Job Description

Research Associate in Conservation Science

Salary: Grade 7
Contract: Full time and fixed term (01 September 2026 to 31 July 2029)
School/Department: Conservation/School of Natural Sciences
Location: Canterbury
Responsible to: Matthew Struebig

Job purpose

The Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), in the School of Natural Sciences, seeks to appoint a highly motivated Research Associate in Conservation Science to join the E3 Sharing Space for Nature project, an exciting research programme focusing on area-based conservation. The role will support the project component that relates to OECMs (other effective area-based conservation measures), with a focus on understanding how, where, and under what conditions do OECMs deliver ecological and social outcomes across multi-use landscapes and seascapes.

In this role you will contribute to the E3 Sharing Space for Nature Initiative's cutting-edge research agenda on OECMs, co-supervise MSc/PhD students and co-organise research and outreach events. You will have a strong research profile in conservation (either natural science, social sciences, economics and/or interdisciplinary research), demonstrating your commitment to conservation impact.

We are very open to applications from candidates from atypical backgrounds and career paths, irrespective of geographical, sectoral and inter-organisational mobility. Career breaks will not be penalised. We also particularly welcome candidates who identify as other than male and from non-white ethnicities. Our new colleague will receive support and mentoring on career development from senior members of DICE.

About DICE

DICE is a world-leading institute, ranked 1st in the UK for the quality of our outputs in the REF21 Geography and Environmental Studies unit of assessment, and awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2019 in recognition of our 'pioneering education, capacity building and research in global nature conservation'. This Research Associate appointment comes at an exciting time for DICE, now that we are part way through a >£10 million research investment. Through Research England's prestigious Expanding Excellence in England (E3) scheme, DICE has created the E3 'Sharing Space for Nature' initiative comprising two clusters that focus on: (i) nature recovery at the landscape, seascape and regional-level in Kent and south-east England and (ii) international policy and practice related to OECMs. In addition, funding from the Leverhulme Trust is supporting a cohort of doctoral scholars over the next four years, confirming the University of Kent as the UK's leading interdisciplinary research training centre in conservation. These major new research programmes are designed to support a radical shift in how we imagine, design and implement effective and inclusive conservation solutions at the landscape and seascape level.

Key accountabilities and duties

- Play a key role in the E3 'Sharing Space for Nature' project by developing and publishing state-of-the-art research, in collaboration with DICE colleagues, project partners and postgraduate students.
- Lead on producing national-level OECM case studies and cross-national comparisons of OECM policy and practice in partnership with new and existing conservation stakeholders.

- Co-organise and participate in research/outreach events and present and promote the research findings at national and international meetings.
- Contribute to the design and execution of research projects, ensuring alignment with institutional and departmental goals.
- Conduct individual and collaborative research, gathering and analysing data to derive meaningful conclusions.
- Publish research findings in high quality peer reviewed journals and support in presenting results at conferences to share insights with the academic community.
- Build and maintain professional relationships with colleagues, students, and external partners to foster collaboration and networking.
- Assist students with research skills, assess knowledge and supervise student projects.
- Participate in team meetings and contribute to discussions on research direction and strategy.

Internal & external relationships

Internal: Wider project team, all colleagues within DICE, students, other departments across the University eg Business Development, Research and Innovation (BDRI)

External: Funding bodies, local businesses, local, national, international and EU government departments, charities and other not-for-profit organisations, and appropriate professional bodies.

Health, safety & wellbeing considerations

This job involves undertaking duties which include the following health, safety and wellbeing considerations:

- Regular use of Screen Display Equipment
- Repetitive limb movements
- Overseas travel might be required

Person specification

The person specification details the necessary skills, qualifications, experience or other attributes needed to carry out the job. Applications will be measured against the criteria published below.

Selection panels will be looking for clear evidence and examples in an application, or cover letter (where applicable), which back-up any assertions made in relation to each criterion.

Essential Criteria:

- A relevant PhD or equivalent in Conservation Science or a related field of study (A)
- Proven experience in conducting research projects, including data collection and analysis (A,I,T)
- Demonstrated ability to write and publish research findings in peer-reviewed journals (A,I)
- Experience working collaboratively in a research or academic setting, contributing to joint projects and initiatives (A,I,T)
- Familiarity with relevant research methodologies and tools specific to the field (A,I,T)
- Strong verbal and written communication skills, with the ability to convey complex information clearly to diverse audiences (I,T)
- Excellent organizational skills with the ability to manage multiple tasks and meet deadlines (I,T)
- Commitment to continually update knowledge and understanding in field or specialism (I)
- A firm commitment to fostering a working and learning environment that is respectful, inclusive and values diversity, including diversity of thought, and which enables staff and students from a wide range of backgrounds to thrive (I)

Desirable Criteria:

- Specialist expertise in OECMs (other effective area-based conservation measures) or related topics (A,I,T)
- Familiarity with more specialized or advanced research methods (A,I)

Assessment stage: A - Application; I - Interview; T - Test/presentation at interview stage