

BLAVATNIK SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Job description and selection criteria

Job title	Senior Research Officer, What Works Hub for Global Education (Post-Doctoral Researcher)
Division	Social Sciences
Department	Blavatnik School of Government
Location	Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6GG
Grade and salary	Grade 7: £ 38,674- £ 43,171 per annum
Hours	Full time.
Contract type	Fixed term – 3 year – extendable funding permitting
Reporting to	Stefan Dercon, CSAE Director and Professor of Economic Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government; and Noam Angrist, Academic Director, What Works Hub for Global Education
Vacancy reference	175637
Additional information	The closing date for applications is 12 Noon on 15 January 2025

Overview

The What Works Hub on Global Education (WWHGE) is a multi-year collaborative research initiative based at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. It partners with the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Bank, USAID, UNICEF, UNESCO-IIEP, the Learning Generation Initiative, and the British Council.

Its ultimate goal is literacy, numeracy and other key skills for all children. It aims to ensure that evidence on what improves learning travels from research studies, into government policy, through to large-scale implementation of reforms, and right back into the classroom in the form of day-to-day policy implementation by individual schools and teachers. If this can be achieved, millions of children will have better outcomes.

The Centre for the Study of African Economies [CSAE] is an internationally renowned development economics research centre at the University of Oxford, with researchers based in the Department of Economics, the Blavatnik School of Government [BSG], and the Oxford Department for International Development [ODID].



The postholder will have an exciting opportunity to engage with the large community of researchers at the What Works Hub for Global Education, the CSAE, the broader Oxford academic community, and with other researchers at universities and international organisations working on similar areas, while also developing their own research portfolio. Oxford provides a vibrant environment for researchers in the social sciences. Many previous Oxford postdoctoral fellows have moved on to permanent faculty positions at leading universities in the US and Europe, or in leading public policy organisations.

Project Background

The What Works Hub on Global Education (WWHGE) will deliver a global platform to support governments who want to transform their education systems in a sustainable way, maximising the impact of education evidence to inform cost effective reforms to benefit all children.

It will achieve this through three work pillars:

- Pillar 1: Synthesise and curate the best evidence to improve foundational learning outcomes at scale for any country in ways that governments and practitioners need to make cost effective decisions.
- Pillar 2: Strengthen education and finance ministries' capability to use and contextualise data and evidence, for example through establishing policy labs within MoE.
- Pillar 3: Create a new field in implementation science in education that produces evidence and supports our partner governments to use a 'diagnose, test, learn and adapt' cycle to take education reform to scale.

The strategic partners for the What Works Hub for Global Education are besides the Blavatnik School of Government (University of Oxford): the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the Gates Foundation, the British Council, Building Evidence in Education (BE2), the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (GEEAP), the Learning Generation Initiative, USAID, UNICEF, UNESCO-IIEP, and the World Bank.

The role

The postholder will contribute to the WWHGE work in Pillar 3, research in implementation science in education. In addition to conducting independent research, the postholder will be expected as much as is feasible to work on research projects with or relevant for our strategic partners, working closely with Stefan Dercon and Noam Angrist.

The main duties of the role are as follows:

- Coordinate, manage, facilitate, and contribute to existing research projects within WWHGE and strategic partners, guided by Stefan Dercon and/or Noam Angrist.
- Identify and implement novel independent and joint research, preferably with Oxford-based researchers, that is consistent with the focus of the project, including working with strategic partners.
- Author and co-author academic articles, working papers, reports, policy briefs, and other outputs, summarizing and reporting on results of the research synthesis and evidence translation.
- Deploy analytic skills and empirical research methods, including in-depth analysis of quantitative data.
- Present findings and represent the programme at internal and external meetings such as conferences, webinars, seminars, etc.
- Oversee the work of the project's early career researchers.

- Contribute to research and policy influencing community of the WWHGE, including building relationships across other WWHGE research teams, and contributing to other activities of WWHGE.
- Contribute to the broader development community, including as curated by CSAE, such as by attending seminars and workshops, some mentoring of students, and other activities consistent with further developing the vibrant research community on education and development at Oxford.

The postholder will report to Stefan Dercon and Noam Angrist regarding overall project management.

Selection criteria

Essential selection criteria

Applications will be judged only against the criteria that are set out below.

- PhD degree in economics, education, public policy, development studies, with a focus on research on education with a strong quantitative focus. Candidates close to completion can be considered too.
- Proven experience in the form of papers and projects of research in the themes broadly linked to the post, and a clear continuing interest in pursuing these themes further.
- Ability to carry out independent quantitative research, with solid theoretical foundations, and including strong writing skills and excellent skills in statistics/econometrics. Strong IT skills specific to the discipline, including use of Stata/R and LaTeX.
- Experience of conducting research on developing economies, with strong preference for experience in research on Africa and South Asia.
- Ability to innovate and work effectively with colleagues, as part of building and contributing to a research community.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, especially those necessary for working in policy circles and to communicate effectively to relevant academic and non-academic audiences using a range of media.

Desirable selection criteria

- Experience in the policy space in developing economies; particularly Africa and South Asia.
- An interest in public policy and political economy.
- Research interest in rigorously studying the uptake of research evidence, the supply and demand of evidence use in policy circles, or the political economy of research uptake.

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:

- 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 Blavatnik School of Government

Our vision is of a world better led, a world better served and a world better governed. We are a global school committed to improving the quality of government and public policymaking worldwide, through three routes: teaching current and future leaders; applied research; and engagement with government and practitioners.

The School was founded in 2010 and our founding dean is [Professor Ngaire Woods](#). We admitted the first 38 Master of Public Policy (MPP) students in 2012 and we currently accept around 120 MPP students and five doctoral students a year.

The Blavatnik School of Government holds a bronze Athena Swan award to recognise advancement of gender equality: representation, progression and success for all. You can find more information on the [Blavatnik School of Government's website](#).

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 **three** referees and indicate whether we can contact them now.

You are required to upload the following documents when applying:

- CV
- A supporting statement
- Candidates are asked to describe their specific interest in postdoctoral positions at Oxford and to note any current Oxford faculty or postdocs who have closely related research interests.
- Job-market paper
- Supplementary research papers - you may also upload a file of supplementary materials such as other available research papers if you wish.
- Provide details of three referees who will then be able to provide letters of recommendation, please alert your referees to prepare to submit their references before or as soon as possible after the closing date to avoid delaying the shortlisting process. References should be emailed to recruit@bsg.ox.ac.uk with the subject title: 175637_Applicant name

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).

If, for any reason, you have taken a career break or have had an atypical career and wish to disclose this in your application, the selection committee will take this into account. The selection committee will also be mindful of the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic may have had on candidates' careers as a result of additional caring responsibilities or other factors.

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 via recruit@bsg.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 dependents. 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.