

Other duties

- Maintain records (electronically) so that all members of the Grants team can access information as and when required, and that records are kept in line with funder requirements and GDPR.
- Maintain confidentiality and ensure professional conduct at all times.
- Attend/undertake training as required and develop your professional and IT skills in order to carry out your role effectively.
- Embed the principles of mutual respect, equality, diversity, inclusivity and sustainability in all aspects of your work; undertake training as and when asked to do so.

Selection criteria

Essential selection criteria

- A strong team ethic and a focus on professional service provision



- Excellent interpersonal skills, the ability to work effectively with all stakeholders and inspire confidence of grant-holders and funders
- Strong communication skills, with the ability to give accurate, clear information in a timely manner
- Very strong numeracy, accuracy and attention to detail
- Ability to manage and prioritise own workload, to delegate and escalate effectively, and to meet strict deadlines
- Educated to degree level or with equivalent experience, and substantial experience relevant to the role
- Understanding of the research grants sector and the principles of good grant management
- Strong financial skills with respect to grant management and proven ability to use the X5 research costing tool and Oracle R12 or similar (training will be provided if necessary)
- Strong IT skills especially in Excel (filter/analysis tools, pivot tables), ability to work effectively online (e.g. Teams / Zoom, OneDrive) and willingness to learn new skills as required

Desirable selection criteria

- Experience of working in the grants research sector, ideally within a university setting
- An awareness of the major science funders and their terms.

Pre-employment screening

Standard checks

If you are offered the post, the offer will be subject to standard pre-employment checks. You will be asked to provide: proof of your right-to-work in the UK; proof of your identity; and (if we haven't done so already) we will contact the referees you have nominated. You will also be asked to complete a health declaration so that you can tell us about any health conditions or disabilities for which you may need us to make appropriate adjustments.

Please read the candidate notes on the University's pre-employment screening procedures at: <https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/pre-employment-checks>



About the University of Oxford

Welcome to the University of Oxford. We aim to lead the world in research and education for the benefit of society both in the UK and globally. Oxford's researchers engage with academic, commercial and cultural partners across the world to stimulate high-quality research and enable innovation through a broad range of social, policy and economic impacts.

We believe our strengths lie both in empowering individuals and teams to address fundamental questions of global significance, while providing all our staff with a welcoming and inclusive workplace that enables everyone to develop and do their best work. Recognising that diversity is our strength, vital for innovation and creativity, we aspire to build a truly diverse community which values and respects every individual's unique contribution.

While we have long traditions of scholarship, we are also forward-looking, creative and cutting-edge. Oxford is one of Europe's most entrepreneurial universities and we rank first in the UK for university spin-outs, and in recent years we have spun out 15-20 new companies every year. We are also recognised as leaders in support for social enterprise.

Join us and you will find a unique, democratic and international community, a great range of staff benefits and access to a vibrant array of cultural activities in the beautiful city of Oxford.

For more information, please visit www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation.

The Department of Biology

You will be joining the Department of Biology at an exciting time. The Department established from August 2022 as a result of a merger between the Departments of Zoology and Plant Sciences, and is preparing to move into the new state-of-the-art Life and Mind Building in two to three years time.

The Department of Biology is recognised internationally for its research in a wide range of fields spanning all levels from molecules to ecosystems, and tackling global challenges through fundamental bioscience research. Over time, the research interests of the Department has been focused on five primary themes: Behaviour & Biomechanics; Ecology & Conservation; Evolutionary Biology; Microbiology & Infectious Disease; and Molecular Plant Biology. Research is conducted in all spheres from laboratory and in silico analysis to theoretical and field-based research.

At all times we seek to reinforce the connections between research and our education offering, at both graduate and undergraduate level. The Department teaches a four-year undergraduate degree MBiol course in Biology, with fourth-year students undertaking a Masters-level research project. It also supports a variety of graduate placements and hosts the University's DPhil in Biology.

External research income to the Department is derived from over 50 different funding agencies, with the principal current funders being the European Research Council, the Royal Society, the Wellcome Trust, BBSRC and NERC. The Department has a significant record in integrating broader societal impacts of its research, including the provision of policy to government at the highest level, as well as supporting the commercialisation of research through spin-out companies and licensing arrangements that have generated hundreds of millions of pounds' worth of innovation.



The Department is located in the University's Science Area at two sites, and will move into the new £200m Life and Mind Building in 2024 that will include extensive laboratory provision with controlled environment rooms, glasshouses and an imaging suite. The Department also benefits from extensive facilities at the John Krebs Field Station at Wytham, with Wytham Woods nearby, as well as partnerships with organisations in the area such as the Oxford Botanic Gardens and Oxford Natural History Museum.

For more information please visit: <https://www.biology.ox.ac.uk>

About the Mathematical, Physical, and Life Sciences (MPLS) Division

The Mathematical, Physical, and Life Sciences (MPLS) Division is one of the four academic divisions of the University, alongside the Humanities, Social Sciences and Medical Sciences Divisions. It is led by an academic Head of Division (Professor Sam Howison) and an administrative Divisional Registrar (Dr Tracy Gale) and comprises nine of the University's academic departments – Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Earth Sciences, Engineering Science, Materials, the Mathematical Institute, Physics, and Statistics – as well as Begbroke Science Park, the multidisciplinary Ineos Oxford Institute for Antimicrobial Research and an interdisciplinary Doctoral Training Centre.

MPLS is proud to be home to some of the most creative and innovative scientific thinkers and leaders in academia, whose interdisciplinary research is tackling major societal and technological challenges, from new energy solutions or improved cancer treatments to understanding climate change processes and helping to preserve biodiversity, tackling antimicrobial resistance, advancing AI and quantum technologies and space exploration, and much more. The quality and impact of our work have been recognised by successive rounds of the national Research Excellence Framework and Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework exercises, and our departments frequently top the major higher education league tables. We teach around 7,300 students (including around 3,400 graduate students) and are playing a key part in training the next generation of leading scientists.

Divisional activity is co-ordinated and represented by the MPLS Divisional Office based at 9 Parks Road, in the heart of Oxford's Science Area. The Divisional Office, which is led by the Divisional Registrar, has around 55 dedicated members of staff, as well as a number of colleagues who are embedded in divisional teams but based in central University services (e.g. in Finance, HR and Development).

To find out more, please visit: www.mpls.ox.ac.uk.



How to apply

Applications are made through our online recruitment portal. Information about how to apply is available on our Jobs website <https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/how-to-apply>.

Your application will be judged solely on the basis of how you demonstrate that you meet the selection criteria stated in the job description.

As part of your application you will be asked to provide details of two referees and indicate whether we can contact them now.

You will be asked to upload a CV and a supporting statement. The supporting statement must explain how you meet each of the selection criteria for the post using examples of your skills and experience. This may include experience gained in employment, education, or during career breaks (such as time out to care for dependants)

Please upload all documents **as PDF files** with your name and the document type in the filename.

All applications must be received by **midday** UK time on the closing date stated in the online advertisement.

Information for priority candidates

A priority candidate is a University employee who is seeking redeployment because they have been advised that they are at risk of redundancy, or on grounds of ill-health/disability. Priority candidates are issued with a redeployment letter by their employing department(s).

If you are a priority candidate, please ensure that you attach your redeployment letter to your application (or email it to the contact address on the advert if the application form used for the vacancy does not allow attachments).

If you need help

Application FAQs, including technical troubleshooting advice is available at: <https://staff.web.ox.ac.uk/recruitment-support-faqs>

Non-technical questions about this job should be addressed to the recruiting department directly at recruitment@biology.ox.ac.uk

To return to the online application at any stage, please go to: www.recruit.ox.ac.uk.

Please note that you will receive an automated email from our online recruitment portal to confirm receipt of your application. **Please check your spam/junk mail** if you do not receive this email.



Important information for candidates

Data Privacy

Please note that any personal data submitted to the University as part of the job application process will be processed in accordance with the GDPR and related UK data protection legislation. For further information, please see the University's Privacy Notice for Job Applicants at: <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/job-applicant-privacy-policy>. The University's Policy on Data Protection is available at: <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/data-protection-policy>.

The University's policy on retirement

The University operates an Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) for very senior research posts at **grade RSIV/D35 and clinical equivalents E62 and E82**, which with effect from 1 October 2023 will be 30 September before the 70th birthday. The justification for this is explained at: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>.

For **existing** employees on these grades, any employment beyond the retirement age is subject to approval through the procedures: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>.

There is no normal or fixed age at which staff in posts at other grades have to retire. Staff at these grades may elect to retire in accordance with the rules of the applicable pension scheme, as may be amended from time to time.

Equality of opportunity

Entry into employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each particular post and the relevant salary structure. In all cases, ability to perform the job will be the primary consideration. No applicant or member of staff shall be discriminated against because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Benefits of working at the University

Employee benefits

University employees enjoy 38 days' paid holiday, generous pension schemes, travel discounts, and a variety of professional development opportunities. Our range of other employee benefits and discounts also includes free entry to the Botanic Gardens and University colleges, and discounts at University museums. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-benefits>

University Club and sports facilities

Membership of the University Club is free for all University staff. The University Club offers social, sporting, and hospitality facilities. Staff can also use the University Sports Centre on Iffley Road at discounted rates, including a fitness centre, powerlifting room, and swimming pool. See www.club.ox.ac.uk and <https://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/>.

Information for staff new to Oxford

If you are relocating to Oxfordshire from overseas or elsewhere in the UK, the University's Welcome Service website includes practical information about settling in the area, including advice on relocation, accommodation, and local schools. See <https://welcome.ox.ac.uk/>

There is also a visa loan scheme to cover the costs of UK visa applications for staff and their dependants. See <https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/visa-loan-scheme>

Family-friendly benefits

With one of the most generous family leave schemes in the Higher Education sector, and a range of flexible working options, Oxford aims to be a family-friendly employer. We also subscribe to the Work+Family Space, a service that provides practical advice and support for employees who have caring responsibilities. The service offers a free telephone advice line, and the ability to book emergency back-up care for children, adult dependents and elderly relatives. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/my-family-care>

The University has excellent childcare services, including five University nurseries as well as University-supported places at many other private nurseries.

For full details, including how to apply and the costs, see <https://childcare.admin.ox.ac.uk/>

Disabled staff

We are committed to supporting members of staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions. For further details, including information about how to make contact, in confidence, with the University's Staff Disability Advisor, see <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/disability-support>

Staff networks

The University has a number of staff networks including the Oxford Research Staff Society, BME staff network, LGBT+ staff network and a disabled staff network. You can find more information at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/networks>

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club is an organisation run by volunteers that aims to assist the partners of new staff settle into Oxford, and provides them with an opportunity to meet people and make connections in the local area. See www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk.

