Job Description

Senior Research and Innovation Officer (Pre-Award)

Salary: Grade 7
Contract: Full time, ongoing
Location: Canterbury Campus
Responsible to: Research and Innovation Support Manager (Local Delivery)
Responsible for: Application development, application management, grant expertise, funder intelligence
Job family: Administrative, professional and managerial

Job purpose

As a member of the Research and Innovation Support (RIS) local delivery team, the role holder is expected to maximise research and innovation funding application success; increasing opportunities for the University by raising awareness of research and innovation funding schemes, contributing directly to the preparation and writing of proposals and providing targeted support and intelligence. This includes supporting academics and professional services staff by providing costing and budgeting, assuring internal approval and guiding colleagues with regards to funder regulations, opportunities and desired outcomes.

Responsible for actively seeking out opportunities including large multi-partner and multi-disciplinary grants for government and charity funding, supporting academic staff and their external partners with the preparation and submission of high-quality applications. Working across the University to secure strategic large scale funding grants and wherever possible maximise the return and impact for the University.

To develop and support relationships with external organisations to maximise the University's research and innovation income opportunities.

The role holder will be assigned to a specific Division but will be expected to work across others as necessary as well as supporting cross-Divisional initiatives such as the University's Institutes.

Key accountabilities

The following are the main accountabilities for the job. Other duties, commensurate with the grading of the job, may also be assigned from time to time.

- Guide a portfolio of research and innovation funding applications and tenders through all stages of the application process (including drafting high-quality content, costing, pricing and approvals), to maximise chances of success, liaising with internal and external stakeholders. Seeking feedback on submitted applications from funders and channelling this intelligence to other interested parties to inform the development of future applications.

- Discuss potential funding projects with academics to identify suitable funding routes, to increase numbers of research and innovation applications and work closely with applicants to improve the quality of applications submitted. Advising applicants based on expert knowledge of funder expectations in terms of eligibility, content, presentation and deadlines as well as critically reviewing and editing draft applications.
- Identify research and innovation funding opportunities from a variety of sources (commercial, charity and government funding) from online sources, contacts and funder events, to increase academic knowledge of alternate sources of funding and increase income and societal impact.
- Dissemination of funding opportunities identified; via email, by providing academic training events, presentations and meetings and utilising university networks to ensure maximum reach and take-up of funding opportunities. Provide expert advice, guidance and, where relevant, training and presentations on funding routes.
- Organising, promoting and managing activities (such as thematic workshops and networking events) to build research capacity and where there is potential, following this through to preparation of research bids.
- Contribute to the work of the overall team and maintain files and audit trail to enable efficient transfer to other functions.
- In partnership with other Senior Research and Innovation Officers (Pre-Award), coordinate and manage demand management processes, e.g. Restricted Bids Committee and internal peer review to improve the quality of research and innovation applications.
- Maintain an awareness of sector developments and share any learnings internally through active participation in a Community of Practice. The postholder will also be expected to provide cover for staff absence and peak workloads of other Senior Research and Innovation Officers (Pre-Award).
- Liaise with the Research and Innovation Officer (Pre-Award) to ensure a smooth handover of research and innovation funded projects, thereby enabling those responsible for post-award processes to manage the acceptance and set-up of awards effectively.
- Support the creation of a culture that is highly performance and contribution focused, built on a foundation of equality, diversity, belonging and inclusivity and that inspires people to bring their best every day.

Key challenges and decisions

The following provide an overview of the most challenging or complex parts of the role and the degree of autonomy that exists.

- A key challenge of the role is the variety and complexity of funders available with a growing portfolio. The role has a high degree of autonomy to deal with the volume, range and complexity of funders and portfolio of applications to be supported.
- The ability to solve problems encountered during the application process is essential, working closely with others within the Research and Innovation Support directorate. Typical issues include guidance queries raised by academics and external partners (SMEs, Councils, Charities Large scale businesses).

- The role is busy with multiple deadlines throughout the year, often with very little notice. It requires a highly organised approach to balance conflicting priorities, meet challenging deadlines, and work quickly and accurately under pressure.
- Working on large-scale research and innovation bids across the University, facilitating expanding programmes for Divisions as well as consortium building projects. This entails supporting strategic multi-partner applications.
- A key challenge of the role is working with the range of partners on applications from different types of organisations (SME, large corporates, national and local charities, local and national government departments). Each partner requires different levels of support, and it is important for the post-holder to be able to adapt easily to each situation.
- Funding operates within a complex legislative framework including consideration of state-aid legislation, employment law, VAT treatment and competition rules. Decisions are required from the post-holder on: which schemes to promote, project staffing models, risk, inclusion or exclusion of external partners, VAT considerations.
- Typical decisions of the role: whether a funding scheme should be pursued or left, what academics should be contacted to participate in a scheme, whether project sections need further evidence, how to present budgets and project delivery information such as risk, Gantt and flow charts, milestones and outcomes/outputs.

Facts & figures

N/A

Internal & external relationships

Internal: All RIS staff, Directors of Research and Innovation, Directors of Operations, academics within and across the Divisions and central professional services departments.

External: Funders (including Research Councils, Innovate UK, NIHR, Royal Societies, EU funders), Tendering organisations (EU and UK Public bodies), External Collaborators (Businesses, Charities, Public and Academic Institutions).

Health, safety & wellbeing considerations

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

- Regular use of Screen Display Equipment
- Conflict resolution
- Pressure to meet important deadlines such as might be inherent in high profile projects

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:

- Degree and/or appropriate administration qualification, or relevant demonstrable experience (A)
- Experience of developing funding applications whether in the public, private or third sector (A,I,T)
- Experience in supporting others in the development of funding applications (A,I)
- An understanding/awareness of the academic research and innovation funding landscape (A,I)
- Experience of developing effective working relationships with internal and external stakeholders (A,I)
- Highly organised with the ability to balance conflicting priorities, meet challenging deadlines, and work quickly and accurately under pressure with a high level of attention to detail. (A,I)
- Ability to work autonomously, make decisions and manage own commitments (A,I)
- High degree of computer literacy including the use of programmes such as Excel, Word with sound spreadsheet and database expertise (A)
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, including an ability to explain complex information to others (I,T)
- Firm commitment to achieving the University's vision and values, with a passion for a transformative student experience and multidisciplinary, impactful research (I)
- Commitment to deliver and promote equality, diversity and inclusivity in the day-to-day work of the role (I)

Desirable Criteria:

- Postgraduate research degree or experience of working within an academic research environment (A)
- Experience managing others to achieve objectives (A, I)

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