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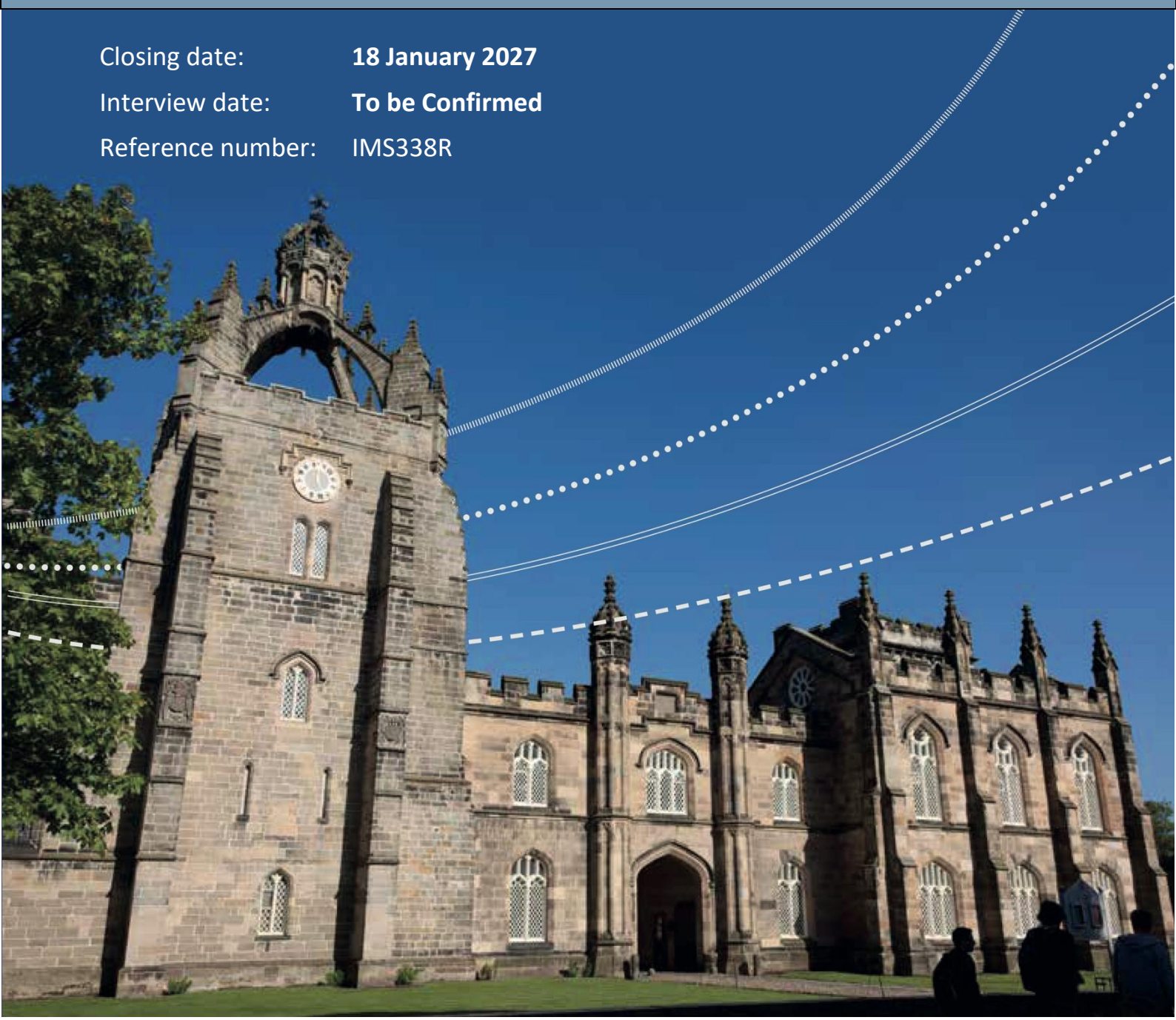
BRUCE FELLOWSHIP IN IMMUNO-NEUROLOGY

INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES,
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL SCIENCES AND NUTRITION

Closing date: **18 January 2027**

Interview date: **To be Confirmed**

Reference number: IMS338R



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INTRODUCTION

The University of Aberdeen is offering **two Independent Bruce Fellowships** for outstanding early-career researchers working in Immuno-Ophthalmology, Immuno-Neurology, or related disciplines relevant to Ophthalmology and Visual Science. These fellowships have been enabled by the generous philanthropic support of David Bruce, whose legacy gift, in support of Ophthalmology, established the Bruce Fellowships

These two-year fellowships are designed for researchers who have already developed a distinct programme of research, generated promising preliminary data, and are now seeking to establish academic independence. The fellowships will provide **protected research time, mentorship, and access to a vibrant interdisciplinary research environment** to enable the incumbents to strengthen their research portfolio and develop competitive applications for major extramural funding.

The programme is intended to support the transition from postdoctoral researcher to independent investigator, providing the opportunity to refine research questions, generate critical data, build collaborations, and establish a sustainable independent research trajectory. In addition to salary support, fellows will have **access to proactive mentorship and a substantial discretionary research fund designed to accelerate the development of their independent research programme** and maximise competitiveness for external fellowship funding.

Applications are welcomed from candidates whose research addresses immunological mechanisms in Ophthalmology, Neuro-Ophthalmology or Visual Science. Areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Ocular inflammatory disease (uveoretinitis)
- Autoimmune disorders affecting the central nervous system, including multiple sclerosis and myasthenia gravis
- Neurodegenerative diseases of the eye and brain, including age-related macular degeneration and dementia-related visual dysfunction
- Diabetes-related complications affective the eye or central nervous system
- Retinal and optic nerve disease
- Translational and experimental approaches to visual and neurological disorders
- Neuroinflammation and neuroimmune interactions

We particularly encourage applications from ambitious researchers with innovative ideas who are ready to build their own independent research programme within a supportive and collaborative academic environment.

The successful candidates will join a vibrant and expanding community of immunologists at the University of Aberdeen Foresterhill site, co-localised with NHS Grampian, offering opportunities for collaboration and mentorship across a broad range of clinical research areas. Existing strengths include macrophage biology (Heather Wilson), tolerogenic dendritic cells (John Forrester), cell therapies (Mark Vickers), antibody engineering (Andy Porter), immuno-matrix interactions (Tara Sutherland), quantitative genetics, immunology and single-cell biology (Mike Morgan), glycobiology (Huan Cao), peptide chemistry (Wael Houssen), and immune checkpoint biology (Frank Ward). Recent strategic appointments have further strengthened expertise in the microbiome and gut host-pathogen interactions (Indrani Mukhopadhya) and immunology of neurodegeneration (Björn Vahsen).

The University also hosts a strong ocular research community. Researchers within the Aberdeen Ocular Immunology Group (OIG) collaborate closely with colleagues studying ocular inflammation (control of uveitis and Tregs with Heather Wilson) and metabolism and diabetes (with Mirela Delibegovis), whilst other groups are working on cornea (Martin Collinson) and the retina (Linda Erskine).

The OIG and Ocular Immunology Programme is managed by Professor John V Forrester (Emeritus) and Dr Lucia Kuffova (Clinical Ophthalmologist and Honorary Senior Lecturer) and currently supports one post-doctoral research Fellow, Dr Marina Sousa.

Current / recent projects include:

- Role of PTP1B in of diabetic retinopathy pathogenesis (with Prof M Delibegovic)
- Regulation of immunity in ocular inflammation: innate vs adaptive (with Prof Heather Wilson)
- Tolerogenic dendritic cell therapy for autoimmune disease: the role of glucose metabolism (Prof John V Forrester / Dr Marina Souza)
- Dendritic cell expression of cell surface lectins as indicators of cell function (with Dr. Huan Cao)
- Role of small GTPase Dock2 in prevention of spontaneous uveitis in transgenic mice (with Dr Christine Moelzer, recent OIG alumna, now at Medical University of Vienna)
- Analysis of immune cell infiltrate in eyes of patients with posterior uveitis (with Dr Soum Basu, L V Prasad Institute, Hyderabad, India).

JOB DESCRIPTION

MAIN PURPOSE OF THE ROLE:

The successful candidate will have completed at least one postdoctoral research position and be conducting research within the broad fields of immunology, ophthalmology, neuroscience or related disciplines. Applicants should have established a clear research direction and generated preliminary data that support a novel and innovative hypothesis relating to disease mechanisms, diagnosis, or therapeutic intervention.

The Bruce Fellowship is intended to support researchers at a pivotal stage in their careers, accelerating their pathway to independence. They will be enabled and empowered to strengthen their research programme and prepare competitive applications for major external fellowship funding. Fellows will use the award period to expand and consolidate existing preliminary findings, generate additional supporting data where required, develop strategic collaborations, refine research aims, and prepare the scientific strategic components needed for longer-term independent funding.

The primary objective of the fellowship is to support the development of a competitive application for longer-term independent funding leading to the opportunity of a proleptic lectureship. Successful candidates will therefore be expected to be actively preparing fellowship applications from the outset of the award, with submission anticipated by the end of year 1.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

For appointment at Grade 6

- Conduct innovative research related to eye or brain diseases which affect vision and involve inflammation and immune mechanisms
- Establish and develop an independent programme of research, building on existing preliminary data to generate further evidence, refine research objectives, and strengthen the scientific foundation for a major external fellowship application
- Design, plan and undertake experimental studies, ensuring the timely delivery of research objectives and high-quality outputs
- Analyse, interpret and disseminate research findings through publications in peer-reviewed journals, conference presentations, and other appropriate channels
- Actively participate in the research activities of the Microbiology and Immunology Theme, Faculty, and Institute, including seminars, workshops, conferences and interdisciplinary research initiatives
- Prepare and submit applications for independent fellowship funding, with the expectation that a major fellowship application will normally be submitted by the conclusion of the first year of the Bruce Fellowship scheme
- Establish links with colleagues in the IMS, the Rowett Institute and across the Medical School.

For appointment at Grade 7, the successful candidate will also:

- Develop national and international collaborations that enhance the Fellow's research programme and future funding competitiveness
- Contribute to the supervision and mentoring of undergraduate and postgraduate students, as appropriate
- Have more extensive evidence of applying and securing independent grant funding
- Have published >2 high-quality discipline-leading publications as key author
- Contribute to public engagement activities
- Supervise and examine postgraduate research students (MSc, PhD) both within the institution and externally

CANDIDATE BACKGROUND

These Fellowships are aimed at ambitious, intellectually curious researchers who are committed to pursuing an independent academic career in the life sciences within the collaborative and vibrant environment of the IMS. We are seeking individuals who have developed a clear research vision, generated promising preliminary data, and are beginning to define a programme of work that can form the basis of a competitive external fellowship application.

Candidates should have a strong interest in understanding disease mechanisms or developing improved therapeutic approaches for ophthalmological or neuro-ophthalmological conditions, particularly where inflammation or immunity play an important role. Applicants should hold a PhD in Immunology, Cell Biology, Molecular Biology, or a related discipline, and will typically have completed at least one postdoctoral position, with experience relevant to ocular or neuro-immunology.

Successful applications will have demonstrated increasing research independence, including hypothesis generation, project leadership, and the development of original research ideas. Candidates will be in the early stages of formulating a programme of work which will constitute a longer competitive external Fellowship application. The Bruce Fellowship provides an attractive package allowing candidates to undertake further research to finalise preliminary data and prepare documentation for the application.

There is considerable flexibility in the scientific focus of the Fellowship within the broad themes of ophthalmology and the central nervous system visual pathways. Applicants are expected to already have decided their own research direction and articulate how the Fellowship will support their progression towards research independence.

The successful candidates will have a PhD in a medical or biological science, a strong publication record appropriate to their career stage, including authorship in high-quality peer-reviewed journals, alongside evidence of scientific communication, presentation and dissemination. They should demonstrate the potential to develop into future leaders in academic research.

Terms of Appointment

For appointment as a Research Fellow, salary will be at the appropriate point on the Grade 6 scale, £39,560 - £46,970 per annum, and negotiable with placement according to qualifications and experience.

For appointment as an Advanced Research Fellow, salary will be at the appropriate point on the Grade 7 scale, £48,337 - £57,666 per annum, and negotiable with placement according to qualifications and experience.

Any appointment will be made subject to satisfactory references and probation period.

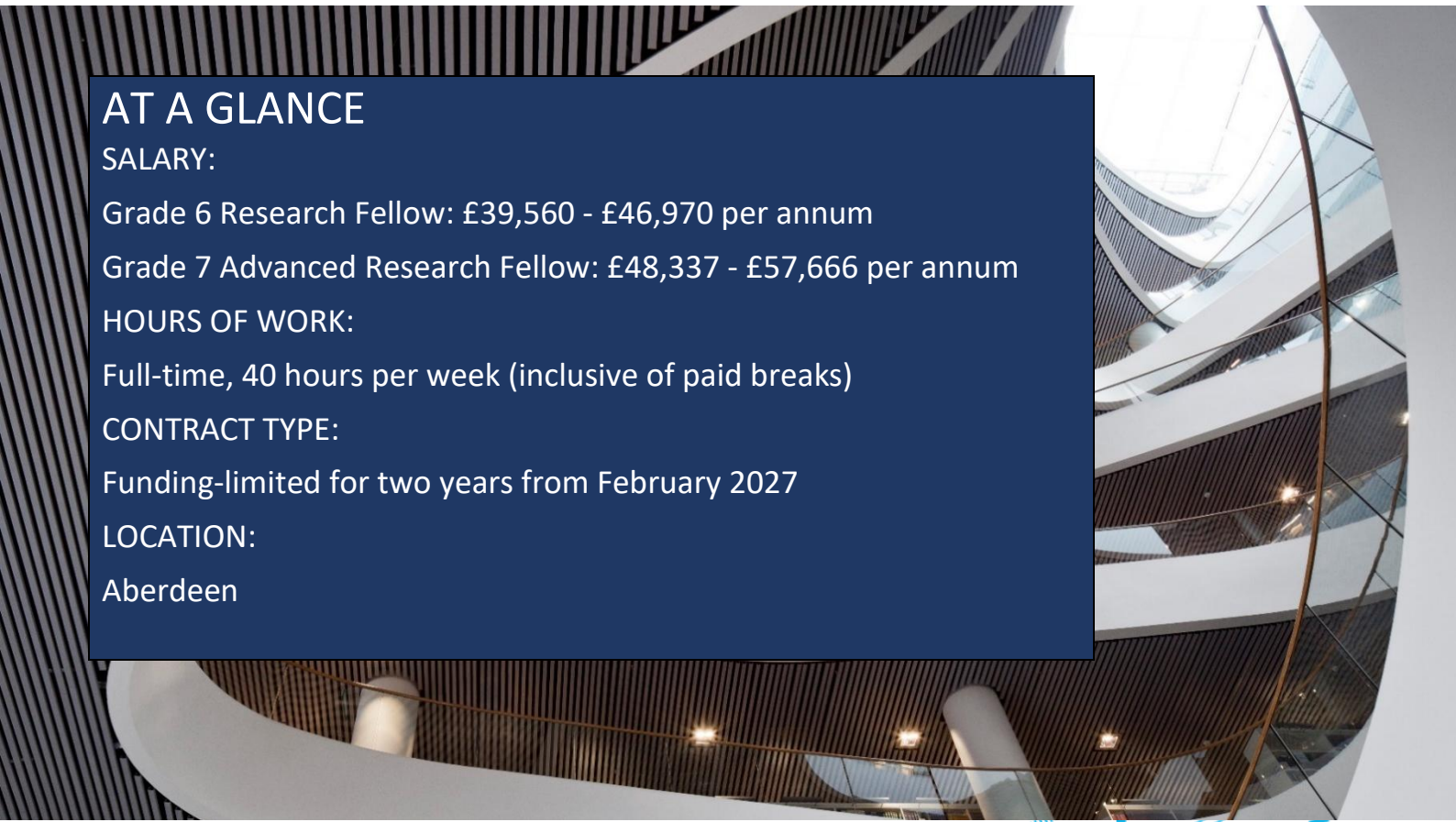
For further information on various staff benefits and policies please visit www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here

This role is based in the UK and as such the successful candidate will be required to live and work in the UK.

Prior to employment, the successful candidate must be able to demonstrate their right to work in the UK. This role may be eligible for sponsorship under the Skilled Worker route under the UKVI immigration rules but is dependent on factors specific to the candidate and if tradeable points can be used under the rules, and should also be eligible for a Global Talent Visa.

Information on other visa options is available at https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa.

Please do not hesitate to contact Grant Rae, HR Adviser (e-mail: grant.rae@abdn.ac.uk) for further information.



AT A GLANCE

SALARY:

Grade 6 Research Fellow: £39,560 - £46,970 per annum

Grade 7 Advanced Research Fellow: £48,337 - £57,666 per annum

HOURS OF WORK:

Full-time, 40 hours per week (inclusive of paid breaks)

CONTRACT TYPE:

Funding-limited for two years from February 2027

LOCATION:

Aberdeen

PERSON SPECIFICATION

	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Education/Qualifications Academic, technical and professional education and training	• PhD in a relevant area of Medical Science; e.g. Immunology, Molecular Biology, Cell Biology • Experience in Ocular / CNS - immunology techniques • Demonstrated knowledge, innovative ideas and commitment to relevant field	• Knowledge of disease models in relevant area
Work and Other relevant experience (including training) e.g. Specialist knowledge, levels of experience, supervisory experience, research	• Evidence of postdoctoral research in a relevant field • Record of presentations at meetings in relevant field • Publications in relevant field • A developing reputation in their field of research commensurate with career stage • Ability to make collaborative research links e.g. with NHS colleagues • Authorship on high quality, peer reviewed publications *For appointment at Grade 7 – additional criteria include:* • Evidence of significant postdoctoral research in a relevant field • National and international collaborations and evidence of collaborative activities • Evidence of applying and securing independent grant funding • Strong publication track record as lead author of peer-reviewed publications • Evidence of supervisory experience	• Supervisory experience of MSc (Research) and/or PhD students
Personal qualities and abilities	• Ability to submit an independent fellowship application to external	• Track record of public and patient engagement

	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
e.g. initiative, leadership, ability to work on own or with others, communication skills	funding body within 2 years of appointment • Strong ability to connect, communicate and collaborate • Promoting positive research culture	• Ability to pass on skills and expertise to other scientists
Other e.g. special circumstances (if any) appropriate to the role such as unsocial hours, travelling, Gaelic language requirements etc.	• Leadership qualities • Sense of independence • Ability to think creatively and innovatively and impart enthusiasm for subject	• Group Leader • Ability to interact positively with others

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open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others

The University of Aberdeen is a broad based, research intensive University, and we put students at the centre of everything we do. Outstanding in a wide range of discipline areas, Aberdeen is credited for its international reach and commercialisation of research ideas into spin out companies. The University has over 16,000 matriculated students and 3,600 staff representing 130 nationalities. We encourage bold thinking, creativity and innovation, and we nurture ambition with many opportunities for professional and personal development in an inclusive learning environment which challenges and inspires.



CURRENT CONTEXT

The University continues to uphold the principals of the foundational purpose. We remain committed to delivering positive change both locally and globally. We work together and with our partners in an interdisciplinary way, catalysing world-leading research in our areas of strength: Energy Transition; Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity; Environment and Biodiversity; Data and Artificial Intelligence; and Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing. We are investing in our future and have committed £100m to upgrading our campus, including the new fully digitised Science Teaching Hub, the regeneration of the historic King's Quarter and a new Business School building. Our commitment to our students, campus and community has led to us being named a Top 20 UK institution in two major league tables[1] and 4th in the UK for overall student satisfaction[2].

[1] The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2023 and the Guardian University Guide 2023
[2] National Student Survey (NSS) 2022

ABERDEEN 2040

On our 525th anniversary as a University we launched **Aberdeen 2040**, our strategic vision for the next 20 years. Four strategic themes will shape our learning and discovery, underlined by 20 commitments we have made against each theme:

- **Inclusive**
  We welcome students, staff and partners from all backgrounds, organisations and communities. We value diversity.
- **Interdisciplinary**
  We innovate in education and research by generating, sharing and applying new kinds of knowledge. We learn together.
- **International**
  We connect with others and extend our networks and partnerships around the world. We think across borders.
- **Sustainable**
  We understand and nurture our environment, and take care of our resources, including our people and finances.

  We work responsibly.

OUR EDUCATION

Recognised as the Scottish University of the Year in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019, we remain true to our roots as an ancient Scottish university, combining breadth and depth in our degree programmes and drawing strength from the quality of our research. Our flexible curriculum encourages students to grow as independent learners and therefore to thrive as graduates in the diverse workplaces of the future. Our education is open to all and we are setting ambitious targets to further widen access.

OUR RESEARCH

Researchers at the University of Aberdeen have been at the forefront of innovation and excellence throughout the centuries, generating insights in medicine, science, engineering, law, social sciences, arts and humanities. This research has contributed to five Nobel prizes as well as other awards such as the Queen's Anniversary prize. Our research is intellectually rigorous working within our established areas of excellence as well as new methods of enquiry. We will continue to generate new knowledge addressing economic and societal issues with ambition and imagination, ensuring that it is globally excellent and locally relevant.

INTERNATIONAL

Aberdeen is increasing its international presence, positioning the University as a global organisation and building on established global partnerships around the world, including Qatar, China, North America, Europe. We feature in the top 50 institutions worldwide for international students[3].

[3] Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021



IMPACT

In 2020 the University signed the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals accord, solidifying our commitment to developing the world in a sustainable way. In 2022 we were listed in the global Top 100 for 8 of these goals[4].

Our highly cited work in zero-carbon technology and global outlooks makes us Scotland's best institution for environmental research[5].

[4] Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2022
5 QS World University Rankings 2022

THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL SCIENCES AND NUTRITION

The School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition is the largest School within the University of Aberdeen and brings together the breadth of disciplines that underpin modern medicine, health and life sciences. Our activities span biomedical sciences, health sciences, nutrition, medicine, dentistry, and medical and dental education, delivered through a vibrant and collaborative academic community.

The School is organised into five interdisciplinary Institutes that work closely together to deliver research-led teaching, innovation and impact across undergraduate, postgraduate and professional programmes:

- The Institute of Applied Health Sciences https://www.abdn.ac.uk/iahs/
- The Institute of Medical Sciences http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ims/
- The Rowett Institute http://www.abdn.ac.uk/rowett/
- The Institute of Education in Healthcare and Medical Sciences https://www.abdn.ac.uk/IEHMS/
- The Institute of Dentistry https://www.abdn.ac.uk/dental/ https://www.abdn.ac.uk/dental/

Research and Academic Excellence

Our School mission statement is 'Here for Health'. We host world-leading research that addresses major challenges in human health and disease. Within the **Institute of Medical Sciences**, research focuses on the development of effective therapies for patients with a range of debilitating and life-threatening conditions. Key strengths include **cardiology, metabolic and cardiovascular health**, **inflammation and immunity**; arthritis and musculoskeletal medicine; cell, developmental and cancer biology; microbiology; and translational neuroscience. Both **cardiovascular and immunology labs** are hosted in the **Institute of Medical Sciences.** The group also operate from within a **Cardiology Clinical Research Facility** in the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary premises, co-located on campus.

The **Institute of Applied Health Sciences** is dedicated to improving population health and health-care delivery through multidisciplinary, clinically orientated research. It is home to a large multidisciplinary group of academic and research staff and hosts the Aberdeen Centre for Evaluation (ACE) and the Health Economics Research Unit (HERU). Professor Dawson works closely with the Clinical Trails Unit based at the Aberdeen Centre for Evaluation as the Chief Investigator for the world's first clinical trial in acute takotsubo cardiomyopathy, A Randomised Controlled Trial of Renin-Angiotensin System Inhibition for Reduction of Cardiovascular Events after Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy, the NIHR-funded **EVEREST** trial, which is currently unfolding and will finish simultaneously with the work on the program grant.

The **Institute of Education in Healthcare and Medical Sciences** provides academic leadership in medical and healthcare education. In addition to oversight of undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, IEHMS delivers the highly regarded University of Aberdeen MBChB programme and a range of postgraduate programmes, including the MSc in Clinical Education, supported by internationally recognised scholarship in healthcare education research.

The **Institute of Dentistry** delivers a graduate entry Undergraduate BDS programme alongside a growing portfolio of postgraduate and professional development programmes, contributing to education, research and clinical service across dentistry and oral health.

The **Rowett Institute** undertakes internationally recognised nutrition and metabolic research aimed at improving health and preventing disease across the life course. Its purpose-built facilities support unique capabilities in human nutrition research, from molecular biology to whole-body metabolism.

Research Centres and Facilities

The School is home to a number of specialist Centres that represent areas of particular research strength and capacity, and which actively support collaboration across disciplines. These include:

- **Aberdeen Cardiovascular and Diabetes Centre**
- Aberdeen Biomedical Imaging Centre (ABIC)
- Centre for Healthcare Education Research and Innovation (CHERI)
- Centre for Health Data Science
- Aberdeen Centre for Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Health
- Aberdeen Centre for Women's Health Research
- Aberdeen Cancer Centre

Excellent infrastructure is provided through state-of-the-art academic and clinical buildings, alongside extensive core facilities supporting biomedical and health research, including flow cytometry, proteomics, advanced microscopy, metabolomics, genome sequencing and high-plex spatial profiling of RNA and protein targets. Dedicated support is available for health data science, clinical trials and translational research.

Location and Partnerships

The School is based at the **Foresterhill campus**, a major integrated healthcare, teaching and research site shared with our principal clinical partner, **NHS Grampian**. This close physical and strategic partnership supports collaborative working across primary and secondary care and provides exceptional opportunities for research translation, clinical education and impact.

NHS Grampian and the University of Aberdeen share a deep, long-standing clinical–academic partnership that underpins excellence in education, research and patient care across the North East of Scotland. Clinicians are embedded in teaching, mentoring, assessment and research, ensuring learning is rooted in real-world practice and that innovation is translated directly into frontline care. This joint model attracts high-calibre staff and students, supports multidisciplinary education, and creates a strong culture of continuous learning and inquiry. Together, both organisations are united by a shared mission to improve health outcomes for local communities through learning, care and impact.

The Foresterhill site is one of the largest integrated healthcare environments in Europe and offers a uniquely rich setting in which staff and students work alongside clinicians, researchers and educators to solve the difficult challenges confronting health and wellbeing.

Our commitment to driving societal impact from our research is facilitated by the Opportunity North East (ONE) BioHub that is home to the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Foresterhill and the wider North East of Scotland life sciences community.

Our Community

The School brings together a diverse community of over 800 staff and approximately 3,000 full-time equivalent students, creating a supportive, collegial and ambitious academic environment. We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, and to providing a positive and flexible working culture that supports career development, collaboration and excellence.

ABERDEEN AND ABERDEENSHIRE

Scotland's third largest city, Aberdeen sits on the coast between the mountains of Aberdeenshire and the stunning North Sea coastline. The Aberdeen City region is a can-do place that is actively investing, at scale, in its future.

Renowned as a Global Energy Hub, Aberdeen is a vibrant, entrepreneurial region, home to a unique mix of business opportunities and specialist skills across various sectors including energy, technology, life sciences and food & drink. More than 20% of Scotland's top businesses are located in this region which is taking great strides to ensure that it continues to compete on a world stage. Investments of more than £10 billion of public and private infrastructure is due to be delivered before 2030, marking an exciting time to be part of a genuine world-class location.

Built from sparkling local granite Aberdeen has earned the name of the Silver City. As the energy capital of Europe, Aberdeen nevertheless retains its old-fashioned charm and character making it an attractive place in which to live, work and study. Due to its global business and international energy industry credentials, Aberdeen is well served by local and national transport infrastructure with excellent rail networks that run both North and South of Scotland and the rest of the UK. It also acts as an international travel hub. Flying time to London is just over one hour with regular daily flights and serves international travel to European centres such as Amsterdam (Schiphol) and Paris (Charles de-Gaulle) as well as flights to other European destinations.

The City and the surrounding countryside provide a variety of urban, seaside and country attractions. Aberdeen has first class amenities including His Majesty's Theatre, Music Hall, Art Gallery, the P&J Arena, Museums, and Beach Leisure Centre. The City is framed by its accessible beach front which is within a short walk of the city centre and there are an array of activities available across the region such as hill walking; mountaineering; sailing; surfing; salmon, trout and sea fishing; golf; sailing; surfing and windsurfing. The surrounding countryside, known as Aberdeenshire, is also one of Scotland's most appealing regions. Royal Deeside and the Cairngorms National Park are within easy access of the city, and there are a variety of towns and villages scattered along the coastline.

The city and the surrounding area have ranked consistently highly in nationally recognised quality of life surveys, coming out top 10 as one of the best places to live in Scotland in 2020 in the annual Bank of Scotland survey.

To find out more visit www.visitabdn.com

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The University values and celebrates a diverse working and learning environment and recognises the richness this brings, both in terms of contributing to the success of the University and creating safe and inclusive cultures. The University welcomes applications from individuals with diverse lived experiences.

The University supports flexible working, including hybrid working arrangements, and has policies in place to facilitate this where it is appropriate. The policies can be found at https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/flexible-working--5607.php.

The University is committed to progressing gender equality across all its functions and has been a proud member of the Advance HE Athena Swan Charter, achieving an institutional Bronze award, one Silver departmental award for the School of Psychology and eleven departmental Bronze awards. LGBTQ+ equality is championed through the University's membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme, where the University has achieved a Silver award in the Workplace Equality Index. The University is on a continual journey to respond to, and combat, GBV in our community and beyond. We are proud to be working towards the EmilyTest Charter, in partnership with the charity, EmilyTest. We all have a role to play in knowing how to signpost colleagues and students to support for gender-based violence, and training and support is available to all staff on this topic.

The University is signed up to Advance HE's Race Equality Charter, affirming the University's commitment to the Charter's aim of improving the representation, progression and success of staff and students who identify as belonging to a racialised group. The University launched its Antiracism Strategy in 2022, representing a bold framework for progress on race equality. Recognising the importance of addressing the under-representation of racialised groups in the senior team, the University's new Recruitment and Selection Policy embeds specific positive action measures to address this.

The University is delighted to be accredited as a Disability Confident employer and strives to ensure that disabled staff and students have the opportunity to work and study in an inclusive, accessible and supportive environment. The University's Wellbeing Strategy commits it to progressing work to tackle stigma related to mental health and action to promote and improve health and wellbeing for staff and students. Candidates who are British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us directly by using contact SCOTLAND-BSL

The University's work on equality, diversity and inclusion is supported by a range of networks and engagement activities, designed to provide safe spaces and raise awareness of the support available and the steps everyone can take to create inclusive campuses.

www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/equality-and-diversity-277

How to Apply

Online application forms are available at www.abdn.ac.uk/jobs

The closing date for receipt of applications is **18 January 2027**

Should you wish to make an informal enquiry please contact:

Should you wish to make an informal enquiry please contact: Prof John Forrester (j.forrester@abdn.ac.uk); Dr Tara Sutherland (tara.sutherland@abdn.ac.uk) or Prof Heather M Wilson (h.m.wilson@abdn.ac.uk)

Applicants should submit a cover letter that includes a brief summary (2-3 sentences) of their proposed fellowship research.

Please do not send application forms or CVs to the above contacts.

Please quote reference number IMS338R on all correspondence