Job Description

ENGINEERING SCIENCE

Job title	Senior Research Associate in Just Energy Systems
Division	Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division
Department	Engineering Science
Location	Holywell House, Osney Mead, Oxford
Grade and salary	Grade 8: £48,235-£57,255 per annum (Whilst the role is a grade 8 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 7 (£38,674-£46,913p.a.) with the responsibilities adjusted accordingly. This would be discussed with applicants at interview/appointment where appropriate.)
Hours	Full time
Contract type	Fixed-term (externally funded 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. Whilst the project is until 2030, we operate in yearly funding cycles. Therefore, there is the possibility of extension dependent on CCG programme funding).
Reporting to	Professor Stephanie Hirmer
Vacancy reference	178202

Research topic	Location based decision making for high-income economic opportunities
Principal Investigator / supervisor	Professor Stephanie Hirmer
Funding partner	The funds supporting this research project are provided by the FCDO.
Relevant publications	Hirmer, S., Tomei, J., Yang, P. et al. Inconsistent measurement calls into question progress on electrification in sub-Saharan Africa. *Nat Energy,* 9, 1046–1050 (2024). Egli, F., Schneider, F., Leonard, A., Halloran, C., Salmon, N., Schmidt, T., & Hirmer, S. (2024). Mapping cost competitiveness of African green hydrogen exports to Europe. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14025768 Lanza, M. F., Leonard, A., & Hirmer, S. (2024). Geospatial and

socioeconomic prediction of value-driven clean cooking uptake. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, *192*, 114199.

Müller, L. A., Leonard, A., Trotter, P. A., & Hirmer, S. (2023). Green hydrogen production and use in low-and middle-income countries: A least-cost geospatial modelling approach applied to Kenya. *Applied Energy*, *343*, 121219.

Leonard, A., Ahsan, A., Charbonnier, F., & Hirmer, S. (2022). The resource curse in renewable energy: A framework for risk assessment. *Energy Strategy Reviews*, *41,* 100841.

The role

The successful candidate will join the [Climate Compatible Growth](#) (CCG) programme and the [Strategic Hydrogen Integration for Effective Low-Carbon Development](#) (SHIELD) in Ukraine project. CCG is a £95m UK ODA-funded research programme running until March 2030, helping developing countries take a path of low carbon development whilst simultaneously unlocking profitable investment in green infrastructure, opening up new markets and supporting delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SHIELD is a £1.7m FCDO-funded research initiative that focuses on assessing the potential of green hydrogen and ammonia within Ukraine's energy system.

The position sits within the Energy and Power Group, led by Professor Malcolm McCulloch. You will be supervised by Professor Stephanie Hirmer and Dr Alycia Leonard. The ethos of the group is focused on developing individuals to reach their goals, developing real- world tools and techniques for sustainable energy systems and to celebrate diversity.

Interviews are likely to take place in mid-March.

Responsibilities

The post-holder will be employed by the Department of Engineering Science, University of Oxford. You will work with the Principal Investigator, Professor Stephanie Hirmer, as well as the other members of the research team, including other Oxford faculty members with backgrounds in all the relevant fields, as well as postdocs and graduate students. Key duties will include:

Specific Tasks

- Working on complex engineering problems, such as infrastructure development, system planning, design specification, in low- and middle-income country (LMIC) contexts.
- Analyse detailed and complex qualitative and/or quantitative data from a variety of sources and generate original ideas by building on existing concepts.
- Working in fields of geospatial analysis, development economics, electrical and transport system planning, system modelling, multi-criteria decision analysis, data science, machine learning.
- Stakeholder engagement and on-the-ground data collection in LMIC contexts with intricate power dynamics.
- Manage relationships with high-level government officials and disseminate research to these stakeholders for direct policy impact.
- Engage strategically with stakeholders on sensitive topics pertinent to the research (e.g., conflict, refugee situations).
- Represent the research group at external meetings/seminars, either with other members of the team or alone.

- Spatial data analysis using geospatial tools (e.g., QGIS, ArcGIS).
- Programming in Python, including data science and machine learning packages and spatial analysis tools and packages.
- Working with energy planning and modelling tools (e.g., CLEWS, OnSSET, OSeMOSYS, HOMER).
- Develop and manage independent research questions and projects within the CCG portfolio and beyond (e.g., leadership of Southern Partner Fund activities).
- Strategic communication of research through policy briefs, working papers, social media communications, and other context-specific formats to maximize reach.

Additional Tasks

- Regularly write research articles for peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, conferences, and reviews. Present papers at conferences, and lead seminars to disseminate research findings.
- Organise and delegate work to junior members of the team and coach other members of the group on specialist methodologies as needed.
- Share responsibility for shaping the research group's plans and contribute to the writing of funding applications for new research projects.
- Develop research questions within a specific context, conduct individual research, analysing detailed and complex qualitative and/or quantitative data from a variety of sources, and generate original ideas by building on existing concepts.
- Develop, establish, and pursue appropriate analytical protocols and techniques to support research.
- Carry out collaborative projects with colleagues in partner institutions and research groups.
- Communicate clearly and appropriately with Prof. Stephanie Hirmer, other research team members, and external collaborators through written and oral means including reports, publications, presentations, and meetings.
- Actively participate in the day-to-day activities of EPG, such as group meetings, reading group and group seminars.
- Co-supervise DPhil/MSc students within the group regularly, including helping them shape their research questions, offering guidance on methods, and providing feedback on written work.
- Be prepared to engage and interact, where appropriate, with other projects undertaken by the research group.
- Manage day-to-day tasks independently and proactively, taking initiative to select options and anticipate and resolve problems, coordinating multiple aspects of work to meet deadlines.
- Raise research funds through grant applications and manage own area of a larger research budget.
- Liaise with funding bodies and provide information to project stakeholders and represent the research group at external meetings/seminars, either with other members of the team or alone
- Act as a source of information and advice to other members of the group on scientific protocols and experimental techniques,
- Set and mark assignments as well as lecture for the MSc Energy Systems programme on specialist topics in Energy for Development as requested.
- The researcher may have the opportunity to teach (this includes lecturing, demonstrating, small-group teaching, tutoring of undergraduates and graduate students, undergraduate admissions assessment and interviewing, and supervision of master's projects in collaboration with principal investigators). Permission must be sought in advance for each opportunity and the total must not exceed 4 hours a week.

- Any other duties appropriate with the role.

Selection criteria

Essential

- Hold a relevant PhD/DPhil with post-qualification research experience.
- Knowledge of geospatial energy modelling and optimisation in Python and GIS.
- Possess sufficient specialist knowledge in the discipline to develop research projects and methodologies. These include just transition, gender equality and social inclusion, and community resilience in relation to energy planning, particularly within rural and developing energy access contexts (i.e., SDG7.1.1).
- Skills in translating qualitative scenarios into quantitative modelling inputs.
- Evidence of strong stakeholder engagement abilities including in challenging geopolitical contexts (e.g., in developing country contexts, displacement settings, conflict zones, etc).
- Clear track record of appropriate high quality published work (i.e., h-index 5+).
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to write for academic publications, present research, represent the group at meetings, and relate well to a team.
- Ability to independently plan and manage a research project, including a research budget.
- Ability to raise research funds through making and winning grant applications.

Desirable

- Ability to translate modelling results into actionable energy policy recommendations with an investment lens.
- Ability in data analytics, computational methods, and machine learning.
- Background in energy financing and markets.
- Understanding of energy transition value chains (e.g., critical minerals, decarbonisation technologies)
- Ability to build narratives stemming from quantitative modelling results/scenarios.
- Organisational skills and note-taking, record-keeping, etc.
- Experience of supervising staff.
- Experience of managing a research budget.

Pre-employment screening

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.

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.

Engineering Science Department

Engineering teaching and research takes place at Oxford in a unified Department of Engineering Science whose academic staff are committed to a common engineering foundation as well as to advanced work in their own specialties, which include most branches of the subject. We have especially strong links with computer science, materials science, medicine and also the Saïd Business School. The Department employs 120 academic staff (this number includes 13 statutory professors appointed in the main branches of the discipline, and 25 full professors); in addition, there are nine visiting professors. There is an experienced team of teaching support staff, professional services and administrative staff and technicians. The Department has well-equipped laboratories and workshops, which together with offices, lecture theatres, library and other facilities have a net floor area of about 25,000 square metres.

The Department is ranked fifth in the world, and the top European University, in the 2023 *Times Higher Education World University Rankings* for Engineering & Technology. Further information about the Department is available at www.eng.ox.ac.uk.

Teaching

We aim to admit 170-180 undergraduates per year to take a 4-year course leading to the MEng degree in Engineering Science. The course is accredited at MEng level by the major engineering institutions. The syllabus has a common core extending through the first two years. Specialist options are introduced in the third year, and the fourth year includes further specialist material and a major project.

Research
Research in the Department is particularly strong. We have approximately 600 research students and about 250 postdoctoral researchers. Direct funding of research grants and contracts, from a variety of sources, amounts to an annual turnover of approximately £70m.

The results of the seven-yearly UK-wide assessment of university research, REF2021, published on 12th May 2022, demonstrate that the University of Oxford made the highest volume of world-leading research submissions. The Department of Engineering Science had 71% of submissions which met the requirements for the highest grading of 4*(research that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance, and rigour). Research activities fall into 8 broad headings, though there is much overlapping in practice: Information Engineering (Robotics, Computer Vision and Machine Learning); Control; Thermofluids; Materials and Mechanics; Civil and Offshore; Electrical and Optoelectronic; Chemical and Process; and Biomedical.

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

The Mathematical, Physical, and Life Sciences Division

The Mathematical, Physical, and Life Sciences (MPLS) Division is one of the four academic divisions of the University. In the results of the six-yearly UK-wide assessment of university research, REF2014, the MPLS division received the highest overall grade point average (GPA) and the highest GPA for outputs. We received the highest proportion of 4* outputs, and the highest proportion of 4* activity overall. More than 50 per cent of MPLS activity was assessed as world leading.

The MPLS Division's 10 departments and 3 interdisciplinary units span the full spectrum of the mathematical, computational, physical, engineering and life sciences, and undertake both fundamental research and cutting-edge applied work. Our research addresses major societal and technological challenges and is increasingly focused on key interdisciplinary issues. MPLS is proud to be the home of some of the most creative and innovative scientific thinkers and leaders working in academe. We have a strong tradition of attracting and nurturing the very best early career researchers who regularly secure prestigious fellowships

We have around 6,000 students and play a major role in training the next generation of leading scientists. Oxford's international reputation for excellence in teaching is reflected in its position at the top of the major league tables and subject assessments.

MPLS is dedicated to bringing the wonder and potential of science to the attention of audiences far beyond the world of academia. We have a strong commitment to supporting public engagement in science through initiatives including the Oxford Sparks portal (http://www.oxfordsparks.net/) and a large variety of outreach activities. We also endeavour to bring the potential of our scientific efforts forward for practical and beneficial application to the real world and our desire is to link our best scientific minds with industry and public policy makers.

For more information about the MPLS division, please visit: http://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 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 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 departments.

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 directly to Gemma Watson at gemma.watson@eng.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: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/gdpr/privacynotices/job/. The University's Policy on Data Protection is available at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/gdpr/universitypolicyondataprotection/.

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: 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.

Oxford Research Staff Society (OxRSS)

A society run by and for Oxford University research staff. It offers researchers a range of social and professional networking opportunities. Membership is free, and all researchers employed by Oxford University are welcome to join. Subscribe at researchstaff-subscribe@maillist.ox.ac.uk to join the mailing list to find out about upcoming events and other information for researchers, or contact the committee on committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk. For more information, see www.ox.ac.uk/oxrss, Twitter @ResStaffOxford, and Facebook www.facebook.com/oxrss.