Job Description – Business Development Manager, Astrobiology Research Group

Flexible between 0.8 and 1 FTE
FTC 3 year Grade 8
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes-based, with some travel

The Role

The post-holder will be welcomed into an interdisciplinary research group investigating the feasibility of life beyond the Earth, and the associated social, legal and economic implications. In their role they will support the Open University Astrobiology Research Group to seek business development opportunities and to implement, identify and engage with bidding and funding opportunities.

Key responsibilities

- To build the business capability of the Group through attracting new income from industrial R&D contract research, public funding, external training, and consultancy services;
- Identify, engage, recruit and support SMEs and multinationals in a timely and professional manner to help them develop new products, services and processes through the application of Astrobiology based insights and skills;
- To build a strong network with national and international partners enabling the generation of collaborative opportunities to recruit businesses, delivery partnerships, including academics and other stakeholders as appropriate;
- To work with businesses, academics and other internal stakeholders to facilitate the writing and delivery of business-led applications and/or funded innovation activities. For example:
  - To work in partnership with STEM-RES (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship) team and members of the Group to prepare contract proposals that are appropriately costed and priced;
  - To work in partnership with the OU’s Research and Enterprise Office and Contract & Legal Services, to ensure that IP (Intellectual Property) is appropriately protected and, where possible, commercially exploited;
- To develop a thorough understanding of the Group’s research portfolio and communicate this to companies with a view to marketing and promoting the Group; thus, increasing external business opportunities and income;
- Working closely with the Executive Committee and members to:
  - develop and deliver a regional, national and international business engagement plan targeting SMEs, multi-nationals and Space Agencies in the sector;
  - develop and optimise project processes, procedures and reporting systems to effectively and professionally deliver the programme;
- To provide essential data, evidence and reports on KPIs for reporting to Research England and the university;
• To work with partners (including funding bodies) to actively identify opportunities to grow collaborations through relevant R&D and Innovation funding;
• Work with managers by engaging appropriate members of the academic community in sector-based networking events;
• Represent the University at an appropriate level, at a range of events including meetings, committees, conferences and exhibitions, which will include out of hours working.
• Support the University to develop marketing and communication collateral including videos, press releases and cases studies to help increase the number of collaborative R&D opportunities, case studies and REF impact.
• Have a strong commitment to the principles and practice of equality and diversity;
• To undertake other duties as agreed by the academic Lead and the Group’s Executive Committee;
• To conduct and/or gain funding for market research and initiate discussions with commercial companies.
Person Specification

Skills and experience

**Essential:**
- Demonstrable experience of relevant management, business development and technical expertise for academic/industry collaboration;
- Commercial insight/business planning & analysis;
- Proven ability to work with and build strong and credible relationships with commercial partners;
- Demonstrable ability to develop and write funding proposals;
- Excellent organisational and time management skills, including the capacity to prioritise competing demands and deliver to tight deadlines;
- Experience of working independently and as a member of an interdisciplinary team.
- Understanding of the UK Innovation funding landscape;
- Both oral and written communication in a variety of contexts, including the ability to offer and receive constructive criticism;
- Demonstration of taking full responsibility and accountability for tasks while making effective use of available resources, information and feedback to improve efficiency, productivity and overall performance;
- Demonstration of a personal commitment to developing interpersonal skills, with an understanding of impact on individuals, respecting and valuing diversity
- Excellent negotiation and influencing skills.

**Desirable:**
- Experience of STEM research environments;
- Proven ability and capacity to adapt quickly, flexibly and effectively to change;
- Demonstrable experience of leading small-scale pilot projects
About the Astrobiology Research Group

Research England has recently awarded the Open University Astrobiology Research Group an Expanding Excellence in England grant worth £6.7 million. This will allow the Group to expand to bring together expertise in technology, international development and governance to address the scientific and governance challenges associated with the advancement of astrobiology and related space exploration missions. This will result in a multi-disciplinary research environment with members spanning three Faculties: the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, the Faculty of Business and Law, and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

The primary aims of this multi-disciplinary group will be as follows:
1. furthering the understanding of the limits of life and potentially habitable environments in the Solar System;
2. identifying chemical and geochemical signatures that could be used as evidence of life;
3. investigating the survivability of microorganisms and their biosignatures;
4. educating and engage with the space sector, policymakers and the public in the UK and ODA countries;
5. examining critically the governance and ethical implications of astrobiology-related space missions to develop and enhance governance frameworks.

The OU Astrobiology Research Group is committed to building an inclusive research environment. The Group supports flexible working arrangements, within the limits of the post, and particularly welcomes applications from groups traditionally under-represented in STEM.
About the Unit

Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
The Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is comprised:

- School of Computing & Communications
- School of Environment, Earth & Ecosystem Sciences
- School of Engineering & Innovation
- School of Life, Health & Chemical Sciences
- School of Mathematics & Statistics
- School of Physical Sciences
- Knowledge Media Institute
- Deanery including teams supporting Curriculum, Research and Enterprise, Laboratory Infrastructure and Faculty Administration

“We aspire to be world leaders in inclusive, innovative and high impact STEM teaching and research, equipping learners, employers and society with the capabilities to meet tomorrow’s challenges”

The Faculty of STEM consists of 2500 staff including 1,800 Associate Lecturers. The Faculty delivers over 185 modules across undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum, supporting nearly 19,000 students (full time equivalents) which is 29% of the OU total.

The Faculty generates more research income (circa £17M) than any other Faculty in the University, supported by a comprehensive laboratory infrastructure.

We are proud of our distinctive values and capabilities underpinning our aspiration:

We are inclusive:
- We transform people’s lives, ensuring STEM education is openly accessible to many thousands of students from diverse backgrounds – our students express high satisfaction with their study experience.
- We engage the public in exciting citizen science and engineering, including through free open educational resources, multi-platform broadcasting, outreach to inspire the next generation and with programmes to encourage more women into STEM.

We are highly innovative:
- We are at the forefront of innovative developments in teaching practical science and engineering at a distance, through simulated and remote access laboratories and practical experimentation.
- Our high-quality teaching and curriculum are informed by world-leading research, strong links with professional bodies and communities of practitioners, as well as by scholarship focused on continuously improving our STEM pedagogy.

We deliver significant social and economic impact:
- We provide STEM higher education at a scale and reach unsurpassed in the UK, with a sizeable international reach and further growth potential.
- We inject transferable STEM skills and knowledge direct into the workplace for immediate employee and employer benefit, as students combine study while working.
- The employability value of our courses is underpinned by accreditation from leading STEM Professional Bodies and Learned Societies, as well as partnerships and sponsorship with leading employers.
Our high quality, applied and academically relevant teaching and research addresses real-world issues, delivering impact for industry and society, including addressing pressing STEM skill-shortages across the UK.