Project Officer (Ecosystems)

Permanent – Full Time
Grade 7
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes

The Role

The post-holder will contribute to the work of a team of technical support to ensure that the Ecosystems & Geobiology laboratories provide a safe and effective environment to support research, teaching and commercial activity. This will be achieved by providing technical expertise and guidance to enable students to attain their academic goals, supporting academic colleagues and being involved in research. The post holder will be responsible for the management of core facilities ensuring that they are fully operational and compliant with relevant laboratory standards.

Appropriate training will be provided to support the role.

Key Duties

1. Responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of experimental laboratories including the biodegradability facility (Containment Level 2), Ecology Laboratories with soil physics testing, controlled environment growth chambers and Field Site Facilities, and other areas as agreed with the Laboratory Manager. This will involve:
   - Ensuring the effective operation of the laboratories with regular maintenance schedules, liaising with external companies to repair and maintain equipment
   - Co-ordinating allocated resources efficiently ensuring availability of consumables and equipment
   - Writing and reviewing documentation including risk assessments, inventories, standard operating procedures and guidance notes for relevant laboratory procedures
   - Responsibility for induction, training and supervision of staff and students in the facility and lab training including health and safety

2. To be responsible for specific contracts and research projects in consultation with Laboratory Manager (Ecosystems). This will involve:
   - Responsibility for ensuring quality of data, analysis of data, maintaining records and writing reports.
   - Liaising with research staff, commercial clients, regulating bodies and support departments

3. To contribute a range of skills to the core laboratory team in order to support research, contract research and consultancy projects, such as sampling environmental materials, sample preparation, and associated analytical techniques. Undertake other activities, as required and commensurate to the grade.

4. All staff are expected to:
   - Undertake any other duties which may reasonably be required.
   - Take reasonable care of the Health & Safety of themselves and that of any other person who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work.
   - To demonstrate a strong commitment to the principles and practice of equality and diversity.
Person Specification

Skills and Experience

Essential
- A degree or equivalent in a relevant scientific subject.
- Proven experience of working in or managing relevant environmental science laboratories with evidence of significant professional training in laboratory procedures.
- Detailed understanding of physical and chemical analysis of environmental materials such as compost, soil, hay, anaerobic sludge.
- Understanding of relevant Health & Safety requirements.
- Proven ability to analyse problems and work creatively to develop practical solutions.
- Data processing skills and experience e.g. using Excel.
- Effective organisational skills with the ability to work independently and prioritise tasks.
- The ability to work as part of a team with a diverse range of staff and students.
- Effective oral and written communication skills.

Desirable
- A current full UK driving licence.
- Experience of working in or managing Containment Level 2 laboratories.
- Experience of working in or managing accredited laboratories e.g. UKAS.
- Practical experience of biodegradability testing and plant growth studies.
- Experience of successful engagement of stakeholders such as commercial clients and funding bodies.
- NEBOSH or similar safety qualification.
- Applicants should have or be working towards professional registration RSciTech, RSci or CSci.
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.