MERTON COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Fellowships for Early Career Researchers 2024

Humanities & Social Sciences: Anthropology, Archaeology, History

Sciences: Mathematics, Computer Science

1. GENERAL

Merton College proposes to appoint up to three three-year, fixed-term Early Career Researchers from 1 October 2024 or as soon as possible thereafter. Two Fellowships are available across the Humanities and Social Sciences subjects of Anthropology, Archaeology or History. One Fellowship is available in the Science subjects of Mathematics or Computer Science. The posts are available to early career researchers and are intended to provide opportunities for the successful applicants to establish a research profile and to help prepare postholders for academic careers.

Candidates who have already held a comparable career development appointment at Oxford or another university are not eligible to apply. A comparable appointment is deemed to be a salaried research-only appointment for the purposes of self-directed research.

Applications are particularly welcome from women, candidates with a disability, and black and minority ethnic candidates, who are under-represented in academic posts at the University of Oxford. All applicants will be judged on merit, according to the selection criteria.

The College is an equal opportunities employer.

Merton College

There are thirty-nine self-governing and independent colleges at Oxford, giving both academic staff and students the benefits of belonging to a small, interdisciplinary academic community as well as to a large, internationally-renowned University. The collegiate system fosters a strong sense of community, bringing together leading academics and undergraduate and postgraduate students across a wide range of subjects, and from different cultures and countries.
Merton College was founded in 1264 by Walter de Merton, and is one of the oldest colleges in Oxford. It was the first fully self-governing college in the University of Oxford and was originally founded for twenty fellows, with undergraduates being formally admitted in the early 1380s. Over the centuries, many eminent scholars and cultural leaders have called Merton home including three Nobel Prize winners and an Abel Prize winner. Merton College has a strong commitment to excellence in research and teaching across a range of subjects in the Humanities, Social Sciences and the Sciences. Information about Merton College can be found at http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk.

The College community currently comprises around 590 students (320 undergraduates and 270 postgraduates), some 70 Fellows, 40 other academic staff and over 100 members of support staff. On average the College has around 12 early career fellows at any one time. A number of Merton Fellows and graduates take part in the College’s interdisciplinary discussion groups, currently organised in the following areas: the History of the Book, and Biomedical and Life Sciences. In addition, the College convenes a number of research talks throughout the year and fosters international collaboration through an active Visiting Researcher scheme including provision of accommodation for scholars.

The College strives to create a diverse, welcoming, inclusive and supportive community in which its members can thrive.

2. RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

Early Career Researchers are expected to engage full-time in research and its dissemination in branches of the Humanities, Sciences, or Social Sciences. The successful candidate will be expected to:

(a) propose, plan and manage a high-quality programme of original research;
(b) publicise the outcomes of that research through publications and presentation of papers;
(c) establish and develop appropriate research collaborations with other academics in Oxford and elsewhere;
(d) submit an annual report to the Research Committee of the College on their research activities;
(e) engage in the academic life and activities of the College.

Early Career Researchers may ask (or be asked) to undertake a limited amount of teaching and on occasions asked to undertake work associated with the admissions process, but they are under no obligation to do so.

There are many college activities which go beyond the narrowly academic. It is hoped that the Early Career Researchers will participate fully in the life of the College, recognising that a college can function successfully only if its Fellows are animated by a spirit of service which elicits a commitment to the life of the community beyond the prescribed contractual duties.

3. OTHER DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS

The appointment is based on the understanding that the successful candidate undertakes to fulfil the following duties and obligations of service:
The Early Career Researcher will be a Fellow of the College throughout their appointment. Initially they will be elected to a Julia de Lacy Mann Fellowship. This category of Fellowship does not carry membership of the Governing Body. At the end of their first year, the person appointed will, if eligible to serve as a Trustee, be elected to a Junior Research Fellowship for years 2 and 3, which carries with it membership of the Governing Body. This provides the Fellow with experience of being a Governing Body member and Trustee.

Throughout their appointment, the Early Career Researcher will be expected to serve on Committees and similar College bodies, and to serve from time to time as an Officer of the College, if such a request is made by the Fellowships and Appointments Committee. If elected as a member of the Governing Body of Merton College, the Fellow will be obliged to attend its meetings (three in each term). The College is a registered charity; members of the Governing Body are its trustees and must conduct business in accordance with UK charity law. A more detailed guide to these responsibilities will be communicated to the successful candidate following election as a Fellow.

Fellows are strongly encouraged to participate in events which foster closer links between the Senior Common Room (SCR) and Middle Common Room (MCR).

4. SELECTION CRITERIA

Candidates should:

- hold a recently completed doctorate, or be close to completion of a doctorate and will have submitted their thesis no later than three months before the start date of this post. Those who formally submitted their doctoral thesis for viva voce examination before 1 October 2022 are not eligible, unless they have had a career break (e.g. a period of parental leave, family commitments, illness) or if there are other exceptional circumstances. Those whose doctorate interrupted their professional training, should have completed their professional training since 1 October 2022;

- have research expertise in their chosen field, commensurate with the candidate’s career, as demonstrated by a recently completed (or close to being completed) doctoral thesis, published or forthcoming books or articles in refereed journals (as relevant to the candidate’s field); or evidence of such future achievement (as relevant to the candidate’s field);

- have evidence of active participation in the successful dissemination of their research findings to fellow academics at national and international conferences or in professional research seminars;

- have a well-planned and coherent plan of research for the duration of the appointment which can either be the further development of the doctoral work or an entirely new area, which is expected to make a valuable contribution to the candidate’s field.

If the research project is laboratory based, candidates will be required to provide a letter of support from the host department confirming that laboratory or studio space can be provided without cost to the College. A copy of such a letter must be submitted if
candidates are called for interview. Candidates should therefore initiate discussion with
the relevant department ahead of an application being submitted.

5. PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The Early Career Researcher will be assigned an academic mentor who will discuss work
in progress and support the individual in making effective use of this appointment to
prepare for an academic career.

The Early Career Researcher will be encouraged to access the support of Oxford
University’s Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) as well as People and Organisational
Development (POD). The CTL has its own well-developed programme of short courses
for academic staff and the Early Career Researcher will be expected to undertake the
introductory session for new academic staff and any other training required as a
minimum, unless evidence of equivalent training can be produced.CTL and POD will
also be able to advise on other Oxford resources, such as the Careers Service.

The Early Career Researcher will be encouraged to complete successfully the ‘Advanced
Teaching and Learning’ programme, offered by the University’s Centre for Teaching and
Learning, by the end of the third year of this appointment.

6. REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS

Successful candidates will be appointed as an Early Career Researcher for a fixed-term
period of three years. The start date of the appointment may, with the agreement of the
College, be brought forward or delayed in exceptional cases, to accommodate personal
circumstances; if so, the terminal date of the appointment will be adjusted accordingly.

The annual salary is £37,099 p.a. (current rate).

The salary will normally be adjusted if the Fellow is in receipt of other remuneration and
may be subject to an annual cost-of-living increase.

Successful applicants will normally be required to be based in Oxford during the tenure
of the appointment, except for any fixed-term periods away for research trips and
fieldwork.

Fellows are entitled to free lunches and dinners at the Common Table when the kitchens
are open. Other allowances and facilities are offered at the discretion of the Governing
Body. An Early Career Researcher may be permitted to undertake teaching up to a
maximum of six hours a week during full term. The understanding is that Merton will
have first refusal of any teaching offered by an Early Career Researcher.

The following conditions will apply to this appointment:

a) Single accommodation within College can be provided at an annual rent of £6,800
(current rate), subject to availability. Alternative accommodation may be available
in a College flat a short distance from the College precinct. A College flat is also
suitable for those with a partner. The occupant of a College flat will be charged an
annual rent of £6,800 p.a. (current rate) and is responsible for all charges relating
to Council Tax and utility bills for the property. The College has very limited
accommodation suitable for families;
b) Auto-enrolment as a member of the Universities Superannuation Scheme, with a right to opt out;

c) The College will provide private medical insurance (the premium is assessable as a taxable benefit);

d) Research expenses of up to £3,800 p.a. (current rate) under the relevant College Bylaw;

e) The College provides for sick leave and family related leave on the same basis as the University of Oxford, taking into account the fixed-term nature and particular circumstances of the employment;

f) Membership of the Senior Common Room, for which a subscription is payable;

g) There will be no entitlement to sabbatical leave;

h) It is not usually advisable for academic staff to take holiday during the ten-week university term. Public holidays falling within Term (0 to 9th week) are normally regarded by the College as ordinary working days for those with teaching responsibilities.

i) The appointment is conditional on verification of the successful candidate’s right to live and work in the United Kingdom.

Sundry other regulations concerning academic facilities (e.g. research expenses) and domestic arrangements in the College (e.g. ordinary meals, Senior Common Room and Guest Room facilities) are contained in the Statutes and Bylaws of the College (by which the Early Career Researcher will be bound) and in a Handbook for new Fellows, available from the Senior Tutor.

7. DURATION OF THE APPOINTMENT AND NOTICE PERIOD

This post is a three-year fixed-term appointment from 1 October 2024 (or as soon as possible thereafter). It is College policy to attempt to advance the careers of academics at an early stage in their career by appointing suitable candidates as Early Career Researchers. It is an integral feature of the appointments of Early Career Researchers that they are time-limited and cannot be renewed so that this policy can be implemented for a continuous succession of academic staff.

Four weeks’ notice may be given by either party.

8. RIGHT TO WORK IN THE UK

The appointment will be conditional on satisfactory provision of proof of the right to work in the UK. Applicants who would need a work visa if appointed to the post will be supported through the visa application process by the College’s Human Resources team and the University of Oxford Staff Immigration Team.

They are also asked to note that the visa application process will require them to submit no later than three months prior to the start date of this post, either a copy of their
doctoral award certificate, or an academic reference confirming that their doctorate has been awarded, or an academic reference confirming that they have submitted their thesis, if they have not yet completed.

9. PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

Those wishing to apply should complete the online application form at http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/about-merton/vacancies and upload the following as a single PDF document in the named format ‘Last Name, First Name, Subject’ and in this exact order:

- the ECR Application Form 2024 (word document on our website);
- a covering letter;
- a CV; and
- a research proposal for the duration of the Fellowship. Please note that this should be no more than 1,000 words including footnotes, but excluding any bibliography;

Applications will be accepted only if made according to the following instructions:

- Hard copy applications are not necessary and late applications will not be accepted.
- Candidates applying more than one year since submitting their doctoral thesis or since completing their professional training should bring to the College’s attention any special factors to be considered. Please note that this information will be shared with members of the selection panel.
- Candidates requiring laboratory or studio space must communicate with the relevant department at the time of application and will be required to submit a letter of support from the host department if they are called for interview.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to submit written work samples, of up to 15,000 words, in advance of the interviews. At interview, shortlisted candidates will be asked to give a short presentation on their research followed by questions from the appointment committee.

It is anticipated that interviews will be held on Friday February 16th 2024 (Mathematics, Computer Science) and Tuesday February 20th 2024 (Anthropology, Archaeology, History). Candidates are advised to hold the relevant date in their diaries.

The closing date for receipt of applications is noon on Friday 10th November 2023. Late applications will not be accepted.

References

When completing the application form, you will need to provide details of two referees, who should be from different institutions. Applicants should ask their referees to write by the closing date to the HR Team at jrfadmin@merton.ox.ac.uk Applicants are responsible for requesting references from their referees and for ensuring that references arrive by 12:00 noon on the closing date of Friday 10 November 2023; they should therefore give referees enough time to write in their support. The College will not request references directly from the referees. Hard copy signed references will be required for the successful candidate.
Applicants are also requested to inform their referees that, under the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018, the references they provide will be regarded as disclosable to the subject of the reference unless it is clear that the reference has been given in confidence. The College asks that a reference given in confidence should be marked “strictly confidential” on the letter of reference itself. Referees should also be asked to note that even where a reference is marked “strictly confidential” it could still be disclosed to the subject of the reference if that subject so requested and the College’s Data Protection Officer deemed it appropriate.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to return the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form (available for download from the College website http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/about-merton/vacancies The information collected on the equal opportunities recruitment monitoring form does not form part of the selection process and will not be circulated to the selection panel. It will be used solely to monitor the effectiveness of the College’s single Equality Scheme which is published at http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/college-policies

Any enquiries related to these Further Particulars should be directed in the first instance to the HR Team at jrfadmin@merton.ox.ac.uk

10. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The policy and practice of Merton College require that all staff are afforded equal opportunities within employment. Entry into employment with the College 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. Subject to statutory provisions, no applicant or member of staff will be treated less favourably than another because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

11. PRIVACY NOTICE

To view our Privacy notice please see here https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/privacy-notices-and-ropas