Job Description – Senior Fellow in International Development, Astrobiology Research Group

Senior Fellow
1 FTE
Permanent, AC3/AC4
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes-based

The Role
The post holder will study the application of space technologies and astrobiology-related science to global challenges. They will be welcomed into an interdisciplinary research group investigating the feasibility of life beyond the Earth, and the associated societal, legal and economic implications. The post-holder will undertake a self-directed research programme that will focus on international development and inclusive innovation, whilst being aligned with the principles of engaged research. The post-holders will be expected to generate income through research grants and/or collaboration with industry or NGOs.

Key responsibilities

- To deliver on an independent research programme that is aligned with the international development and inclusive innovation priorities of the Astrobiology Research Group;
- To identify global challenges that require technological innovation, and identify opportunities for the adoption of these technologies;
- To take on a leadership role in applying for external research funding;
- To identify pathways to commercialisation of innovative technologies in an international development context;
- To undertake research that is internationally excellent and leads to high-impact publications and that is a strategic fit with the objectives of the OU Astrobiology Research Group;
- To attract and supervise postgraduate students;
- To be an active member of the OU Astrobiology Group, attending regular research group meetings and share knowledge with junior members of the team;
- To participate in, and host, seminars and workshops aimed at sharing research outcomes, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and enhancing the reputation of the Group;
- To initiate and sustain activities that enhance the impact of research activities;
- To contribute expertise and scientific ideas to research projects, methodologies and teaching areas, as appropriate;
- To carry out administrative tasks associated with this work, such as risk assessments, workload planning, career developments and staff appraisals);
- To undertake professional development as an academic researcher;
- To have a strong commitment to the principles and practice of equality and diversity;
- To undertake other duties, as directed by their Line Manager.
Person Specification

Skills and experience

**Essential:**
- PhD in a subject area in international development or relevant social sciences including business, education, technology policy, politics, geography, planning or design;
- Experience in work as part of an interdisciplinary research team;
- An excellent track record of independent research, as shown by highly-cited or high impact REF-eligible publications;
- Evidence of collaborating with industry, NGOs or policy stakeholders;
- A demonstrable record of obtaining external funding, commensurate with career stage
- Experience as a Principal or Co-Investigator on research grants;
- A demonstrable track record of communicating research results through conference presentations;
- Ability to plan and prioritise own workload and work to agreed deadlines;
- Good oral and written communication in a variety of contexts, including the ability to offer and receive constructive criticism.

**Desirable:**
- Evidence of public engagement or impact-related activities;
- Active membership or contribution to groups, boards or committees within their organisation or externally;
- A good record of demonstrable research impact, commensurate with the stage of career;
- A demonstrable experience of administrative and managerial responsibilities in research;
- Experience of supervising PhD or MSc students.

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 Units

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 700 staff and 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.

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)
The Faculty is the largest and most diverse at The Open University, with some 50,000 students studying our modules with excellent completion rates and consistently outstanding student satisfaction ratings. Noted for the strength of our interdisciplinary approaches, our scholars of international standing teach and research a very wide range of topics and themes in specific subject areas, recognized as world class or internationally excellent in the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2014, and having a direct and profound influence on our undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.

From 1 August 2019, the Faculty will be organised into three Schools:
• School of Arts and Humanities
• School of Social Sciences and Global Studies
• School of Psychology & Counselling

Students are supported by three Student Support Teams. These teams offer specialist study support to students undertaking our qualifications across the University. Members of academic staff, including academics based in all four nations of the UK, form part of these teams in sustaining and improving student progression and retention.

The Faculty works closely with important organisations and institutions in the UK and other parts of the world in a range of validated partnerships and collaborations. Engaged in world-class, agenda setting research tackling the most difficult challenges facing us in the 21st Century, with work in numerous subject-based and interdisciplinary research groups and projects. With c.1800 members of staff comprising academics, associate lecturers, support staff and full-time research students working across the locations of the University, combining originality and innovation in research and curriculum, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is a vibrant and exciting place to study and work.
To find out more about the Faculty’s teaching, learning and research, please visit: [http://fass.open.ac.uk/](http://fass.open.ac.uk/).

The School of Social Sciences & Global Studies (SSGS)
From August 1st the new School of Social Sciences and Global Studies (SSGS) will consist of approximately 130 academics, including Staff Tutors, and research staff, and will organised into eight disciplines: Politics, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Economics, Development, Geography, Social Policy and Criminology, and Sociology. In addition to offering single and joint honours qualifications, the School is noted for its interdisciplinary teaching in social sciences at level 1, notably DD102 ‘Introducing the Social Sciences’ and DD103 ‘Investigating the Social world’. Staff in Philosophy and Religious Studies also contribute to first year modules in the School of Arts and Humanities.

SSGS is a research rich School with a range of vibrant research clusters and collaborations, as well being home to two of the Universities Strategic Research Areas: in International Development and Inclusive Innovation, and Citizenship and Governance ([http://fass.open.ac.uk/research/strategic](http://fass.open.ac.uk/research/strategic)).
The School’s Disciplines have contributed to highly successful Units of Assessment in REF 2014, and the School actively supports staff’s research and scholarship.

To find out more visit the requisite discipline pages, which will be found on the following web pages: [http://fass.open.ac.uk/schools/school-history-religious-studies-sociology-social-policy-and-criminology](http://fass.open.ac.uk/schools/school-history-religious-studies-sociology-social-policy-and-criminology) and [http://fass.open.ac.uk/schools/school-politics-philosophy-economics-development-geography](http://fass.open.ac.uk/schools/school-politics-philosophy-economics-development-geography)