

Summary

Job title	Postdoctoral Research Associate in Early Modern History, Material Culture & Heritage
Division	Humanities
Department	Faculty of English
Location	The Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, Woodstock Road, Oxford, with regular (funded) travel to National Trust sites
Grade and salary	Grade 7: £38,674 to £46,913 per annum
Hours	Full time
Contract type	Fixed-term (12 months)
Reporting to	Professor Nandini Das
Vacancy reference	179690
Additional Information	<p>It is anticipated that the researcher will take up their post on 1 October 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter.</p> <p>Closing date for applications is midday on Friday 6 June 2025. Shortlisting is expected to take place the following week and interviews will take place online during the week commencing 16 June 2025.</p> <p>For informal enquiries, please contact Alice Purkiss: alice.purkiss@humanities.ox.ac.uk </p>

The role

This fixed term, non-renewable, one year full-time postdoctoral position will support a new collaborative project titled, *'Knotted Histories: Early Modern Global Carpets, Global Exchange and the Public Country House.'* Building upon a cross-sector collaboration between Oxford's English Faculty, the Ashmolean Museum and the National Trust (NT), this project aims to redefine cultural and global contexts of carpet production and use beyond traditional and outdated connoisseurial approaches.

Led by Prof. Nandini Das (Oxford), Dr Francesca Leoni (Ashmolean Museum), Dr Christos Kefalas & Emma Slocombe (National Trust), the project aims to illuminate the latent potential of global carpet collections



for rethinking scholarship and heritage sector practice relating to wider histories of production and consumerism, sociability and embodiment, and global networks of exchange. This project will redefine carpet scholarship, through a renewed focus on craft makers and manufacture and an examination of structures of cultural meaning across East and South Asia and Europe.

The National Trust's carpet collection is the largest in the UK and contains over 3000 textiles made over 500 years, most displayed in the historic interiors they were acquired to furnish. However, the cultural and community significances of its rare early modern carpets are little understood and remain overlooked. The project will test and define its approach through two NT property case studies, selected as representative collection types and indicative of the challenges they pose: Ham House, London and Knole, Kent. These will be supported by research into the Beattie Archive at the Ashmolean, a unique resource of hundreds of carpet analyses and weavings documented by the pioneering carpet scholar May Hamilton Beattie. Including fibre samples alongside documentary material, it provides vital contextual and technical data to further carpet-related scholarship.

The role combines scholarly research in the areas indicating under 'Responsibilities' below, with professional development opportunities with the heritage sector, intersecting humanities research and heritage science. The PDRA will be encouraged to participate in Oxford's vibrant Early Modern research community (e.g. the Centre for Early Modern Studies, TIDE@Oxford, and the Early Modern Visual and Material Culture Seminar) and professional training will be offered in support of the PDRA's interests and skills, where relevant (e.g. curatorial training, object handling, collections care, Oxford's Heritage Pathway programme). The PDRA will gain insights into curatorial and conservation practice at the National Trust and the Ashmolean Museum, experience of project management and major grant development, and have the opportunity to network with national and international researchers and museum professionals. They will publish their work in scholarly, sector and public-facing outputs, e.g. NT's Cultural Heritage Magazine. The PDRA will have the opportunity to travel to a range of National Trust sites and both national and local archives. They will also undertake primary research at Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and establish networks with German museum professionals in support of the wider project's development. There will be an opportunity to seek membership of the Senior Common Room at Exeter College.

If you would like to discuss this opportunity, we would be interested to hear from you. Please contact Alice Purkiss: alice.purkiss@humanities.ox.ac.uk

It is anticipated that the researcher will take up their post on 1 October 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Interviews are expected to take place online on the afternoon of the 16th June 2025.

Responsibilities

The postdoctoral researcher will be expected to:

- Conduct independent research at National Trust case study sites, the Ashmolean Museum, libraries, national and international archives/sites, creating a literature review and collaboratively developing new methodologies
- Prepare research publications (e.g. research papers) and present papers at conferences
- Contribute to sector/public facing outputs (enhanced catalogue records, curator talks etc.)
- Co-convene interdisciplinary workshops with identified partners

- Collaborate with curators, conservators, and project partners on technical analysis of historic carpets, including fibre, weave, and dye studies
- Support the development of a major funding bid in collaboration with the project team

Selection criteria

Essential

- A PhD/D.Phil in a relevant humanities discipline (e.g. art history, history, material culture, literary history or a relevant interdisciplinary field)
- Established or developing track record of outstanding research
- Publication record appropriate to career stage
- Experience and confidence in handling and transcribing early modern documents and archival materials, including skills in early modern palaeography
- Wider understanding of early modern trade history and material culture, especially portable artefacts
- Familiarity with carpet production and scholarship
- Ability to manage own academic work and related activities independently
- Excellent communications skills and aptitude for collaborative, interdisciplinary and public engagement work

Desirable

- Demonstrable enthusiasm for and understanding of early modern material culture, including textiles
- Desirable languages: one or more of Persian, Arabic, Latin, Italian
- Interest in working with the museum and heritage sectors
- Experience of public engagement with research, e.g. writing for non-academic audiences

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>

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.

Humanities Division

The Humanities Division is one of four academic divisions in the University of Oxford, each with a full-time Head and elected Board. The Humanities Division is distinctive for its depth and breadth. Its activity spans nine faculties, one School and two independent research institutes: the faculties of Classics; English; History; Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics; Medieval and Modern Languages; Music; Asian & Middle Eastern Studies; Philosophy; and Theology and Religion; the Ruskin School of Art; the Rothermere American Institute and the Voltaire Foundation. Interdisciplinary links within and beyond the University are strong, extending to the social sciences, medical sciences and the natural and physical sciences.

One of the largest centres for Humanities internationally, with over 800 members of academic and research staff, the Division offers world-class research and teaching, backed by the superb resources of the University's libraries and museums, including the famous Bodleian Library, with its 11 million volumes and priceless early book and manuscript collections, the Pitt Rivers Museum, the History of Science Museum 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 and digital Humanities.

The outstanding quality of Humanities research at Oxford is recognised globally. This reputation for research excellence contributes to the University coming top of several international rankings for Arts and Humanities, including the US News and World Report rankings and the QS World University Rankings by Subject. The Division's 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 Division has responsibility for over 4,000 undergraduates (a third of the University's total undergraduate population), and for over 2,000 postgraduate students (over 1,100 doctoral students and some 900 Master's students). Twenty-nine undergraduate courses are offered in Humanities subjects, seven of which are offered jointly with the other academic divisions. The Doctoral and Master's programmes offered are distributed across all of the Division's faculties, along with a suite of Master's courses offered with the Social Sciences Division and a growing portfolio of Master's courses that draw from across the Humanities. The Division is part of the Open-Oxford Cambridge AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership. The Humanities Division has embarked on a major building project on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, supported by a £185 million gift to create the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities.

For more information please visit: <http://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/>

The Schwarzman Centre

The teaching and study of the humanities is so important because it tells the story of what it means to be human - who we are, where we came from, and how our culture, literature and language have developed over time. With over 700 academic staff and 6,000 students, Oxford Humanities leads the world in the breadth and depth of subject coverage and the quality of teaching and research. But don't just take our word for it - the latest QS World University Rankings placed us at number one.

The new Humanities building will take our teaching, research and public engagement to new heights. For the first time in the University's history, seven humanities faculties will be housed together along with a new library. These disciplines are currently scattered in buildings across Oxford but they will be united in a new building designed to encourage cross-disciplinary study and research. Academics in the building will work together to tackle some of the most pressing questions of our time. As well as a new Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence, they will consider the environment and how society rebuilds after the pandemic.

Crucially, the building will be open to the public, and we aim to bring research and performance in the arts and humanities to new audiences. There will be dedicated space for schoolchildren to visit and engage with Oxford's researchers. There will be exhibition space and three new performance venues for music, theatre, drama, dance, lectures and more. A new Cultural Programme will bring the world's leading performers and artists to Oxford. Our venues will also be open to regional cultural organisations, with whom Oxford researchers will strengthen partnerships. We cannot wait to welcome you to the first performance in 2025!

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.

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 two page supporting statement outlining previous research (e.g. doctoral project) and indicating how you meet 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.

Shortlisted candidates will be asked to supply 1 piece of written work (up to 8000 words including notes), either in the form of chapters of their doctoral work, or published articles.

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

Non-technical questions about this job should be addressed to the recruiting department directly at hr@humanities.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** 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, flexible working options, 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 <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/health-assured-eap>

University Club and sports facilities

Membership of the University Club is free for University staff. It 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 <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

We are a family-friendly employer with one of the most generous family leave schemes in the Higher Education sector (see <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/family-leave>). 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 <https://childcare.admin.ox.ac.uk/>.

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 <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/disability-support>. For information about how we support those going through menopause see <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/menopause-guidance>

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 <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/networks>

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club is 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.

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/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 <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/connecting-other-researchers/oxford-research-staff-society>