

Research Associate



OPPORTUNITY

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Reference: 0061-25

Grade: Grade 8

Salary: £38,249 - £40,497 per annum, depending on experience

Contract Type: Fixed term (24 months)

Basis: Full Time

Job description

Job Purpose:

Applications are invited for a full-time Postdoctoral Research Associate to work on a project investigating the neurocognitive mechanisms underpinning adolescent alcohol consumption, funded by the Academy of Medical Sciences (AMS). This post is based at the School of Psychology and [Aston Institute for Health & Neurodevelopment](#) (AIHN) at Aston University, Birmingham.

This is a unique opportunity to join a world-leading team in addiction and neuroimaging research led by Dr Charlotte Pennington (Aston University) and supported by collaborators Dr Daniel Shaw (Aston University) and Prof. Jackie Blissett (Aston University). The project will comprise a large-scale neuroimaging experiment to determine whether reward sensitivity and inhibitory control predict alcohol-related attentional bias and consumption in adolescence.

The successful candidate will provide essential research assistance for all aspects of the project. Support is particularly required for the programming of experimental tasks and analysis pipelines for functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) data and collecting such data from a large sample of adolescents at the AIHN. Therefore, the candidate must have a track record of excellent programming and quantitative data analysis skills. Some experience with the collection and analysis of fMRI data is desirable, but full training will be provided. The candidate must be able to travel to Aston University, Birmingham as data collection will happen on site.

The candidate must have a PhD in Psychology, Neuroscience, or a cognate discipline. They should have advanced skills in programming and data analysis and experience of writing up research for high-quality publications and conference presentations. Additional essential criteria and responsibilities can be found in the job description and person specification.

Main Duties/Responsibilities

- ▶ Plan and conduct primary research towards the goals of the research project, specifically related to functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) measures of brain function and connectivity.
- ▶ Develop computer code for running experimental tasks that are compatible with fMRI.
- ▶ Recruit adolescent participants and conduct fMRI testing at the Aston Institute of Health & Neurodevelopment, Aston University, Birmingham.
- ▶ Apply advanced statistical analysis techniques to behavioural and fMRI data.
- ▶ Manage the project from ethics application through to data management in accordance with the highest standards of research governance.
- ▶ Supervise postgraduate members supporting the project.
- ▶ Carry out administrative tasks related to the delivery of the research project goals.
- ▶ Organise and participate in research group meetings.
- ▶ Disseminate research findings through high-quality publications, national and international conferences, and public engagement events.

Additional responsibilities

- ▶ Engage in continuous personal and professional development in line with the demands of the role, including undertaking relevant training and development activities to develop themselves and support the development of others.
- ▶ 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
Education and qualifications	<p>An undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree (BSc/MSc) in Psychology, Neuroscience or appropriate related discipline.</p> <p>A PhD in Experimental Psychology, Neuroscience, or associated area.</p>	Application form and interview
Experience	<p>Significant experience in experimental programming – the candidate will be expected to programme experimental tasks that are compatible with functional magnetic reasoning imaging (fMRI).</p> <p>Knowledge and execution of advanced statistical analyses and their application in neuroimaging.</p> <p>Experience of performing experiments and collecting data from human participants.</p> <p>Experience writing up research for high-quality publications.</p> <p>Experience of presenting research at national and/or international conferences.</p> <p>Experience of supervising other personnel involved in the project.</p>	Application form and interview
Aptitude and skills	<p>Skills in experimental/computer programming (e.g., MATLAB, PsychoPy).</p> <p>Knowledge of ethical processes and procedures.</p> <p>Ability to prepare written communications to a high standard.</p> <p>Ability to initiate research and drive research progress independently.</p>	Application form and interview

	Essential	Method of assessment
	<p>Ability to analyse and interpret statistical data using advanced analysis techniques.</p> <p>Excellent data management skills.</p> <p>A willingness to undertake further training as appropriate, and to adopt new procedures as and when required.</p> <p>Good interpersonal skills, and ability to work in a multi-disciplinary setting.</p> <p>Strong organisation and time management skills.</p>	

	Desirable	Method of assessment
Experience	<p>Knowledge of addiction research and the application of neuroimaging.</p> <p>Experience in the collection and/or analysis of fMRI data.</p> <p>Experience with storing and organizing neuroimaging data in accordance with BIDS guidelines.</p> <p>Experience with open research practices, such as study preregistration, open materials, code, and/or data.</p> <p>Experience working with young people and/or adolescents (participants in this project will be 18-25 years old)</p>	Application form and interview
Aptitude and Skills	<p>Understanding of and ability to contribute to public engagement activities.</p>	Application form and 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



Innovation

We strive for excellence within ourselves and others, providing solutions to new and existing challenges.



Collaboration

We work best when we are collaborative, working together to contribute to the Aston community.



Ambition

We strive together for improvement and innovation looking ahead to see the bigger picture.



Inclusion

We treat everyone in our community equally and how they would like to be treated.



Integrity

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.

Contact information

Enquiries about the vacancy:

Name: Dr Charlotte R. Pennington
Job Title: Senior Lecturer in Psychology
Email: c.pennington@aston.ac.uk

Enquiries about the application process, shortlisting or interviews:

Recruitment Team via 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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