

# Research Assistant



**OPPORTUNITY**

Where change  
gets real.



**Reference: 0045-25**

**Grade: 7**

**Salary: £30,505 to £35,880, per annum, depending on experience**

**Contract Type: Fixed Term (20 Months)**

**Basis: Part Time (0.5 FTE 25 hours per week)**

## Job description

### Job Purpose:

“Advancing the use of biochar in the building industry: a multi-stakeholder study” <https://www.ukri.org/news/first-projects-from-ukris-new-interdisciplinary-scheme-announced/> is an £0.8M project awarded to a research team attached to Heriot-Watt University, Aston University and the University of Birmingham and funded through the UKRI Cross Research Council Responsive Mode (CRCRM) Scheme. The project envisions to increase the level of awareness of biochar and its commercial, healthy revenue generation potential, carbon credits and environmental benefits for the building industry via a multi-stakeholder approach. The aims of the project include identifying appropriate types of biochar to be used as a building material, analyse the energy performance and carbon reduction potential of biochar cementitious composites for different building types; applying an integrative multi-stakeholder approach to co-create qualitative and quantitative indicators to express, holistically, the value of biochar in buildings; undertaking a life cycle analysis of biochar composites to realise carbon credits and environmental benefits; and delivering a decision support framework for adopting biochar within the building industry with indicators proposed would be transferrable to other new materials.

The project is highly interdisciplinary bringing together civil engineering, building modelling and social science in the research design process and solution development. The participation and collaboration of stakeholders is key to generate qualitative and quantitative indicators to express, holistically, the value of biochar in modern low-carbon construction. Professor Dulini Fernando from Aston University is one of the co-investigators of the project.

The advertised position is for a researcher to work with Professor Dulini Fernando (and the rest of the team members) on:

- ▶ Developing and expediting a methodology for stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle.
- ▶ Developing qualitative and quantitative indicators to express the value of biochar in buildings via a stakeholder methodology
- ▶ Collecting, analysing and presenting data related to stakeholders at all phases of the project
- ▶ Delivering a decision support framework for adopting biochar within the building industry
- ▶ Working in close collaboration with all of the team members

The ideal candidate will have experience in working on multidisciplinary projects with a background in STEM or social sciences and proficiency in qualitative and quantitative research methods. Knowledge of stakeholder methodology would be an added advantage. The postholder will be based at Aston with the option of working on a hybrid basis but is expected to travel to other partner universities and lead all the stakeholder consultation activity of the project.

## **Main Duties/Responsibilities**

- ▶ Conduct a comprehensive literature review on stakeholder consultation and engagement and develop a and expedite methodology for the project
- ▶ Take a lead in data collection, storage, analysis and dissemination.
- ▶ Utilise qualitative approaches to carefully design a series of events and stakeholder workshops
- ▶ Develop qualitative and quantitative indicators to express the value of biochar in buildings via a stakeholder methodology
- ▶ Take a lead role in designing a decision support framework for adopting biochar within the building industry
- ▶ Work in very close collaboration with the researchers undertaking biochar characterisation and building modelling of biochar composites and other key research related to the project to proactively obtain information and provide support. Assist academic duties of line manager as appropriate
- ▶ Travel to partner universities (research collaborators) to carry out interdisciplinary research and/or attend meetings presentations etc.
- ▶ Identify appropriate sources of funding and help prepare research proposals for funding bodies

Please note that this job description is not exhaustive, and the role holder may be required to undertake other relevant duties commensurate with the grading of the post. Activities may be subject to amendment over time as the role develops and/or priorities and requirements evolve.

## **Additional responsibilities**

- ▶ Engage in continuous personal and professional development in line with the demands of the role, including undertaking relevant training and development activities.
- ▶ Ensure and promote the personal health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students.
- ▶ Carry out duties in a way which promotes fairness in all matters and which engenders trust.
- ▶ Promote equality of opportunity and support diversity and inclusion as well as working to support the University's environmental sustainability agenda and practices.

## Person specification

	Essential	Method of assessment
<b>Education and qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A PhD in STEM related subject or social sciences</li> <li>▶ Proficiency in quantitative and qualitative methods</li> </ul>	Application form and interview
<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Experience in using qualitative and quantitative research methods</li> <li>▶ Experience in developing qualitative and quantitative indicators to express the value of phenomena</li> </ul>	Application form and interview
<b>Aptitude and skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ability to work in teams</li> <li>▶ Ability to work independently and in collaboration with others to move forward in the face of complex and uncertain situations</li> <li>▶ Ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders</li> </ul>	Application form and interview

	Desirable	Method of assessment
<b>Education and qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Proficiency in stakeholder methodology.</li> </ul>	Application form
<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Experience in designing and running stakeholder consultation workshops</li> <li>▶ Work experience in interdisciplinary research projects.</li> </ul>	Application form and interview

	Desirable	Method of assessment
<b>Aptitude and Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ A genuine interest in learning beyond one's discipline.</li></ul>	Interview

## University values

All staff are expected to demonstrate/promote the University's values and expectations, which are an integral part of our strategy and underpin the culture of the University. In addition, our leaders are expected to be accountable, help to execute strategic visions of the University and share and set clear expectations that inspire those around them.

Values + Behaviours

				
<b>Innovation</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Ambition</b>	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Integrity</b>
We strive for excellence within ourselves and others, providing solutions to new and existing challenges.	We work best when we are collaborative, working together to contribute to the Aston community.	We strive together for improvement and innovation looking ahead to see the bigger picture.	We treat everyone in our community equally and how they would like to be treated.	We are open, honest and fair. We take ownership of the way we work and how we treat each other.

## How to apply

You can apply for this role online via our website <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/jobs>.

Applications should be submitted by 23.59 on the advertised closing date.

All applicants must complete an application form, along with your CV.

Any CV sent direct to the Recruitment Team and Recruiting Manager will not be accepted.

If you require a manual application form, then please contact the Recruitment Team via [recruitment@aston.ac.uk](mailto:recruitment@aston.ac.uk).

## Contact information

### Enquiries about the vacancy:

Name: Professor Dulini Fernando

Job Title: Chair of Work and Organisation

Email: [d.fernando2@aston.ac.uk](mailto:d.fernando2@aston.ac.uk)

### Enquiries about the application process, shortlisting or interviews:

Recruitment Team via [recruitment@aston.ac.uk](mailto:recruitment@aston.ac.uk) or 0121 204 4500.

## Additional information

Visit our website <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr> for full details of our salary scales and benefits Aston University staff enjoy.

**Salary scales:** <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/payroll-and-pensions/salary-scales/index>

**Benefits:** [Benefits and Rewards | Aston University](#)

**Working in Birmingham:** <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/birmingham>

**Employment of Ex-Offenders:** Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, a person with a criminal record is not required to disclose any spent convictions unless the positions they applying for is listed an exception under the act.

**Eligibility to work in the UK:** You should ensure that you meet the eligibility requirements, including meeting the [English language standards](#). If you do not meet the eligibility criteria, any application for a work visa would be unsuccessful. Please see UKVI guidance for further information on eligibility, knowledge of English requirements and approved test centres <https://www.gov.uk/tier-2-general>

With the end of free movement for EU/EEA/Swiss nationals from 1 January 2021, the UK's new immigration system applies to all non-UK/Irish nationals who require a visa.

Where an individual is subject to UK immigration control, they will require a visa to work in the UK.

The following individuals do not need a visa for the UK, but do still have to prove their right to work before employment can commence:

- **British Citizens or Irish Nationals**
- **EU/EEA/Swiss nationals with Settled or Pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme**
- **Non-EEA nationals with Indefinite Leave to Remain/Settlement in the UK**

The main routes available for those who need a visa to work in the UK are **Skilled Worker**, **Global Talent** and the **Graduate Route**.

You can find further information about each of these visa routes on our candidate immigration page.

If you will conduct research in your role, you may need to apply for and obtain ATAS clearance before Aston can issue a Certificate of Sponsorship for your visa application. Please see below for further details.

### **Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS):**

If you will conduct research in your role and you apply for a Skilled Worker or Temporary



Worker GAE visa, you may need to apply for and obtain ATAS clearance before Aston can issue a Certificate of Sponsorship for your visa application.

This process can take at least 6 weeks to process, and Aston will consider this when confirming your expected start date. Processing times will increase between April and September and can longer to complete.

There is no fast-track option available. ATAS certificates will be processed in order of receipt.

You can find more information about ATAS on our candidate immigration page.

## **Before you start and Right to Work**

### 90-day entry vignette

If you have applied for your visa outside of the UK, you will receive a vignette in your passport which is usually valid for 90 days. Please make sure to travel to the UK within the 'valid from' and 'valid to' dates on this visa. If you entered the UK before or after these dates, you would not 'activate' the visa and you would need to leave and re-enter the country.

You will also receive a decision letter confirming details about your immigration permission and where to collect your Biometric Residence Permit.

### Cost of Living - Estate and Letting Agents

There are numerous Estate and Letting Agents in and around Birmingham that can help you find suitable accommodation. The Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme provides a list of professional agencies and landlords who have applied with them for accreditation. Whilst accreditation is not a guarantee of quality, it provides some reassurance about the standard of the service they provide.

You can also use property search websites such as Rightmove or Zoopla.

## **Equal Opportunities**

Aston University promotes equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. We aim to ensure, through our admissions policies for students, and our staff recruitment and selection processes that we encourage applications from all groups represented in the wider community at a local, national and international level.

The University will endeavour not to discriminate unfairly or illegally, directly or indirectly, against student or potential students, staff or potential staff. This commitment applies to all functions of the University and to any stage of an individual's career.

An Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form is included within the application form. Data you provide on the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form will be included in a general database, for statistical monitoring purposes, enabling the University to monitor the effectiveness of its Policy, Codes of Practice and Guidelines on Equal Opportunities in Employment. Individuals will not be identified by name.



## **Data Protection**

Your personal data will be processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679) ("GDPR"). The University's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices, including the Job Applicant Privacy Notice can be found at <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/data-protection>. Your application will only be used to inform the selection process, unless you are successful, in which case it will form the basis of your personal record with the University which will be stored in manual and/or electronic files. Information in statistical form on present and former employees is given to appropriate outside bodies.

Full details of our terms and conditions of service and associated policies and procedures are available online at <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies>

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