University of Reading

Human Resources

Job Description

Title	Details
Job title	Senior Research Technician in Agricultural and Environmental Science
Department/Unit	Department of Geography and Environmental Science
Job Type	Part time (18 hours per week), fixed term for 22 months
Grade	Grade 5
Accountable to	Professor Tom Sizmur
Vacancy reference	SRF54702
Additional Information	na

Purpose

We seek an experienced environmental chemistry technician with experience analysing environmental or agricultural samples in the laboratory to work on an Innovate UK funded research project that aims to create and test novel organic fertilisers.

Team Structure

You will be line managed by Professor Tom Sizmur in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science and will work closely with members of Technical Services supporting the department who will provide training and support. You will also maintain close contact with the project lead, Eddie Mordue, from Traditional Garden Growers. The post holder may be asked to supervise students, visitors, trainee technicians, and interns on an ad hoc basis.

Main duties and responsibilities

The role will require:

- Setting up and maintaining mesocosm and pot experiments within controlled environment facilities, making measurements of pant growth, environmental conditions, and collecting samples of plants and soils for laboratory analysis.
- Preparing, extracting/digesting, and analysing soil, crop, and fertiliser samples generated by the project for key chemical, physical, and biological properties (e.g. elemental composition, nutrient release, water holding capacity, aggregate stability, microbial community).

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- Running analytical instruments to analyse soil, crop, and fertiliser samples (e.g. ICP-OES, Spectrophotometer, Elemental Analyser, Gas Chromatography) and undertaking basic data processing.
- Isolating and culturing microbial communities and preparing isolates for sequencing
- Maintaining a laboratory (or suite of laboratories) and the associated research equipment, samples and consumables by overseeing and participating in housekeeping, data recording, waste management, stock keeping and ordering.
- Liaise with academic staff, students, and other members of technical staff to align activity with other laboratory users, and exploit opportunities to work in partnership to achieve greater efficiency.
- Undertake method development and author Standard Operating Procedures.
- Work in accordance with University Health and Safety guidelines.

Supervision received

Day-to-day supervision will be provided Professor Tom Sizmur. You will be working in laboratories which may have another member of Technical Services staff as the Laboratory Co-ordinator and another member of academic staff as the Laboratory Manager. You will also receive training and support from other members of Technical Services

Supervision given

The post holder may be asked to supervise students, visitors, trainee technicians, and interns on an ad hoc basis.

Contact

You will need to main close contact with other laboratory users. You will also maintain close contact with the project lead, Eddie Mordue, from Traditional Garden Growers and project partner Paul Mayfield. You may be asked to join quarterly meetings with the Innovate UK project officer.

Terms and conditions

Part time fixed term post. There no pre-determined fixed set hours of work. The hours of work can be negotiated to ensure that the appointee's personal commitments can be accommodated around the hours required to carry out the duties associated with the post. Field and laboratory work must ordinarily take place between 9am and 6pm, Monday to Friday.

This document outlines the duties required for the time being of the post to indicate the level of responsibility. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list and the line manager may vary duties from time to time which do not change the general character of the job or the level of responsibility entailed.

Date assessed: Oct 2026

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Person Specification

Job Title	School/Department
Senior Research Technician in Agricultural and Environmental Science	**Department of Geography and Environmental Science**

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Skills Required	• Excellent laboratory analytical skills prepare samples using complex protocols and operate analytical equipment. (I) • Good organisational skills to collect samples and conduct high quality sample preparation and analysis using a range of analytical procedures and equipment. (I) • Good verbal (I) and written (A) communication skills.	• Able to develop methods, troubleshoot equipment, and conduct repairs. (A)
Attainment	• BSc in a relevant discipline (e.g. Analytical Chemistry, Environmental Science, Agriculture, Biological Sciences), or equivalent (e.g. HND Degree, NVQ4). (A) • Demonstrable commitment to Continuing Professional Development. (A)	• MSc in a relevant discipline (e.g. Analytical Chemistry, Environmental Science, Agriculture, Biological Sciences), or equivalent. (A) • Registered Science Technician (RSciTech) (A)
Knowledge	• Detailed knowledge of, and the operation of analytical equipment. (I) • Good knowledge of environmental sample collection techniques. (I) • Solid understanding of QC/QA procedures and how they can be applied to the analysis of environmental samples. (I) • Sound knowledge of the correct and safe use of standard laboratory equipment (e.g. pipettes, balances, centrifuges, volumetric glassware). (A)	• Understanding of agriculture, agronomy and soil science. (A)
Relevant Experience	• Considerable experience of preparing samples in the laboratory and analysing them using analytical equipment. (A)	• Experience operating an ICP-OES, Gas Chromatograph, Discrete

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	• Experience setting up a laboratory experiment, making measurements, and collecting samples. (A) • Experience managing or maintaining a laboratory environment. (A) • Experience prioritising and managing competing demands. (I)	Analyser, or Elemental Analyser (A) • Experience isolating and culturing microbes. (A)
Other		• Full, valid, clean UK driving licence. (A) • First Aid qualification. (A) • Willingness to work outdoors and travel to field sites hosting on-farm trials (I)

Completed By Tom Sizmur

Date 12/10/2026

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