



Job description

Post	Research Assistant
Department	Department of Biology
Division	Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division (MPLS)
Location	The John Krebs Field Station, Wytham, Oxford OX2 8QJ
Grade and salary	Grade 6: £32,332 - £32,982 per annum
Hours	Full time
Contract type	Fixed-term (15 months)
Reporting to	Dr Beth Mortimer
Application deadline	12 noon on 21 June 2024
Vacancy reference	173351
Recruitment contacts	HR: recruitment@biology.ox.ac.uk or PI: beth.mortimer@biology.ox.ac.uk
Additional information	Whilst the role is a grade 6 position, we would be willing to consider candidates with potential but less experience who are seeking a development opportunity, for which an initial appointment would be at grade 5 (£28,759 - £32,982 per annum) with the responsibilities adjusted accordingly. This would be discussed with applicants at interview/appointment where appropriate.

Research topic	Spider vibration sensing
Principal Investigator / supervisor	Dr Beth Mortimer
Project team	Dr Beth Mortimer, Dr Jun Wu, Mr Thomas Miller
Funding partner	Royal Society
Recent publications	https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2020.587846 https://doi.org/10.1098/rsif.2023.0365 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asd.2022.101140





The role

A Research Assistant post is available to join the Animal Vibration Lab, based in Department of Biology. The research assistant will work as part of an exciting multidisciplinary team on the spider vibration sensing project, under the leadership of Dr Beth Mortimer. Through the project, they will learn interdisciplinary skills and approaches at the interface between biology and engineering. They will be responsible for provision of research support for behavioural experiments with live spiders, investigating orientation response of spiders to controlled vibrational input into the legs. They will use this experimental approach to help prepare interdisciplinary publications answering questions about the mechanisms behind spider vibration sensing, collaborating with the wider project team. The postholder will also aid the project team with communication of research outputs (presentations, outreach). We encourage applications from those keen to apply for PhD/DPhil funding for a related project in the future and are keen to hear their ideas and aspirations for this. A contract of less than 15 months is also possible and can be negotiated.

Responsibilities

- Manage own research and administrative activities, within guidelines provided by senior colleagues
- Contribute to wider project planning, including ideas for new research projects
- Determine the most appropriate experimental methodologies to test hypotheses, and identify suitable alternatives if technical problems arise
- Select, follow, and adapt experimental protocols
- Gather, analyse, and present scientific data from a variety of sources
- Contribute to scientific reports and journal articles and the presentation of data/papers at conferences
- Responsible for some animal husbandry tasks, as needed
- Use specialist scientific equipment in a laboratory environment
- Represent the research group at external meetings/seminars, either with other members of the group or alone



Selection criteria

Essential selection criteria

- Hold a first degree in biology or related discipline, together with some relevant experience
- Keen and clear interest in working at the biology/engineering interface
- Ambitions to complete a doctorate on a related topic
- Possess sufficient specialist knowledge in animal behaviour and/or sensory ecology and/or biomechanics to work within established research programme
- Ability to manage own research and administrative activities
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to write text that can be published, present data at conferences, and represent the research group at meetings
- Experience of following and adapting protocols and selecting appropriate experimental methodologies

Desirable selection criteria

- Experience of contributing to reports and articles for publication
- Experience of working in a research team and contributing ideas for new research projects

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>

Hazard-specific / Safety-critical duties

This job includes hazards or safety-critical activities. If you are offered the post, you will be asked to complete a health questionnaire which will be assessed by our Occupational Health Service, and the offer of employment will be subject a successful outcome of this assessment.

The hazards or safety-critical duties involved are as follows:

- **Lone Working**
- **Work with allergens, Eg laboratory animals, pollen, dust, fish or insects etc.**
- **Travel outside of Europe or North America on University Business**



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' 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.

