

# RESEARCH ASSISTANT



<b>Job Title:</b>	<b>Research Assistant</b>
<b>Department:</b>	Clinical Research
<b>Faculty:</b>	Infectious and Tropical Diseases
<b>Location:</b>	LSHTM Keppel Street, London
<b>FTE:</b>	1.0
<b>Grade:</b>	G5
<b>Accountable to:</b>	Research Fellow & Biobank Coordinator (currently Caroline Kingdon)
<b>Job Summary:</b>	The successful applicant will be a critically important member of the research team and will contribute to the preparation of study instruments, data collection, communication with participants, epidemiological and clinical data analysis, preparation of grant applications and peer-reviewed academic publications and reports.

## General Information

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) is renowned for its research, postgraduate studies and continuing education in public and global health.

Our mission is to improve health and health equity in the UK and worldwide; working in partnership to achieve excellence in public and global health research, education and translation of knowledge into policy and practice.

We embrace and value the diversity of our staff and student population and seek to promote equity, diversity and inclusion as essential elements in contribution to improving health worldwide. We believe that when people feel respected and included, they can be more creative, successful, and happier at work. While we have more work to do, we are committed to building an inclusive workplace, a community that everyone feels a part of, which is safe, respectful, supportive and enables all to reach their full potential.

## History

Founded in 1899 at the London Docks, LSHTM is now based in Bloomsbury, where it has two main sites at Keppel Street and Tavistock Place, and additional sites in The Gambia and Uganda. Today, our staff, students and alumni work in government, academia, international agencies and health services across the world.

## Research

Research income has grown to more than £180 million per year from national and international funding sources including UK government and research councils, the European Union, the Wellcome Trust, Gates Foundation and other philanthropic sources.

Our diverse research talents, skills and experience underpin our position as a leader in public and global health. These range from the molecular to the global, the theoretical to the applied, the analytical to the political. Our staff are conducting research in more than 100 countries.

## Staff community

We have 3,500 staff based all around the world with core hubs in London and at the MRC Units in The Gambia and Uganda, which joined LSHTM in February 2018. Our outstanding, diverse and committed staff make an impact where it is most needed -

deploying research in real time in response to crises, developing innovative programmes for major health threats, or training the next generations of public and global health leaders and researchers.

## **Partnerships**

Working in partnership is central to achieving our mission. Our strategic collaborations in the UK and across high-, middle- and low-income countries deliver health and socioeconomic benefits across the world, especially in the most disadvantaged communities.

LSHTM is also a member of the M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies, the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region, and the Consortium of Universities for Global Health.

## **Education**

We deliver research-led educational programmes to future health leaders, managers and researchers across the world. We have more than 1,200 face-to-face Master's and Doctoral students, 3,800 studying by distance learning, and 500 each year on short courses and continuous professional development. Our free online courses are studied by more than 300,000 participants globally.

## **Excellence in research and education**

We perform strongly in various global university league tables. In the ShanghaiRanking's Global Ranking of Academic Subjects 2022 we placed 3rd in public health (1st in the UK). In the 2022 CWTS Leiden Ranking LSHTM is ranked 1st in the world for publishing open access research and 1st in the UK for the proportion of academic research with women listed as authors. Our global partnerships are also recognised, with LSHTM placed first position in the UK and 10th in the world for the proportion of our research which includes international collaboration.

In the US News Best Global Universities Ranking 2022, we ranked 2nd in the world for public, environmental & occupational health, 4th in the world for infectious diseases, 14th in the world for social sciences & public health, and 13th best University in the UK overall. We ranked 23rd for medicine in the 2021QS World University Rankings.

In 2017, the inaugural Center for World University Rankings by Subject placed LSHTM first in the world for tropical medicine research, second for parasitology and seventh for infectious diseases, public, environment and occupational health, and social sciences and biomedical.

LSHTM was named University of the Year 2016 by Times Higher Education and awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in 2017 in recognition of our response to the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa. LSHTM does not appear in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings as universities are excluded if they do not teach undergraduates.

We seek to foster and sustain a creative and supportive working environment based upon an ethos of respect and rigorous scientific enquiry. We embrace and value the diversity of our staff and student population and seek to promote equality as an essential element in contribution to improving health worldwide.

LSHTM is one of around 20 specialist institutions that receive institution specific funding from the Office for Students (OfS). This funding recognises the additional costs that

LSHTM incurs because of its unique range of teaching, specialist facilities, and the scale of its contributions to national and international agencies.

## Faculty Information

### Faculty of Infectious and Tropical Diseases

The Faculty of Infectious and Tropical Diseases encompasses all of the laboratory-based research in the School as well as that on the clinical and epidemiological aspects of infectious and tropical diseases. It is headed by Alison Grant, who is **Professor of International Health**. The range of disciplines represented in the faculty is very broad and inter-disciplinary research is a feature of much of our activity. The spectrum of diseases studied is wide and there are major research groups with a focus on malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, vaccine development and evaluation, and vector biology and disease control. The Faculty is organised into three large research departments comprising: Clinical Research, Disease Control, and Infection Biology. There is close interaction between scientists in different research teams. The Faculty has strong overseas links, which provide a basis for field studies and international collaborations in developed and developing countries. The teaching programme includes MSc courses, taught in-house and by distance learning, which are modular in structure, a variety of short-courses and an active doctoral programme (PhD and DrPH). For further information on the Faculty see: <http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/itd/index.html>.

#### ***Department of Clinical Research (Head: Professor Shunmay Yeung)***

The Department of Clinical Research addresses infectious diseases of major public health importance in developing countries. Activities include trials of new therapies, vaccines and educational interventions; the development of new diagnostic tests; studies to elucidate the immunological and molecular correlates of pathogenesis and protective immunity, and to identify genetic polymorphisms conferring protection or susceptibility to infectious diseases; health services research which aims to identify the most efficient and cost-effective way to deliver health care; and health policy analysis. In addition to our many overseas collaborations, we have close links with the Hospital for Tropical Diseases, in purpose-built accommodation on the main UCL Hospital campus, five minutes walk from the School. The Wellcome Trust Bloomsbury Centre for Global Health Research is based in the Department, and supports Clinical Fellows at all levels, most of whom are based overseas.

The Department's main research interests include HIV and related infections; in particular, the interaction between HIV infection and tuberculosis, and other sexually transmitted diseases; malaria; trachoma; leprosy; diagnostic tests for resource limited settings; eye health; disability; and travel medicine.

#### **Teaching**

The School offers 19 one year full-time taught programmes leading to the Master of Science (MSc) degree of the University of London and the Diploma of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (DLSHTM). The Faculty of Infectious and Tropical Diseases runs or contributes substantially to nine of these MSc programmes. In addition, the Faculty is responsible for the three-month Professional Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, the Professional Diploma in Tropical Nursing and offers a range of specialist short courses lasting usually one or two weeks. The School offers a further six MSc programmes by Distance Learning, with the Faculty responsible for the MSc Infectious Diseases.

#### **Research Training**

The School offers two doctoral training programmes. The MPhil/PhD degrees are designed for those who wish to go on to a full time research career. The DrPH is directed towards those who expect their careers to be more in the practice of public health.

## TEAM & PROJECT INFORMATION

## **CureME Team**

The CureME research team is one of the UK's leading centres of excellence in ME/CFS research. Led by PIs Dr Luis Nacul and Dr Eliana Lacerda, it has become a major international force for research into ME/CFS. It operates within the Department of Clinical Research at the London Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and works with collaborators through Europe and across the globe.

One of CureME's flagship projects has been the UK ME/CFS Biobank, the first ME/CFS disease-specific biobank in Europe and one of the first in the world. Now containing over 30,000 aliquots of blood from over 600 participants, the biobank not only enables research at the LSHTM, but also acts as a distribution centre to enable cost-effective biomedical studies into ME/CFS in locations across the globe.

The CureME team has been the recipient of three major US NIH grants, as well as holding other sources of charity and private funding. It is a friendly and collaborative group, which works closely in collaboration with laboratory research groups currently based at the Department of Immunology and Infection at the LSHTM (led by Prof Hazel Dockrell) and Dr Jacqueline Cliff (based at Brunel University), and with senior support in statistics and genomics (Prof Taane Clark) as well as a number of consulting researchers at the London School and beyond.

Full details of the work of CureME can be found at <http://cureme.lshtm.ac.uk/>.

## **Project precis**

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome affects an estimated 24 million people worldwide, of whom around a quarter are severely affected and are house- or bed-bound; it strikes people in their prime of life, causing enormous personal and societal economic costs. Few people recover completely from ME/CFS, although symptoms can fluctuate. There is no diagnostic test for ME/CFS, and the lack of understanding of disease mechanisms is preventing the development of rational treatments.

ME/CFS is characterised by persistent or recurrent incapacitating fatigue and the worsening of symptoms following even minor physical or mental exertion, alongside symptoms affecting the immune, endocrine, and neural systems. There is an overlap in clinical presentation with some people experiencing Long COVID, including post-viral fatigue and brain fog, potentially caused by similar disease mechanisms.

Some of the human herpesvirus (HHV) family have been implicated with the onset of ME/CFS and/or the aggravation of symptoms, but different studies have given contradictory results. This project will investigate the role of herpesvirus reactivation in a large cohort of people with ME/CFS and two control groups. We aim to look at the association between DNA concentrations of HHV-6B and severity of ME/CFS symptoms; confirm whether there is systemic virus reactivation, by looking at the concentration of HHV-6B in saliva at two time points, and to describe the impact of HHV-6B on the immune response of the study participants. We will include people with symptoms of Long COVID as well as others who have made a full recovery in the comparison groups.

The portfolio of duties outlined below will vary in accordance with the detailed expectations of the role (attached), which may be varied from time to time, and agreed at your annual Performance and Development Review (PDR).

## **Job Description**

### **Main Activities and Responsibilities**

#### **Knowledge Generation**

1. To undertake high quality research as directed by your line manager, including contributing to drafting grant proposals and peer-reviewed and other outputs, and evaluating teaching practice;
2. To support the administration of projects linked to your employment, helping ensure compliance with good practice in relation to the conduct of research, the ethics policy, and other relevant School policies;
3. To prepare and present research results for publication in scientific journals and to draft/contribute to scientific papers and research applications, in conjunction with the research team;
4. To contribute to study instrument optimisation to maximise the efficiency of data collection and analysis;
5. To be the principal individual responsible for data entry, management and validation in the group's database;
6. To liaise with the IT technical consultants to ensure that the participant portal is capturing the participant data effectively;
7. To participate in the further development of the project database, attending meetings with IT/technical consultants and providing suggestions on how best to develop the tool as a resource for researchers and patients.

To contribute to data analyses and/or critical reviews as required.

#### **Education**

1. To participate in some aspects of the School's Education Programme or educational outreach activities;
2. To train other database users and develop best practice in data entry, management and export.

#### **Internal Contribution**

1. To undertake activities that support the Department, Faculty, MRC Unit or the School;
2. To reflect LSHTM's EDI goals in your work and behaviour;
3. To participate in the School's PDR process;
4. To support the administration of the group, completing finance, communications or office tasks under direction when required;
5. To assist with project team communications where required, creating content for the project website and social media;
6. To advise new starters working in similar roles or within the Department on standard information or procedures;
7. To continuously build and maintain good relationships with LSHTM staff from other departments;

8. To contribute actively to the team and demonstrate a 'can-do attitude' to achieve project objectives;
9. To prepare and mail the packs for collection of saliva samples from participants for the HHV6 study;
10. To receive and log the returned HHV6 study saliva samples;
11. To demonstrate maturity and sound judgement in dealing with problems, referring them on to line managers where appropriate;
12. To prioritise and manage own workload to ensure that tasks are completed in a timely and efficient manner.

## External Contribution

1. To demonstrate good external citizenship by supporting the external academic and practice communities;
2. To represent the project team and the School to the ME/CFS research and patient community;
3. To communicate with study participants when required, reviewing symptoms assessments and arranging participant enrolment, in collaboration with nursing staff;
4. To support clinical visits when required, preparing study tools and packs;
5. To communicate sensitively and maturely with vulnerable study participants where required.

## Professional Development and Training

1. To keep up-to-date with the latest research / thinking in your academic field and with changes to pedagogic practice within the School and more generally;
2. For lab-based disciplines: where the length and nature of the position permits, to apply for and, if accepted, undertake a doctoral degree (if not already acquired);
3. To undertake and successfully complete the mandatory training required by the School as appropriate to the role;

## General

All academic staff are free within the law to question and test received wisdom, and put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, to enable the School to engage in research and promote learning to the highest possible standards.

All staff at LSHTM are also expected to:

1. Act at all times in the School's best interests;
2. Treat School staff, students and visitors with courtesy and respect at all times;
3. Comply fully with School policies, procedures and administrative processes relevant to the role;
4. Uphold and support the School's values (as set out in the School Strategy);
5. Act as ambassadors for the School when hosting visitors or attending external events;

*The above list of duties is not exclusive or exhaustive and the role holder will be required to undertake such tasks as may reasonably be expected within the scope and grading of the role.*

*Role descriptions should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are an accurate representation of the role.*

## Person Specification

This form lists the essential and desirable requirements needed by the post holder to be able to perform the job effectively.

Applicants will be shortlisted solely on the extent to which they meet these requirements.

### Essential criteria:

1. MSc or equivalent higher degree in Med stats/Epidemiology, or demonstrable equivalent research experience;
2. Evidence of good organisational skills, including effective time management.
3. Proven ability to work independently, as well as collaboratively, as part of a research team.
4. Evidence of excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.
5. Evidence of ability to write and contribute to published work;
6. Ability to apply working knowledge gained through academic studies and work experience;
7. Experience with literature review and critical appraisal, and with epidemiological data management or analysis;
8. Ability to work with colleagues from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures;
9. Strictest standards for maintaining participant confidentiality;
10. Ability to think and work independently with excellent organisational skills;
11. Some experience in the administration of research, e.g. in research finance, ethics, communications or project management;
12. Excellent IT skills, including use of word processing packages, spreadsheets and electronic record keeping;
13. Experience with databases and statistical packages.

### Desirable Criteria

1. Some experience of teaching
2. Demonstrable understanding of key issues in the field of ME/CFS research;
3. Understanding of basic principles in biobanking and human tissue storage.



## Salary and Conditions of Appointment

The post is full-time 35 hours per week, 1.0 FTE and currently funded by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) until 31 August 2023 but we anticipate it being extended once year 2 funding confirmed. The post is available with an immediate start date. The salary will be on the Academic scale, Grade 5 scale in the range £37,531 - £42,875 per annum (inclusive of London Weighting). The post will be subject to the LSHTM terms and conditions of service. Annual leave entitlement is 30 working days per year, pro rata for part time staff. In addition to this there are discretionary "Wellbeing Days". Membership of the Pension Scheme is available.

Applications should be made on-line via our website at <http://jobs.lshtm.ac.uk>. Applications should also include the names and email contacts of 2 referees who can be contacted immediately if appointed. Online applications will be accepted by the automated system until 10pm of the closing date. Any queries regarding the application process may be addressed to [jobs@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:jobs@lshtm.ac.uk). Please quote reference ITD-CRD-2023-04

The supporting statement section should set out how your qualifications, experience and training meet each of the selection criteria. Please provide one or more paragraphs addressing each criterion. The supporting statement is an essential part of the selection process and thus a failure to provide this information will mean that the application will not be considered. An answer to any of the criteria such as "Please see attached CV" will not be considered acceptable.

Please note that if you are shortlisted and are unable to attend on the interview date it may not be possible to offer you an alternative date.

## Asylum and Immigration Statement

*The School will comply with current UKVI legislation, which requires all employees to provide documentary evidence of their legal right to work in this country prior to commencing employment. Candidates will be required to email a copy of their passport (and visa if applicable) to HR prior to their interview and if appointed will be asked to bring the original documents in to be copied and verified before their start date.*

*Applications from candidates who require sponsorship to work in the UK will be considered alongside other applications. Applicants who do not currently have the right to work in the UK will have to satisfy UK Visas & Immigration regulations before they can be appointed.*

*Further information about Sponsorship and eligibility to work in the UK, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-skilled-worker>*

Date amended: Sept 2022

## Academic Expectations: Research Assistant

Examples of expected types of activities are listed; the selection of activities will vary from year to year and not all activities in each category would necessarily be done in any one year. The statement in each shaded heading summarises the general expectations for contributions in each category. Research Assistants employed on research projects will be expected to focus on Knowledge Generation, in accordance with their job description, but some activity in other areas is required and will support career progression. Research Assistants predominantly employed to support Education will be expected to have more limited contribution to Knowledge Generation, again as reflected in their job description.

***Knowledge generation: High quality support for, and contribution to, knowledge generation***

*Research and scholarship*

- Undertaking research, as directed by line manager
- Contributions to funding applications including supporting more senior staff in completing applications
- Contributing to peer-reviewed and other research outputs as expected by the subject area/discipline in terms of types of output
- Poster/oral presentations at conferences
- Social media contributions such as twitter, blogs, web-based media or webinars

*Reflective practice and critical enquiry (RPaCE)*

- Participating in RPaCE
- Disseminating learning and experiences through presentations to colleagues

*Doctoral degree supervision*

- None expected though involvement in advisory activities/roles or provision of practical skills training is encouraged where relevant

*Research management, leadership and support*

- Effective management of own time and activities
- Supporting the administration of projects he/she is employed on, eg taking meeting minutes

*Professional development*

- Appropriate courses and other development activities, referenced to RDF
- Especially for lab-based disciplines: where the length, nature and funding source of the position permit, to apply for and, if accepted, undertake a doctoral degree (if not already acquired).

<b><i>Education: Participation in educational activities<sup>1</sup></i></b>
<p><i>Teaching and assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in some aspects of the School's Education Programme or education outreach activities e.g. contributions to taught courses, research methods training, mentoring school pupils on outreach programmes</li> </ul> <p><i>Educational development and innovation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributions to educational innovations or developments, e.g. helping to update the content or delivery of a course or module</li> </ul> <p><i>Educational leadership and management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None expected</li> </ul> <p><i>Professional development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal study/training and/or other activities that develop educational knowledge and expertise, referenced to UKPSF; working towards Associate Fellow HEA</li> </ul>
<b><i>Internal contribution: Support to the academic environment in the Department or beyond</i></b>
<p><i>Internal citizenship including contributing to supportive academic environment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting Department/Faculty/Centre/School events or special interest groups; organising seminars/lab meetings/journal clubs; group or departmental social organising; support to EDI activities including Athena Swan; support to external partnerships</li> </ul> <p><i>General leadership and management roles</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None expected</li> </ul>
<b><i>External contribution: Support to the external academic community</i></b>
<p><i>External citizenship</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement in journal or book reviews, if opportunities arise</li> <li>• Sharing examples of good practice (e.g. contributing to discipline-specific interest group or professional bodies)</li> </ul> <p><i>Knowledge translation and enterprise: not expected but options include</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collection of evidence of research impact for impact case studies (e.g. policy records, correspondence with policy makers, media highlights)</li> <li>• Engagement with policy/practice/industry/NGO communities and with the general public</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> it is accepted that some RA roles and/or funding make it difficult to give time to Educational activities, but some degree of engagement is encouraged