Job Description – Research Associate, Health Wellbeing, and Social Care

FT – 37.50 hours per week
Fixed term: 30 month fixed term contract
AC2 - £33,797 - £40,322
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes-based with the necessity of working overseas
Reporting to ACCESS Academic Director

About the Role

We are seeking to appoint a highly motivated Post-Doctoral Research Associate to work on a project titled ACCESS Approaches in Complex and Challenging Environments for Sustainable SRHR (ACCESS). ACCESS is a new multi-million pound Government funded consortium (within the UK Aid Connect programme) to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Project Description

The ACCESS consortium is led by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). The Open University is a partner, alongside Frontline AIDS, Internews Europe, The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Women’s Refugee Commission.

ACCESS will draw on the consortium’s expertise to design and test innovative solutions that enable the most marginalised and under-served people to access comprehensive, evidence-based SRHR. The project seeks to bridge the gap between research and programming by drawing on existing and emerging evidence to inform the design of the programme through an adaptive, people-centred co-creative approach. Multiple complex and interconnected barriers impede universal access to SRHR. The greatest magnitude and proportion of these challenges remain in countries with the lowest levels of development, and among the poorest and most marginalised populations. In a world increasingly affected by physical disasters, conflict, economic crisis, and outbreaks of epidemics, the response to SRHR in these challenging and complex environments is more important than ever.

ACCESS will apply our complementary skills to build robust evidence to generate sustainable, transferable, rights-based approaches to deliver comprehensive SRHR to all, ensuring no one is left behind, even in the most complex and challenging settings. To achieve this, our consortium will capitalise on our pooled skills, ideas and resources, and those of in-country communities and practitioners, to co-create innovative solutions. Directing our combined efforts across four focus countries, Lebanon, Mozambique, Nepal and Uganda, we will use systematic and participatory research and knowledge exchange approaches to generate new evidence and new evidence-based solutions which we will institutionalise globally through working with our existing networks, ensuring a direct pipeline to apply evidence to action.
Summary of duties
The Open University (OU) is the consortium partner responsible for Capacity Building and Learning within the ACCESS project. The successful candidate will support this work which involves collating different forms of knowledge (for example, formal academic, methodological and technical knowledge, practitioner expertise/insight, and experiential knowledge from marginalised communities) around key SRHR challenges in the four countries to identify needs and priorities for learning to improve SRHR.

In addition to conducting literature and scoping reviews on key areas of SRHR work, the successful candidate will support the project team in developing and implementing processes for the co-creation of learning resources with different learner groups. These groups include practitioners and volunteers working with marginalized communities (for example community health workers, aid workers, legal support and advocacy workers including volunteers) and, from within these communities, peer educators, community leaders and community members themselves. The successful candidate will also take part in reviewing and analysing evidence generated to inform OU and ACCESS-wide monitoring and evaluation. Finally, the successful candidate will play a leading role in devising knowledge exchange opportunities and activities within the consortium, and for the consortium.

Key Responsibilities
Duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- To assist in the design, facilitation, write-up, reporting and dissemination of co-creation activities (for example co-creation workshops, authoring workshops, consultation and validation events etc.).
- To undertake reviews of relevant literature.
- To undertake authoring of learning resources alongside the project team and in-country authors, to be used in online, distance or face-to-face modes of delivery.
- To formulate detailed plans for projects based on broad guidance from the project team.
- To facilitate and document knowledge exchange activities.
- To travel abroad for fieldwork where appropriate, incl. to facilitate co-creation workshops, which may include work outside of standard office hours but time off in lieu will be given and transport costs covered.
- To contribute towards ethical clearance where appropriate.
- To support the implementation of the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) strategy for OU work packages within the ACCESS project.
- To write and contribute to work package reports, annual reports, team meetings and advisory group reports.
- To contribute towards articles suitable for publication in high quality academic journals.
- To travel to meetings and make presentations both with the project team and to external stakeholders.
- To contribute towards project-related social media.
- To undertake other duties as may be reasonably requested and that are commensurate with the nature and grade of the post.
Essential Skills and Experience

- Experience in initiating, conducting, completing and disseminating research in SRHR, or an associated area,

- Experience in initiating, conducting, and completing knowledge exchange in SRHR, or an associated area.

- Experience of working with/for marginalised or disadvantaged populations.

- Evidence of high quality academic skills, including the capacity to interpret relevant literature, develop conceptual frameworks and communicate research findings to different audiences (ie, to academic debates, and policy-makers).

- A demonstrable interest in sexual and reproductive health.

- A demonstrable commitment to the use of participatory, co-design methods in research and knowledge exchange.

- Experience in a range of fieldwork methods including conducting and analysing semi-structured interviews or focus groups.

- An ability to problem solve, adapt, and respond to changes quickly.

- Excellent attention to detail and record keeping.

- Ability to work collaboratively across disciplinary boundaries and work effectively with academic and non-academic partners.

- A good understanding of the ethical and social justice implications of research on sensitive topics.

- The ability to support the University’s equality, diversity and inclusion mission in this role.

Desirable Skills and Experience

- A completed (or close to submission) PhD in a relevant social science discipline: health, education, development studies, social policy, sociology etc.

- Ability to learn new IT systems.

- Experience in running Public Engagement events and initiatives.

- Experience of providing research training workshops and supporting lay researchers.

- Experience of work in humanitarian/development contexts

- Experience in project management and planning applied to own work and the work of others.

- A good understanding of work in informal learning settings.
- A good understanding of supporting teaching and learning with online, mobile and digital technologies.

- Experience of authoring or co-authoring academic outputs (e.g. journal articles, books, research reports).

If you would like further details about the role before making an application then please email your query through to Resourcing-Hub@open.ac.uk quoting the reference number and job title or contact Marion Child 01908 6 55668.

The Open University is an Institution that strives to create an academic climate in which diversity is embraced by maintaining and respecting the dignity, respect and civility of individuals from all backgrounds, identities, cultures and experiences. The programmes in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, and Language Studies play an integral role in achieving the University’s widening participation and social justice mission. We strive to recruit, retain and develop the careers of a diverse pool of students and staff, and particularly encourage applications from all underrepresented groups.