

Job Description



Summary

Job title	Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Philosophy
Division	Humanities
Department	Faculty of Philosophy
Location	Global Priorities Institute, Trajan House, Mill Street, Oxford, OX2 0DJ, UK
Grade and salary	Grade 7: £34,308 - £42,155 per annum
Hours	Full time (37.5 hours per week)
Contract type	Fixed-term (4 years)
Reporting to	Director of the Global Priorities Institute
Vacancy reference	160274

The role

You will be part of the Global Priorities Institute (GPI), which aims to develop and promote philosophically and scientifically rigorous approaches to the question of how appropriately motivated actors can do good more effectively. You will conduct advanced research in Philosophy. At least 50% of your time will be spent on topics directly relevant to the Global Priorities Institute's research agenda, which you will help to set. You will report to the Director of the Global Priorities Institute.

GPI is located in Trajan House in central Oxford, a building shared with the Future of Humanity Institute (another research centre within the Faculty of Philosophy) and the Centre for Effective Altruism. We particularly encourage applications from women, black and ethnic minority candidates, as these groups are underrepresented in philosophy in general and at GPI in particular.

Responsibilities

- Prepare research publications for publication in peer-reviewed journals, as book chapters and as internal reports, both alone and in collaboration with other group members.
- Adapt existing and develop new research methodologies and materials.
- Prepare working theories and analyse qualitative and/or quantitative data from a variety of sources, reviewing and refining theories as appropriate.
- Under the direction of the Director, pursue individual and collaborative research and administrative activities. This involves small scale project management, to co-ordinate multiple aspects of work to meet deadlines.
- Participate in internal seminars and discussion groups to develop and refine ideas collaboratively



- Contribute ideas for new research projects.
- Present papers at conferences or public meetings.
- Reflect on the impact of their research on the world beyond the academy, and if so requested by the GPI Director, trace this impact in detail with a view to generating formal impact case studies.
- Act as a source of information and advice to other members of the group on research expertise.
- Represent the research group at external meetings/seminars, either with other members of the group or alone.
- Carry out collaborative projects with colleagues in partner institutions, and research groups.
- Ad hoc teaching and supervision if and when the opportunity arises, insofar as this is beneficial to the postholder's career development.
- Assist in the supervision of visiting graduate students.
- Contribute as appropriate, in liaison with others in GPI and elsewhere in the Philosophy Faculty, to engagement with the Research Excellence Framework impact agenda.

Selection criteria

Essential selection criteria

- PhD awarded or close to submission either in Philosophy or in a closely related discipline together with equivalent experience and expertise in Philosophy.
- Outstanding academic ability.
- Genuine interest in global priorities research.
- An excellent record of publications in international peer-reviewed journals, relative to the applicant's career stage.
- Ability to manage own academic research and associated activities.
- Ability to contribute ideas for new research projects.
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to write for publication, present research proposals and results, and represent the research group at meetings.

Desirable selection criteria

- Experience of independently managing a discrete area of a research project.
- Experience of actively collaborating in the development of research articles for publication.
- Experience of and enthusiasm for interdisciplinary research.
- Possess sufficient specialist knowledge of and interest in Philosophy, global priorities research and/or effective altruism to work within global priorities research.

Pre-employment screening

Standard checks

If you are offered the post, the offer will be subject to standard pre-employment checks. You will be asked to provide: proof of your right-to-work in the UK; proof of your identity; and (if we haven't done so already) we will contact the referees you have nominated. You will also be asked to complete a health declaration so that you can tell us about any health conditions or disabilities for which you may need us to make appropriate adjustments.

Please read the candidate notes on the University's pre-employment screening procedures at: <https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/pre-employment-checks>

About the University of Oxford

Welcome to the University of Oxford. We aim to lead the world in research and education for the benefit of society both in the UK and globally. Oxford's researchers engage with academic, commercial and cultural partners across the world to stimulate high-quality research and enable innovation through a broad range of social, policy and economic impacts.

We believe our strengths lie both in empowering individuals and teams to address fundamental questions of global significance, while providing all our staff with a welcoming and inclusive workplace that enables everyone to develop and do their best work. Recognising that diversity is our strength, vital for innovation and creativity, we aspire to build a truly diverse community which values and respects every individual's unique contribution.

While we have long traditions of scholarship, we are also forward-looking, creative and cutting-edge. Oxford is one of Europe's most entrepreneurial universities and we rank first in the UK for university spin-outs, and in recent years we have spun out 15-20 new companies every year. We are also recognised as leaders in support for social enterprise.

Join us and you will find a unique, democratic and international community, a great range of staff benefits and access to a vibrant array of cultural activities in the beautiful city of Oxford. For more information, please visit www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation.

Faculty of Philosophy

The Oxford Philosophy Faculty has over 150 academic members, all of whom are undertaking teaching and/or research in Philosophy at Oxford. Of these, around 60 hold permanent posts within the Faculty or the colleges; many distinguished philosophers hold posts elsewhere in the University. Oxford thus contains the largest group of philosophers in the UK, and one of the largest in the world. It has a vigorous research culture which is further enhanced by its four large research centres: the Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics; the Future of Humanity Institute; the Global Priorities Institute; and the Institute for Ethics in AI. The Faculty performed outstandingly in the most recent UK Research Excellence Framework, achieving the highest volume of world-leading (4* ranked) philosophy research of any unit in the country.

Each year, many distinguished philosophers from around the world visit Oxford to give lectures and seminars. There are over fourteen hundred students studying Philosophy at undergraduate level, always in combination with at least one other subject, and around 150 graduate students, about half of whom are studying for the BPhil or the specialist MSt courses in Ancient Philosophy, Philosophy of Physics and

Practical Ethics, and the rest for the DPhil. A list of current Faculty members and their research interests can be found on the Philosophy Faculty website at:

<http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/faculty-members>.

Further information about the Faculty can be found on its website at:

<http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk>.

The Global Priorities Institute

The Global Priorities Institute is an interdisciplinary research centre conducting foundational research to inform the decision-making of individuals and institutions seeking to do as much good as possible with their limited resources. It prioritises topics which are important, neglected, and tractable, and uses the tools of multiple disciplines, especially Philosophy and Economics, to explore the issues at stake. It is part of the Faculty of Philosophy.

The research agenda for the Global Priorities Institute is collectively set by the researchers at the centre. It focuses around the question of what one should do with a given unit or resources if one's aim is to do the most good. Examples of the types of questions it includes are:

- How should we compare causes with very different types of benefits? For example, how do we decide whether to spend a fixed budget on (a) malaria reduction, (b) boosting school attendance, (c) corporate campaigns against factory farming, or (d) research on reducing risks from pandemics?
- What is the rational response to the fact that the vast majority of our actions' consequences are unknown (and in many cases unknowable) to us?
- Are deviations from standard decision theory required in cases that involve extraordinarily small probabilities of extraordinarily large payoffs?
- Do the most cost-effective altruistic interventions mainly involve influencing the course of the very far future, or instead focus on more immediate effects?

More information on the research agenda and the Institute's published work to date is available from the website (<http://globalprioritiesinstitute.org/>). Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to consult this additional information before applying, in order to assess their fit to and interest in the Institute.

As described in our research agenda, GPI currently has a particular focus on longtermism and is keen to hire researchers who share this interest and would be enthusiastic about contributing to this research program. In the near future, GPI aims to explore new research avenues related to artificial intelligence as a potential existential risk, as well as issues concerning the nature, distribution, and measurement of mental states that are constitutive of wellbeing or otherwise morally significant for priority setting. We are keen to hire researchers with expertise in these areas who would be enthusiastic about contributing to the development of research agendas that address these themes. Candidates whose research skills and/or interests lie in other areas of global priorities research are also strongly encouraged to apply.

Humanities Division

The Humanities Division is one of four academic divisions in the University of Oxford, bringing together the following faculties: Classics; English; History; Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics; Medieval and Modern Languages; Music; Oriental Studies; Philosophy; Theology and Religion; the Ruskin School of Art. The Division has over 500 members of academic staff, approximately 4,100 undergraduates (more than a third of the total undergraduate population of the University), 1,000 postgraduate research students and 720 students on postgraduate taught courses.

The Division offers world-class teaching and research, backed by the superb resources of the University's libraries and museums, including the famous Bodleian Libraries, with their 11 million volumes and priceless early book and manuscript collections, and the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. Such historic resources are linked to cutting-edge agendas in research and teaching, with an increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary study. Our faculties are among the largest in the world, enabling Oxford to offer an education in Arts and Humanities unparalleled in its range of subjects, from music and fine art to ancient and modern languages.

The Humanities Division has embarked on a major building project on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, following the recent announcement of the £150 million gift to create the [Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities](#).

The Schwarzman Centre will serve as a dynamic hub dedicated to the Humanities. The building will bring together seven Humanities faculties, the Humanities Divisional Office, a new library and significant cultural and public engagement spaces in a space designed to encourage experiential learning and bold experimentation through cross-disciplinary and collaborative study. The Faculty of Philosophy will move to the Schwarzman Centre upon the completion of the project.

For more information please visit: www.humanities.ox.ac.uk

How to apply

Applications are made through our online recruitment portal. Information about how to apply is available on our Jobs website <https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/how-to-apply>.

Your application will be judged solely on the basis of how you demonstrate that you meet the selection criteria stated in the job description.

Please note that GPI is advertising for a number of postdoctoral and senior research fellow roles in philosophy and will run the selection processes for these concurrently. If you apply for one of these roles, by default we will consider that you have applied for all of them, unless you state otherwise in your application. You therefore only need to apply for one role and we will be sure to align offers we make with the applicants' academic background and level of experience

Applications must include:

- A CV and supporting statement. The supporting statement should be around 300-700 words long and must include a description (and ideally evidence) of your knowledge of and interest in global priorities research of around 100 words. You should also explain briefly how you meet the selection criteria for the post using examples of your skills and experience. This may include experience gained in employment, education, or during career breaks (such as time out to care for dependants).

- A writing sample of your *best, most polished* work in philosophy, since we will use this sample primarily for assessing your academic ability. The writing sample should be single-authored. It is not important that the topic of the writing sample be relevant to the Institute’s research agenda, provided that sufficient evidence of your fit to the Institute is provided elsewhere in your application.
- The details of three referees and indication whether we can contact them now. We expect to contact referees for all longlisted candidates.

For the preferred candidate, we will also take up a reference from their current or most recent former line manager, excepting those cases in which the line manager has already submitted a reference, or the candidate does not have a line manager in the relevant sense. Permission will be sought from the preferred candidate before taking up such an additional line manager reference.

The Faculty of Philosophy wish to take this opportunity to thank in advance those referees who write on behalf of applicants.

Please upload all documents as PDF files with your name and the document type in the filename (for example “Surname_CV.pdf”). Our online application portal can only handle PDF files and so documents in other formats may not be accepted as part of your application.

All applications must be received by **midday** UK time on the closing date stated in the online advertisement.

Details on the selection process

Longlisted candidates will be invited to complete a questionnaire concerning the extent and nature of their interest in global priorities research and/or effective altruism.

Shortlisted candidates will then be invited:

- To submit a research proposal (of no more than 1,000 words) prior to interview;
- To participate in a short work task (involving no more than a few hours of preparation plus a 45-minute discussion); and
- To participate in an interview (again around 45 minutes).

Work tasks and interviews will be conducted remotely, via video link.

We aim to notify longlisted candidates within two weeks of the closing date for applications, and to further notify shortlisted candidates within one month of the closing date. We anticipate holding final interviews in December or January. We will update our website with timings for the selection process: <https://globalprioritiesinstitute.org/opportunities/>

Information for priority candidates

A priority candidate is a University employee who is seeking redeployment because they have been advised that they are at risk of redundancy, or on grounds of ill-health/disability. Priority candidates are issued with a redeployment letter by their employing department(s).

If you are a priority candidate, please ensure that you attach your redeployment letter to your application (or email it to the contact address on the advert if the application form used for the vacancy does not allow attachments).

If you need help

Application FAQs, including technical troubleshooting advice is available at: <https://staff.web.ox.ac.uk/recruitment-support-faqs>

Non-technical questions about this job should be addressed to the recruiting department directly: gpi-office@philosophy.ox.ac.uk.

To return to the online application at any stage, please go to: www.recruit.ox.ac.uk.

Please note that you will receive an automated email from our online recruitment portal to confirm receipt of your application. **Please check your spam/junk mail** if you do not receive this email.

Important information for candidates

Data Privacy

Please note that any personal data submitted to the University as part of the job application process will be processed in accordance with the GDPR and related UK data protection legislation. For further information, please see the University's Privacy Notice for Job Applicants at: <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/job-applicant-privacy-policy>. The University's Policy on Data Protection is available at: <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/data-protection-policy>.

The University's policy on retirement

The University operates an Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) for very senior research posts at **grade RSIV/D35 and clinical equivalents E62 and E82**, which with effect from 1 October 2023 will be 30 September before the 70th birthday. The justification for this is explained at: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>.

For **existing** employees on these grades, any employment beyond the retirement age is subject to approval through the procedures: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>.

There is no normal or fixed age at which staff in posts at other grades have to retire. Staff at these grades may elect to retire in accordance with the rules of the applicable pension scheme, as may be amended from time to time.

Equality of opportunity

Entry into employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each particular post and the relevant salary structure. In all cases, ability to perform the job will be the primary consideration. No applicant or member of staff shall be discriminated against because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Benefits of working at the University

Employee benefits

University employees enjoy 38 days' paid holiday, generous pension schemes, travel discounts, and a variety of professional development opportunities. Our range of other employee benefits and discounts also includes free entry to the Botanic Gardens and University colleges, and discounts at University museums. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-benefits>

University Club and sports facilities

Membership of the University Club is free for all University staff. The University Club offers social, sporting, and hospitality facilities. Staff can also use the University Sports Centre on Iffley Road at discounted rates, including a fitness centre, powerlifting room, and swimming pool. See www.club.ox.ac.uk and <https://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/>.

Information for staff new to Oxford

If you are relocating to Oxfordshire from overseas or elsewhere in the UK, the University's Welcome Service website includes practical information about settling in the area, including advice on relocation, accommodation, and local schools. See <https://welcome.ox.ac.uk/>

There is also a visa loan scheme to cover the costs of UK visa applications for staff and their dependents. See <https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/visa-loan-scheme>

Family-friendly benefits

With one of the most generous family leave schemes in the Higher Education sector, and a range of flexible working options, Oxford aims to be a family-friendly employer. We also subscribe to the Work+Family Space, a service that provides practical advice and support for employees who have caring responsibilities. The service offers a free telephone advice line, and the ability to book emergency back-up care for children, adult dependents and elderly relatives. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/my-family-care>

The University has excellent childcare services, including five University nurseries as well as University-supported places at many other private nurseries.

For full details, including how to apply and the costs, see <https://childcare.admin.ox.ac.uk/>

Disabled staff

We are committed to supporting members of staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions. For further details, including information about how to make contact, in confidence, with the University's Staff Disability Advisor, see <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/disability-support>

Staff networks

The University has a number of staff networks including the Oxford Research Staff Society, BME staff network, LGBT+ staff network and a disabled staff network. You can find more information at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/networks>

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club is an organisation run by volunteers that aims to assist the partners of new staff settle into Oxford, and provides them with an opportunity to meet people and make connections in the local area. See www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk.