UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Assistant/Associate Professor in Crop Sciences

Department of Plant Sciences

Closing date: 6 January 2027
Job Reference: PD51645









Race Equality Charter Bronze Award

We are a Living Wage Employer

disability confident COMMITTED

Athena SWAN Silver Award

Assistant/Associate Professor

Salary:
We are looking to appoint at either Grade 9 (£48,337-£61,165) or Grade 10 (£64,878 - £68,817) depending on skills and experience.

Contract:
Permanent

Location:
Cambridge

Faculty / Department:
Plant Sciences

Responsible to:
Prof Julian Hibberd,
Head of Department

Working Pattern:
Full Time

The University of Cambridge has a Hybrid Working Policy that aims to enable as many staff as possible to work in a hybrid way if they so wish



Purpose of the role

We seek excellent candidates who are able to teach and conduct research in crops using cutting-edge computational approaches. We are particularly interested in individuals who combine strong expertise in computer science, machine learning, or mathematical modelling, together with a deep interest in, background in, or compelling vision for, crop biology.

We welcome applicants working in all aspects of crop biology, especially those developing and implementing intelligent software for AI-guided crop improvement. Areas could include the design of new-to-nature proteins or regulatory sequences; complex trait improvement and genomic prediction; pangenome and multi-omic data integration; foundation models for plant genomes; computer vision and high-throughput phenomics; and mechanistic and predictive modelling of crop growth and gene regulation. We welcome applicants interested computational approaches applicable to any crop, supporting the department's existing strengths with wheat, rice, maize, beans, potato and tomato, as well as a number of under-utilised crops.

The appointee will join the Department of Plant Sciences, which delivers teaching and research that stretches across the plant sciences discipline - from genetics and genomics, to physiology, ecology and conservation. In 2020, we established the Crop Sciences Centre to more efficiently translate our discovery research in model species to crops, and to accelerate advances in crops themselves. The post-holder will be part of the Crop Science Centre, and have access to the support it provides, as well as that in the Department of Plant Sciences and the wider university. Across Cambridge over 30 research groups focus on plants, creating a vibrant environment for collaborative research and the sharing of ideas.

Key responsibilities

Key responsibilities include teaching undergraduates, conducting world-leading research, and advising postgraduate students and post-doctoral workers. There is the opportunity to become a Fellow of a College. Undergraduate teaching includes lectures, practical classes, and small-group supervisions. Postgraduate training options include contribution to MPhil and PhD programmes. Innovations in teaching methods are actively encouraged, as are engagement with mentoring and professional development.

We will support the successful candidate to develop a research programme that complements and reinforces existing Departmental research strengths. There are shared laboratory facilities for a variety of environmental analyses both within the Department and in collaboration with other Departments, and the opportunity to work with a world-leading range of equipment and facilities.

Candidates must have a PhD in a relevant field and sufficient breadth and/or depth of specialist knowledge in their chosen discipline to be able to teach to a high standard. They should also have evidence of excellence in research and demonstrated capacity to develop research objectives, projects and proposals. Appointments at the level of Associate Professor will usually be able to provide evidence of success in obtaining research funding to support research or career development.

Applications should comprise a letter of application (summarise how you would contribute to both teaching and research in the Department), your CV (including up-to-date publications list, and for three outputs a concise narrative outlining the context for each piece of work, your contribution to the output and the importance of the findings), and a statement of your current and future research plans on no more than four pages.

The University actively supports equality, diversity and inclusion and encourages applications from all sections of society. We particularly welcome applications from women and black and ethnic minority candidates, as they are currently under-represented at this level in our University.

Person Specification

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Education		
Candidates must have a PhD in a relevant field and sufficient breadth and/or depth of specialist knowledge in their chosen discipline to be able to teach to a high standard.	✓	
Academic		
They should also have evidence of excellence in research and demonstrated capacity to develop research objectives, projects and proposals.	✓	
A developing bibliography of research publications	✓	
Demonstrate a firm commitment to teaching at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels	✓	
A track record of securing research funding		✓
Willing to take a leading role in the supervision of Research Students	✓	
An interdisciplinary and collaborative research approach		✓
Leadership experience and achievements		
Willingness to undertake management and administrative duties	✓	
Proven ability to lead and inspire a team and work with vision and foresight		✓
Evidence of commitment to addressing gender or ethnic minority underrepresentation and/or support for the progression of women or ethnic minorities		✓

Declaration on Research Assessment

The University of Cambridge is a signatory to the San-Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), and in recruitment or promotion evaluations will assess research on the basis of its merits rather than the journal or venue in which it is published. Applicants should not include Journal Impact Factors or uncontextualized metrics in their applications. Full details are at: https://www.research-strategy.admin.cam.ac.uk/research-policy/DORA

Department of Plant Sciences



The Department of Plant Sciences at Cambridge University maintains teaching and research specialisms across a wide range of plant science disciplines (from molecular and developmental biology, through cell-signalling, biochemistry and physiology to epidemiology, ecology and ecosystem modelling) with 21 academic staff leading active research groups, 2 independent research fellows, 3 senior research associates, 70 post-doctoral researchers and 58 support staff. Research grant income in 2025/26 was £19.3M, with the Department currently administering a total of 124 grants with a combined value of £67.6M from a variety of sources, including research councils, Royal Society, charities, EU, industry and government agencies. The Department has strong links with both Cambridge University Botanic Garden and the Sainsbury Laboratory Cambridge. The Department occupies the main building on the Downing Site, which includes a Teaching Laboratory, the Plant Growth Facility and Algal Innovation Facility at the Botanic Garden, and the Crop Science Centre on Huntingdon Road.

Cambridge is one of only a few UK universities where undergraduates can study plant science separately, and often provides over half of all UK graduates in the subject.

It is essential to provide cohorts of skilled and informed plant scientists, if the impact of plant science research is to be translated into agriculture, industry, conservation and policy. There are approximately 95 postgraduate students based in the Department and at the Sainsbury Laboratory and NIAB. Our PhD students go on to prestigious fellowships and influential scientific positions worldwide.

The Department is committed to providing a friendly, supportive and inclusive environment in which all can reach their potential, regardless of gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, age, religious belief or disability. The Department has been central to supporting women at Cambridge University. Professor Enid MacRobbie FRS, was the first female science Professor at Cambridge, and the first female Head of Plant Sciences. Alison Smith, Professor of Plant Biochemistry, became the second female Head of Department in October 2017. Department members participate in collaborations on a worldwide basis. We regularly welcome national and international visitors, including academics, researchers, students and interns.

The School of the Biological Sciences

The School of the Biological Sciences is one of the six Schools that are responsible for delivering teaching and research and the administration of those activities within the University. The School delivers internationally-leading research and teaching on animal, plant and microbial science at scales that range from the atomic, molecular and cellular through whole organisms to populations and communities. The research impacts on the pharmaceutical and biotechnological industries, on human and animal health and the clinic as well as in conservation, agriculture and the environment.

About the School

The School of the Biological Sciences employs around 2000 staff teaching over 4000 students (around 2000 undergraduates in the Natural Sciences, Medical Sciences and Veterinary Sciences and Psychological and Behavioural Sciences Triposes plus around 2000 postgraduates).

The School collaborates closely with the School of Clinical Medicine. The joint Graduate School of Life Sciences looks strategically at graduate provision and education across the two Schools and at the undergraduate level the Medical Education Committee oversees medical education.

The School is currently arranged in two Faculty Boards (Biology and Veterinary Medicine) which are divided into nine Departments: Biochemistry, Genetics, Pathology, Pharmacology, Physiology, Development and Neuroscience, Plant Sciences, Psychology and Zoology are part of the Faculty Board of Biology while Veterinary Medicine is part of the Faculty Board of Veterinary Medicine.

The School also contains five major interdisciplinary Institutes: Wellcome Trust / CRUK Gurdon Institute for Cancer and Development, Wellcome Trust / MRC Stem Cell Institute, MRC Toxicology Unit, Cambridge Systems Biology Centre, Cambridge Centre for Crop Science and the Sainsbury Laboratory for Plant Development.

The School is involved with several Strategic Research Initiatives including being a major player in the Cambridge Conservation Initiative . The School is associated with the Museum of Zoology and the Botanic Garden. Key officers of the School plus details of relevant Research Ethics Committee (Human Biology and Psychology) can be found on the School's website..

Athena SWAN

The Athena SWAN Charter was launched in June 2005 to recognise and reward commitment to advancing the careers of women working in higher education in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM).

The University of Cambridge was a founder member of Athena SWAN Charter and the University won its first award in the inaugural round of March 2006. Since then, the University has successfully renewed its Bronze Athena SWAN award in 2009 and 2012 and in 2014 achieved a Silver Athena SWAN award.

Many of the Departments in the School of Biological Sciences hold awards at Bronze or Silver level and the School continues to support the Athena SWAN process across all subjects.



Terms of Appointment

Tenure and probation Appointments are to the retiring age for established academic positions. For University Assistant Professors and University Associate Professors the appointment is subject to satisfactory completion of a five-year probationary period.

Working Pattern
The appointment is full-time.

Pension
You will automatically be enrolled to become a member of USS (Universities Superannuation Scheme) – a hybrid pension scheme. If you are already a member of the NHS Pension scheme, you may be eligible to continue in the scheme and should contact the Pensions section of the University: www.pensions.admin.cam.ac.uk/.

Annual leave
Subject to compliance with the Statutes and Ordinances relating to leave, full time officers are entitled in any holiday year to take a minimum of 28 days annual paid holiday. These periods are inclusive of public holidays that fall outside Full Term.

Sabbatical leave
Cambridge is generous in having statutory provision for leave of absence of one term for every six terms of service. Academic staff use this opportunity for study and research.

College membership
Membership of a College adds an important social and many of the University's academic community find attractive. Appointment to a College fellowship is a separate matter from a University appointment. Most colleges expect their fellows to take part in undergraduate supervision and College administration, for which the College provides modest remuneration additional to University salary. Many academic staff will be invited to join a College as a teaching fellow, but it is not compulsory for academic staff to be a member of a College. The Head of Institution or senior colleagues can offer more advice.

Residence
It is a requirement of the role that you are resident in the University during term-time. Further information can be found here: https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/2019/chapter11-section1.html#indexterm-d358e257

General information

Pre-employment checks
Right to work in the UK - we have a legal responsibility to ensure that you have the right to work in the UK before you can start working for us. If you do not have the right to work in the UK already, any offer of employment we make will be conditional upon you gaining it.

References - offers of appointment will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory references.

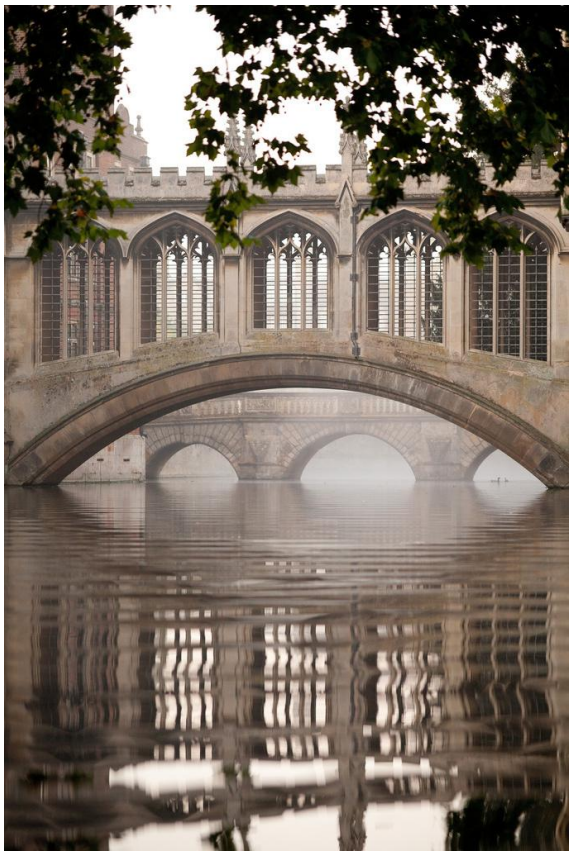
Qualifications - the person specification for this position lists qualifications that are essential and/or desirable. Please note that if you are offered the post you will be asked to provide your relevant original certificates of these qualifications.

Health declaration
Once an offer of employment has been made the successful candidate will be required to complete a work health declaration form.

Equality and Diversity
We particularly encourage women and candidates from a black or ethnic minority background to apply for this vacancy as they are currently under-represented at this level in our University.

Information if you have a disability
The University welcomes applications from individuals with disabilities.
We are committed to ensuring fair treatment throughout the recruitment process. We will make adjustments to enable applicants to compete to the best of their ability wherever it is reasonable to do so and, if successful, to assist them during their employment. Information for disabled applicants is available at http:// www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/staff/ disabled/

We encourage you to declare any disability that you may have, and any reasonable adjustments that you may require, in the section provided for this purpose in the application form. This will enable us to accommodate your needs throughout the process as required. However, applicants and employees may declare a disability at any time. If you prefer to discuss any special arrangements connected with a disability, please contact, the Business and Operations Manager, who is responsible for recruitment to this position.







The University

The University of Cambridge is consistently ranked one of the best universities in the world, achieving academic excellence through its Faculties, Departments and other Institutions, together with the 31 Colleges.

The University is renowned for its record of discovery and innovation. It is one of the great institutions, with a regional, national and global reach, attracting the very best and brightest minds. Our staff and students shape the world around us for the better: we attract and partner with like-minded people.

Whether contributing to the development of new anti-cancer drugs, adding to the understanding of how black holes are formed, revolutionising the study of ancient settlements, convening academic expertise to offer solutions to the climate crisis, or analysing public attitudes towards democracy around the world, the University's research is remarkable in its breadth, quality and impact. The University also sits at the heart of Europe's largest technology cluster and has catalysed more than 1,500 high-tech companies. And yet what inspires our 24,000 students and 13,000 staff is not what has already been achieved, but what is possible in the future.

The education and experience of our students, based on a partnership between the University's academic Departments and Faculties and the 31 Colleges, is second to none. Every student is a member of one of the Colleges, each a community of students, academics and staff drawn from across the University's comprehensive range of subject areas.



The University is a self-governing community, with a system for decision-making that provides a high degree of accountability and transparency to its members. Each Department and Faculty is part of one of six academic Schools, but each of them, and each individual academic, has a great deal of autonomy. The Colleges are independent and self-governing, working in a symbiotic relationship with the University.

The University has a number of Institutions that are independent of any Faculty or Department and are not part of the academic Schools. These include the Institute of Continuing Education (which provides high-quality education to adults throughout their lives), the Fitzwilliam Museum, Kettle's Yard (an historic house and gallery that holds important collections of modern art) and the University Library. In addition to their diverse contributions to University and public life, these non-School Institutions are also important centres of teaching and research.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment provides academic publishing, examinations and learning materials worldwide, supporting the dissemination of research, academic development at school and in higher education, and international student mobility. Legally, the Press & Assessment is a department of the University. It provides very important funds to invest in the academic purposes of the University.

The University has made truly remarkable contributions to the sum of human understanding, with breakthrough ideas and discoveries that have changed the way we understand ourselves, our planet, and the universe around us. Yet the global and national contexts in which it operates are fast-changing and increasingly filled with uncertainty. In a world that is becoming - politically, economically, socially, and technologically – ever more interconnected but even less equal, the University's mission – "to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence" – has never been more relevant.



About Us

The University is one of the world's leading academic centres. It comprises 150 faculties and departments, together with a central administration and other institutions. Our institutions, museums and collections are a world-class resource for researchers, students and members of the public representing one of the country's highest concentrations of internationally important collections.

The University has an annual income of £2 billion. Research income, won competitively from the UK Research Councils, the European Union (EU), major charities and industry, exceeds £500 million per annum and continues to grow.

The Colleges and the University remain committed to admitting the best students regardless of their background and to investing considerable resources both in widening access and financial support. The 31 Colleges are self-governing, separate legal entities which appoint their own staff. Many academic staff are invited to join a College as a Teaching Fellow, which provides a further social and intellectual dimension. The Colleges admit undergraduate students, provide student accommodation and pastoral support and deliver small group teaching for undergraduates.

The University awards degrees and its faculties and departments provide lectures and seminars for students and determine the syllabi for teaching.

Our instinct for seeking out excellence and setting up enduring and mutually beneficial collaborations has led us to establish strategic partnerships across the globe. Whether it is the successful Cambridge-Africa Programme involving universities in Ghana, Uganda and elsewhere on the African continent; or the close association with the government of India to pursue new research in crop science; or the creation, with Germany's Max Planck Institutes, of a Cambridge-based centre for the study of ethics, human economy and social change – international partnerships are now an inextricable part of the University's make-up.

"Through its outstanding education, research and innovation, the University of Cambridge has made – and continues to make – a lasting contribution to human knowledge and is flourishing. By working at the University of Cambridge, you will be joining a vibrant community of students, scholars and professional services staff committed to supporting and enhancing the University's mission to contribute to society."

Professor Deborah Prentice,

Vice Chancellor 2023



Working at the University

Working at Cambridge you will join a diverse, talented and innovative community, with more than 24,000 students and over 13,000 staff from all walks of life and corners of the world.

The University continually explores strategies to attract and retain the best people. It is committed to supporting its staff to achieve their best. We are a fair, diverse and inclusive society and we believe our staff are our greatest asset. There is strong commitment to developing institutional leadership and supporting and encouraging staff development at all levels.

The University offers a variety of roles including academic, research, professional, managerial and support roles. We also offer extensive benefits and excellent learning opportunities within a stimulating working environment.

The University's estate is undergoing the most significant transformation in its history. Cambridge has been able to create a science and technology campus to the west of the city centre, and is expanding further to the north west of Cambridge including investing in affordable homes for University key workers and community facilities. Even with their continued development, the University remains within walking or cycling distance across the campus. The University is a major partner on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus and continues to redevelop its historic city centre sites demonstrating a clear determination to ensure that we can offer the best facilities and opportunities for our staff and students.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The University has built its excellence on the diversity of its staff and student community. We aim to be a leader in fostering equality and inclusion, and in promoting respect and a sense of belonging for all. We encourage applications from all sections of society. All appointments are made on the basis of merit. We have an Equal Opportunities Policy, along with a range of diversity groups, including the Women's Staff Network, Race Equality Network and LGBT+ Staff Network. More details are available here: http://www.equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/

The University has a bronze Race Equality Charter award, with a framework for improving the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education. Furthermore, the University's silver Athena swan award recognises and celebrates good practice in recruiting, retaining and promoting gender equality.

Living in Cambridge

Cambridge is rich in cultural diversity. From beautiful University and College buildings, museums and art galleries, quaint gardens and punts on the River Cam, to a vibrant restaurant and café scene, our employees are surrounded by the wonderful features of this unique city.

You can find a wide-range of high street shops and 3 shopping centres, with independent alternatives at the historic market and nestled within the passageways in the city centre. You will find a cinema, bowling alley, a nightclub and various live performances at the Cambridge Leisure Park, with further entertainment options at the Corn Exchange, Arts Theatre and the ADC Theatre. Further information can be found on the Visit Cambridge website.

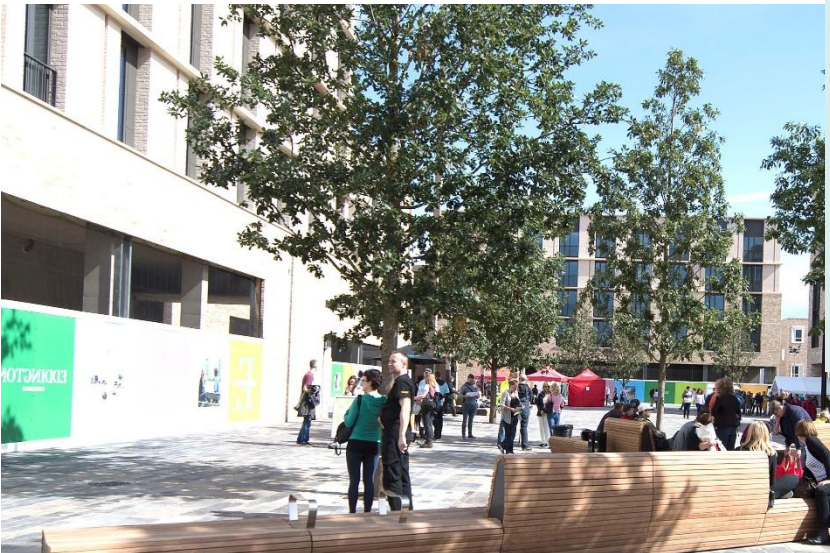
If you prefer the faster pace of life, London is a 45-minute train journey away. For those travelling from overseas, Stansted Airport is just 45 minutes away and Heathrow Airport under 2 hours away. The University is a short distance from a host of other attractions such as Ely Cathedral, Newmarket Races and various wildlife parks and stately homes. Cambridge is also within easy reach of the beautiful Broads and coastlines of Norfolk and Suffolk.

Relocation Support

The University recognises the importance of helping individuals to move and settle into a new area. We provide support and guidance to those relocating internationally or domestically to take up a post at the University of Cambridge, liaising with other University offices and selected partners to ensure comprehensive relocation support is available. This includes: accommodation, childcare, schools, banking, immigration and transport. If you would like further information, please visit https://www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk/RelocationService/. The Shared Equity Scheme and the Reimbursement of Relocation Expenses Scheme provide financial assistance to qualifying new members of

Accommodation Service

The University Accommodation Service helps staff, students and visiting scholars who are affiliated to the University in their search for suitable accommodation in Cambridge. The dedicated accommodation team can provide access to a wide range of University-owned furnished and unfurnished properties, and has a database of private sector accommodation available for short and long-term lets. For further information and to register with this free service please visit: https://www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk/





What Cambridge can offer

We offer a comprehensive reward package to attract, motivate and retain high performing staff at all levels and in all areas of work.

The University offers a wide range of competitive benefits, from family leave entitlement, to shopping and travel discount schemes. Our generous annual leave package contributes to the positive wellbeing of our University employees. Sabbatical leave enables academics to focus on research and scholarship, whilst still maintaining their full salary. The University also has a career break scheme for academic and academic-related staff, with additional flexible working policies for all other staff.



Pay and benefits

The University salary structure includes automatic service-related pay progression in many of its grades and an annual cost of living increase. In addition to this, employees are rewarded for outstanding contribution through a number of regular pay progression schemes. The University offers attractive pensions schemes for employees, with an additional benefit of a salary exchange arrangement providing tax and national insurance savings.



CAMbens employee benefits

The University offers employees a wide range of competitive benefits, known as CAMbens. CAMbens offers something for everyone across a range of categories, including:

- Financial Benefits, including shopping discounts (both local and national) and a Payroll Giving scheme;
- Relocation and Accommodation Benefits, including relocation assistance and interest-free Rental Deposit Loans;
- Travel Benefits, including Cycle to Work, discounts on train season tickets and interest-free Travel to Work loans;
- Family Friendly and Lifestyle Benefits, including support with childcare and family friendly policies;
- Health and Wellbeing Benefits, including a University Staff Counselling Service, discounts at the University Sports Centre, and other local gyms, and healthcare schemes.

What Cambridge can offer

Family-friendly policies

The University recognises the importance of supporting its staff. We have a range of family-friendly policies to aid employees' work-life balance including a generous maternity, adoption and shared parental leave entitlement of 26 weeks' full pay, and paid emergency leave for parents and carers.

Other family-friendly support includes:

Our highly regarded workplace nurseries, a childcare salary exchange scheme and a high-quality holiday Playscheme are available to help support University employees with caring responsibilities (subject to demand and qualifying criteria). Further childcare information can be found here: https://www.childcare.admin.cam.ac.uk/

The Newcomers and Visiting Scholars Group (https://www.nvs.admin.cam.ac.uk/) is an organisation within the University that welcomes the partners and families of visiting scholars and new members of the University. Run by volunteers, the group offers opportunities to visit interesting Cambridge venues, learn about the community, take part in social events and gain local knowledge while developing a strong support network of both residents and other newcomers.



Your wellbeing

The University's Sport Centre, Counselling Services and Occupational Health are just some of the support services available to University employees to promote their physical and mental wellbeing. The University delivers The Festival of Wellbeing annually, which is a programme of stimulating talks and activities, which aim to promote wellbeing and good mental and physical health. The University also hosts the Cambridge Festival, which is a great opportunity to get your first taste of public engagement, through volunteering, supporting hands-on activities or proposing a talk.

Development opportunities

We support new employees to settle in through various activities as well as supporting their professional and career development on an ongoing basis. Our Personal and Professional Development (PPD) team provide development opportunities for all University employees, including face-to-face sessions, online learning modules and webinars. All employees also have unlimited access to LinkedIn Learning to support their development. Both new and existing employees can undertake funded Apprenticeships, which lead to a range of vocational and professional qualifications. We offer reduced staff fees for University of Cambridge graduate courses and the opportunity to attend lectures and seminars held by University departments and institutions. A range of University training providers also offer specialist learning and development in their own areas e.g. teaching and learning, digital literacy, finance, health and wellbeing, safety.

How to apply

Applications should be submitted online via the University of Cambridge jobs page www.jobs.cam.ac.uk by clicking “Apply online” in the job advert. You will need an email address to register for our online system.

Conversations about flexible working are encouraged at the University of Cambridge. Please feel free to discuss flexibility prior to applying (using the contact information below) or at interview if your application is successful.

Informal enquiries are welcomed and should be directed to: Catherine Butler, Business and Operations Manager, Department of Plant Sciences
Tel: 01223 333909
Email: cek31@cam.ac.uk

If you have any queries regarding the application process, please contact: Katrina Wilson via kjw63@cam.ac.uk

The closing date for applications is: 6 January 2027

The interview date for the role is: to be confirmed.

