



Job description and selection criteria

Job title	Research Assistant
Division	Medical Sciences
Department	Paediatrics
Location	Department of Paediatrics, Wood Research Group, Institute of Developmental & Regenerative Medicine IDRM, Old Road Campus, Oxford
Grade and salary	Research Grade 6: £34,982 - £40,855 per annum (with a discretionary range to £45,628 per annum)
Hours	Full-time
Contract type	Fixed term until 31/10/2025
Reporting to	Jennifer Frommer, Group Leader - Oligo Chemistry Drug Development
Vacancy reference	176908
Additional information	Applications are to be made online, please see the advert for the closing date.

Research topic	Oligonucleotide therapies for neuromuscular diseases
Principal Investigator / supervisor	Prof Matthew Wood
Project team	Wood Group
Project web site	https://www.paediatrics.ox.ac.uk/research/wood-group
Funding partner	The funds supporting this research project are provided by the Medical Research Council and LifeArc in partnership with the Nucleic Acid Therapy Accelerator (NATA) Hub.



The role

The NATA Delivery Research Challenge is a major and prestigious programme of funding awarded to the University from the Medical Research Council and LifeArc in partnership with the Nucleic Acid Therapy Accelerator (NATA) Hub. The promise of nucleic acid therapeutics has been demonstrated in the clinic, however their development and widespread use has been hindered by a lack of robust techniques to achieve targeted delivery to specific tissues, improve stability and facilitate uptake into cells, without compromising safety or effectiveness. The Global Oligonucleotide therapy market is currently worth \$1 billion and is expected to reach \$1.62 billion in 2025 provided the challenges with targeted delivery are resolved. This programme will support an international consortium working to overcome major barriers to safe and effective delivery through the development of novel technologies, platforms and resources, ultimately enabling the potential of these therapies to be fully realised in the treatment of a wide range of diseases.

We are seeking a highly motivated and detail-oriented individual to join our team as a Research Assistant for solid phase oligonucleotide synthesis. As a research assistant, you will play a crucial role in supporting our laboratory research activities related to oligonucleotide synthesis. Your primary responsibility will be to assist in the synthesis, purification, and characterisation of oligonucleotides used in various molecular biology applications. This position offers an excellent opportunity to contribute to cutting-edge scientific research and develop valuable laboratory skills.

The Wood laboratory focuses on developing molecular therapies for disorders of the nervous system and muscle. Our objectives include understanding disease biology, identifying and validating therapeutic targets, and developing gene-based nucleic acid therapeutic platforms. The laboratory uses *in vitro* and animal models to evaluate these platforms and simultaneously develops advanced delivery technologies to target relevant tissues and cells, such as skeletal muscle, heart, and nervous system. The laboratory has developed novel oligonucleotide and RNA editing therapies for neuromuscular disorders, including Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), Myotonic Dystrophy type 1 (DM1), Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) and Spinal and Bulbar Muscular Atrophy (SBMA). The group has also developed extracellular vesicle nanotechnologies for targeted cell delivery and discovered delivery technologies, including peptide and antibody-based technologies. Research in the laboratory also includes studying fundamental RNA biology and developing RNA-based therapeutic agents and novel technologies for their delivery.

Flexible working

The Wood Research Group is based at the Institute of Developmental & Regenerative Medicine based on Old Road Campus Oxford. This post is advertised as a full time position. There may be an oppurtunity to work hybridly for the successful applicant.

Responsibilities

- Oligonucleotide Synthesis: Conduct oligonucleotide synthesis using automated synthesiser (K&A) and solid-phase chemistry techniques.
- Purification and Characterisation: Perform purification of synthesised oligonucleotides using various purification methods, such as high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) or polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (PAGE). Characterise synthesized oligonucleotides using analytical techniques, including UV spectrophotometry.

- Quality Control: Perform quality control checks on synthesised oligonucleotides using LC-MS to ensure high purity and integrity.
- Inventory Management: Maintain accurate records of reagents, chemicals, and laboratory supplies. Monitor inventory levels and order necessary materials to ensure uninterrupted laboratory operations.
- Data Analysis: Analyse experimental data, interpret results, and present findings to the research team. Contribute to the preparation of scientific reports, presentations, and publications.
- Laboratory Maintenance: Maintain a clean and organised laboratory environment. Adhere to laboratory safety protocols and ensure compliance with relevant regulations.
- Collaboration and Communication: Collaborate with other team members, including scientists and researchers, to support ongoing projects. Communicate experimental progress, challenges, and findings effectively within the team.

Selection criteria

Essential

- Hold a minimum of BSc or MSc degrees in a relevant science subject (PhD level applicants are also encouraged to apply) with research experience in a relevant area of biomedical science.
- Laboratory Skills: experience in oligonucleotide synthesis, purification, and characterisation techniques. Proficiency in solid-phase synthesis methods and automated synthesisers is highly desirable.
- Problem-Solving Skills: Demonstrated ability to troubleshoot experimental issues and optimise protocols for improved results.
- Organization and Time Management: Excellent organizational skills with the ability to prioritise work effectively, and meet deadlines.
- Team Player: Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to work collaboratively in a teamoriented research environment.
- Communication Skills: Excellent written and verbal communication skills. Ability to present scientific findings effectively.

Desirable

• Analytical Techniques: Familiarity with analytical techniques commonly used in oligonucleotide characterisation, such as HPLC, PAGE, and UV spectrophotometry.

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. If you have previously worked for the University we will also verify key information such as your dates of employment and reason for leaving your previous role with the department/unit where you worked. 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: <u>https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/pre-employment-checks</u>

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:

- Work with allergens, e.g. laboratory animals, pollen, dust, fish or insects etc.
- Work with any substance which has any of the following pictograms on their MSDS:



Additional security pre-employment checks

This job includes duties that will require additional security pre-employment checks:

- Enhanced Level Screening as this role includes conducting research involving animals (or working closely with such research).
- A satisfactory basic Disclosure and Barring Service check due to the nature of this position i.e. working with highly sensitive data.
- University security screening (e.g. identity 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 cuttingedge. 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.

Department of Paediatrics

The Department of Paediatrics is a world leader in child health research and hosts internationally renowned research programmes in drug development, gastroenterology, haematology, HIV, immunology, neuroimaging, neuromuscular diseases and vaccinology. Our work spans from early proof-of concept fundamental science, all the way up to its application in clinical settings.

We continue to shape the landscape of medical science through positively impacting the lives of millions of children from our global research programmes, academic resources, and commitment to success. Our broad research base positions the department in a pivotal role and subsequently a world leader in child health. With research facilitates in the UK and abroad, we work on a global scale, building a paediatric network in the medical science community. We are committed to inform and inspire external audiences worldwide through our public engagement and outreach activities.

In 2021, we successfully administered a grant value of £130,895,28 obtained through 168 projects. Our strong relationship with funding bodies have also been a contributor to the successes and milestones in children's health research. With strong support from the Wellcome Trust, NIH, Cancer Research UK, UKRI, MDUK, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Academy of Medical Sciences and the NIHR, we have employed 360+ staff, researchers, and students. These figures continue to grow as we expand our activities to overcome the multitude of challenges within children's research health.

For more information please visit: http://www.paediatrics.ox.ac.uk/

The Department of Paediatrics holds a Gold Athena Swan award to recognise advancement of gender equality: representation, progression and success for all.

Medical Sciences Division

We are an internationally recognized centre of excellence for biomedical and clinical research and teaching, and the largest academic division in the University of Oxford.

World-leading programmes, housed in state-of-the-art facilities, cover the full range of scientific endeavour from the molecule to the population. With our NHS partners we also foster the highest possible standards in patient care.

For more information please visit: http://www.medsci.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 <u>https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/how-to-apply.</u>

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/three 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 dependents).

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.

If you currently work for the University please note that:

- as part of the referencing process, we will contact your current department to confirm basic employment details including reason for leaving
- although employees may hold multiple part-time posts, they may not hold more than the
 equivalent of a full time post. If you are offered this post, and accepting it would take you
 over the equivalent of full-time hours, you will be expected to resign from, or reduce hours
 in, your other posts(s) before starting work in the new post.

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: <u>https://staff.web.ox.ac.uk/recruitment-support-faqs</u>

Non-technical questions about this job should be addressed to the recruiting department directly at <u>recruitment@paediatrics.ox.ac.uk</u> or using the contact details in the online advertisement.

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 e-recruitment system 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: <u>https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/job-applicant-privacy-policy</u>. The University's Policy on Data Protection is available at: <u>https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/data-protection-policy</u>.

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** of 30 September before the 70th birthday. The justification for this is explained at: <u>https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra.</u>

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

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 including salary sacrifice schemes for bicycles and electric cars and other discounts. Staff can access a huge range of personal and professional development opportunities. See https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-benefits.

Employee Assistance Programme

As part of our wellbeing offering staff get free access to Health Assured, a confidential employee assistance programme, available 24/7 for 365 days a year. Find out more <u>https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/health-assured-eap</u>.

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 includes practical information about settling in the area, including advice on relocation, accommodation, and local schools. See <u>https://welcome.ox.ac.uk/.</u>

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

Family-friendly benefits

We are a family-friendly employer with one of the most generous family leave schemes in the Higher Education sector (see <u>https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/family-leave</u>). Our Childcare Services team provides guidance and support on childcare provision, and offers a range of high-quality childcare options at affordable prices for staff. In addition to 5 University nurseries, we partner with a number of local providers to offer in excess of 450 full time nursery places to our staff. Eligible parents are able to pay for childcare through salary sacrifice, further reducing costs. See <u>https://childcare.admin.ox.ac.uk/</u>.

Supporting disability and health-related issues (inc menopause)

We are committed to supporting members of staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions, including those experiencing negative effects of menopause. Information about the University's Staff Disability Advisor, is at <u>https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/disability-support.</u> For information about how we support those going through menopause see <u>https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/menopause-guidance</u>.

Staff networks

The University has a number of staff networks including for research staff, BME staff, LGBT+ staff, disabled staff network and those going through menopause. Find out more at <u>https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/networks</u>.

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 <u>www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk.</u>

Research staff

The Researcher Hub supports all researchers on fixed-term contracts. They aim to help you settle in comfortably, make connections, grow as a person, extend your research expertise and approach your next career step with confidence. Find out more https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/researchers/researcher-hub.

Oxford's Research Staff Society is a collective voice for our researchers. They also organise social and professional networking activities for researchers. Find out more <u>https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/connecting-other-researchers/oxford-research-staff-society</u>.