

Summary

Job title	Postdoctoral Researcher in Attention, Flourishing, and the Humanities
Division	Humanities
Department	Faculty of English Language and Literature
Location	St Cross Building, Manor Road, Oxford OX1 3UL
Grade and salary	Grade 7: £36,024-£39,347
Hours	Full time
Contract type	Fixed-term (30 months)
Reporting to	Dr Kathryn Murphy
Vacancy reference	172707

The role

Funded by a grant awarded to the Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre (OH BRC) by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHCR), this is a 2.5-year full-time post-doctoral position, which will investigate the connections between attention, flourishing, and the humanities. The position will be housed in the English Faculty, but will also participate in the BRC's Flourishing theme, which investigates how human flourishing can be fostered beyond clinical contexts, and in conjunction with nature.

Within this broader framework, the researcher will devise their own programme of original research, working towards publication, under the supervision of Dr Kathryn Murphy, and participate in ongoing research and public engagement projects related to the theme. At least one of the projected publications should be a research publication, but the researcher will be welcome to engage in public engagement or creative critical activity as part of their research.

The researcher's own proposed work should fall under the broad scope of attention studies in the humanities. The commodification of attention in the contemporary world has led to increasing focus in several humanities disciplines, domains, and historical periods on the concept, ethics, history, and disciplines of attention. The proposed project for this post-doctoral position should aim to further some aspect of this work with regard to either (i) practices of attention to nature or representations of nature, or (ii) the cultivation of attention as an aspect of human flourishing. The researcher will be situated in the



Faculty of English, but interdisciplinary projects, or projects which focus on literatures other than English, or on history, philosophy, or art history, broadly conceived, will also be considered.

In addition to producing their own independent and original research, the successful candidate will join the BRC Flourishing theme group, which involves regular collaborative meetings to discuss particular themes, collaborative work on elaborating conceptual support for our research, and occasional collaboration on publications. They will also join the curatorial team for a 2026 Bodleian Exhibition entitled *Plain Things Wonders*, which will focus on the history of natural history, 1626-2026, from the perspective of local attention and citizen science, and collaborate with Kathryn Murphy on a publication relating to the exhibition. They will also participate in a less formal Attention Network comprised of scholars in the Humanities who work on attention, including Kathryn Murphy, Dr Nicholas Gaskill, Professor Patrick McGuinness, Dr Alessandra Aloisi, and Professor Carolin Duttlinger.

It is anticipated the researcher will take up their post on 1 September 2024, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Responsibilities

The postdoctoral researcher will be expected to:

- Identify, propose, and execute a research programme in the broad field of attention studies in the Humanities;
- Prepare research publications appropriate to the duration of the project, such as the completion of a monograph or of research articles in the field;
- Join the curatorial team for the exhibition *Plain Things Wonders*;
- Collaborate with Kathryn Murphy on a publication relating to the exhibition;
- Engage with the collaborative work and projects of the BRC Flourishing Theme, the Oxford Attention Network, and, if appropriate, the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery.

The researcher will be welcome to develop other possible activities in addition to their core work, including public engagement projects, publication in non-academic venues, presentation of papers at conferences, and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Selection criteria

- A PhD/DPhil in a humanities discipline (e.g. literature, art history, history, philosophy);
- Established or developing track record of outstanding research;
- Publication record that is appropriate to career stage;
- Ability to manage own academic research and related activities;
- Excellent proposal for independent research to be undertaken during the postdoctoral position;
- Appetite and aptitude for collaborative, interdisciplinary, and public-engagement work.

English Faculty

The Faculty of English is the largest English Department in the UK, and has a very distinguished research record (awarded the top grade in the last two research assessment exercises). We have been ranked top in the QS World Rankings in the subject for the last eight years and our teaching has been graded 'Excellent' in every Quality Assurance review. The English Faculty's teaching and research covers literature in English from works in Old English of the 7th century to the current period of what has been called global English. The spread of historical expertise places the Faculty in a unique position to speak authoritatively about the long history of the literatures and languages of the British Isles, as well as the diaspora and interchange of literatures and languages that emerged from them. Students have opportunities to trace the development of literature from early manuscripts to current digital and hybrid forms; they benefit from a distinctive experience of close personal supervision with leading academics, in turn developing their own communities and identities as critics and researchers.

The Faculty currently has 80 permanent members of academic staff, including 9 statutory Professors. This is in addition to a further 100 or so members teaching in the colleges and temporary members of staff. A list of Faculty members and their research interests is available on the website. For more information, please visit: www.english.ox.ac.uk.

Humanities Division

The Humanities Division is one of four academic divisions in the University of Oxford, bringing together the following faculties: Classics; English; History; Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics; Medieval and Modern Languages; Music; Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Philosophy; Theology and Religion; the Ruskin School of Art. The Division has over 500 members of academic staff, approximately 4,100 undergraduates (more than a third of the total undergraduate population of the University), 1,000 postgraduate research students and 720 students on postgraduate taught courses.

The Division offers world-class teaching and research, backed by the superb resources of the University's libraries and museums, including the famous Bodleian Libraries, with their 11 million volumes and priceless early book and manuscript collections, and the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. Such historic resources are linked to cutting-edge agendas in research and teaching, with an increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary study. Our faculties are among the largest in the world, enabling Oxford to offer an education in Arts and Humanities unparalleled in its range of subjects, from music and fine art to ancient and modern languages.

The Humanities Division has embarked on a major building project on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, following the recent announcement of the £150 million gift to create the [Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities](#).

The Schwarzman Centre, which is due to be in use from October 2025, will serve as a dynamic hub dedicated to the Humanities. The building will bring together seven Humanities faculties, the Humanities Divisional Office, a new library and significant cultural and public engagement spaces in a space designed to encourage experiential learning and bold experimentation through cross-disciplinary and collaborative study. The Faculty of English will move to the Schwarzman Centre upon the completion of the project.

For more information please visit www.humanities.ox.ac.uk.

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.

NIHR Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre

The Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre (OH BRC) led by Professor John Geddes is based at the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. The OH BRC is run-in partnership with the University of Oxford and has support from National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) for 11 research themes focused on brain health. The Flourishing Theme will investigate how non-clinical environments might be utilised to enhance public health and mental health. Its main aim is to enable flourishing initiatives and interventions for patients and non-patients, delivered in spaces beyond the clinic. The initial focus is on developing nature-based approaches to mental health and wellbeing through a living laboratories infrastructure that includes Oxford's gardens, arboretum and woods. The theme is led by Professor Ilina Singh and comprises three main work packages (WP):

- WP1- Flourishing Mechanisms: Innovations in Discovery Science
- WP2- Living Laboratories: Promoting Accessible and Inclusive Real-World Research
- WP3- Innovations to promote ethical flourishing beyond the clinic

The concept of 'e-co-flourishing' informs our work in the Flourishing Theme. We view e-co-flourishing as a kind of flourishing in which human and non-human flourishing are entangled, interdependent and mutually constitutive within a multi-level (micro, meso and macro-level) ecological system. Patient and public involvement, engagement and participation (PPIEP) is woven into our Theme, enabling integration of insights, perspectives and experiences from diverse communities in the research, using co-design and other participatory approaches.

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 above.

As part of your application you will be asked to provide details of two referees. We will only ask for references if you are shortlisted for the position.

You will also be asked to upload:

- A two-page cover letter outlining previous research (e.g. doctoral project) and indicating how you meet the selection criteria for the post. This may include experience gained in employment, education, or during career breaks (such as time out to care for dependants);
- A CV;
- A two-page research proposal outlining the project to be undertaken during the postdoctoral position, including at least one anticipated independent publication. (The outline is of indicative interest and will not be treated as binding in the event of selection.)

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

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

All applications must be received by **midday (BST)** on the closing date stated in the online advertisement.

Shortlisted candidates will be asked to supply written work, either in the form of chapters of their doctoral work, or published articles.

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

Please consult the FAQs for applicants, including technical troubleshooting advice, which 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 recruitment@ell.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.