CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACK

Assistant Director, Research & Innovation (maternity cover)

The Scottish Funding Council’s work in tertiary education makes a real difference to people’s lives through learning, research and innovation. Joining us could be a transformative decision for you too.

We are currently looking for:

POST: Assistant Director, Research and Innovation (up to 12 months)
DIRECTORATE: Research and Innovation

COMMITTED TO EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY
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Welcome

Thank you for your interest in joining our team at the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

We are the national funding authority for tertiary education and research. We invest around £2 billion every year, and our funding enables colleges and universities to provide life-changing opportunities for over half a million people.

What drives us is our ambition to create and sustain world leading learning, research, and innovation. So, naturally, we have a clear focus on recruiting the best people and developing them throughout their career.

Our policies and investments spread far beyond campuses, and they have real impact on Scotland’s economy and on wider society: this makes the Scottish Funding Council an inspiring place to work.

This is a really exciting time for us. We have recently published a new strategic plan which focuses our priorities, operations, and capabilities to play an even more central and effective role in Scotland’s future.

We are a friendly, welcoming team and we believe we are at our best when our work is informed by different perspectives. We are always keen to receive applications from talented people from all walks of life, whose skills will help us serve all of Scotland’s communities.

We look forward to hearing from you, and very much look forward to welcoming new members to the team.

Karen Watt
Chief Executive
About the vacancy

Overview

We are looking for an experienced and enthusiastic professional to join our Research and Innovation directorate for up to 12 months to cover the post of Assistant Director, Research and Innovation while the postholder is on maternity leave.

We welcome applications from people with disabilities and those from minority ethnic and language communities, as well as those who have skills in Scottish Gaelic or British Sign Language. For this role we also welcome applications for secondment.

Background and purpose of role

This is an exciting opportunity to lead and shape the Scottish Funding Council’s research strategy over the next 12 months at a time of significant development and change in the Scottish and UK R&D landscape.

The role provides a unique national vantage point and includes leading engagement with key stakeholders within the Scottish Government, UK Government and UK Research & Innovation as well as across Scottish institutions. You will work flexibly across a broad range of areas from supporting people and positive research cultures to developing cases for investment in research and influencing UK R&D policy. You will work as part of a small, knowledgeable and supportive team that delivers high quality work across a range of research & innovation areas.

Key responsibilities

Reporting to the Director of Research and Innovation, you will:

1. Lead and be responsible for key areas of SFC research strategy, including but not limited to people & culture, evidence development and contributions to UK R&D policy.

2. Support the Director of Research & Innovation on specific areas of work related to research strategy and the implementation of existing research and innovation policy, as required.

3. Work closely with colleagues across SFC to develop and monitor SFC’s evidence and narrative to develop how SFC articulates the value of research and feed into internal and Scottish Government budgetary processes.

4. Cultivate and maintain positive working links with institutions, the Scottish Government, UK Government and UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) including relationship building with relevant stakeholders.
5. Horizon-scan and provide advice, support and guidance to internal and external Scottish stakeholders, producing briefings, reports and papers as required for SFC senior management and key stakeholders.

6. Represent SFC as required, deputising for the Director where appropriate in external and internal engagements.

7. Support and promote effective working and collaboration across SFC, breaking down organisational silos and facilitating greater project and collaborative work across teams, contributing research & innovation perspectives and input as appropriate.

Person Specification

- Experience of policy development, stakeholder engagement and influencing within a complex political environment, for example within institutions, national and local governments, agencies or influencing bodies/groups.

- Knowledge and experience of current research policy issues in Scottish and UK contexts, ideally with experience of working in a research or research policy environment.

- A demonstrable understanding of the current Scottish political and Government operating environment.

- Good awareness of higher education issues in Scotland.

- Ability to think strategically and creatively and demonstrate good judgement when analysing and responding to complex issues.

- High-level oral and written communication skills, including experience of representation and negotiation at a senior level.

- Excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to work well as part of a team.

- Qualified to SCQF Level 9 (Degree) or equivalent experience.

Status of vacancy outline

This outline is indicative and has been created to describe the nature of appointments at this level. Post holders will be expected to carry out any work that is commensurate with their grade or that may reasonably be required of them.

Further information

For an informal discussion to find out more about the role, please contact Cat Ball, Assistant Director, Research and Innovation: email cball@sfc.ac.uk.
Key rewards and benefits

The salary range for this post (Grade M1) is **£56,409 to £66,531** per annum (1.0FTE).

- Normal full-time hours of work are 35 per week. We will consider flexible working arrangements. A flexi-time system is in operation.

- Annual leave entitlement of 26.5 days pro-rata, rising to 30 days pro-rata after 4 years’ continuous service. Public and privilege holiday entitlement of 11.5 days pro-rata.

- A flexible approach to hybrid working, giving you flexibility to work from home anywhere in the UK for some of the time while also maintaining regular in-person contact with colleagues.

- Annual pay review: approved within the framework of the Scottish Government’s Public Sector Pay Policy and negotiated with our recognised trade union, Unite. Salaries are reviewed annually in April for employees who commence employment prior to 1 October in the preceding year.

- Eligibility to join the Civil Service Pension Scheme. With its low member contribution rates and generous employer contributions, this gives you a secure, inflation-proof pension for life with no investment uncertainty. Details of contribution rates together with further details of the pension benefits are available on the Civil Service Pensions website. There is also the option of a Partnership pension account.

- Support for continuous professional development.

- Support for health and wellbeing, including generous occupational sick pay, free access to confidential advice and support through our 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme, Special Leave (paid and unpaid), a contribution to learning outside work through our Lifelong Learning Fund, free winter flu vaccination, and access to occupational health support.

- Support for travel to and from work, including a salary sacrifice cycle loan scheme, cycle storage and shower facilities, an interest-free loan for bus or rail season tickets and free office car parking for employees on a first-come basis.
How to apply

To apply, please send your CV and covering letter to recruitment@sfc.ac.uk by 5pm on Wednesday 20 September 2023. The selection panel will use this evidence to assess your application against the selection criteria in the Person Specification section above. In your CV please also set out your educational and professional qualifications, and career history, with key responsibilities, dates and achievements. Please provide reasons for any gaps. Please also provide the following:

- Your current salary.
- Any dates when you will not be able to attend the interview.
- When you could take up appointment if successful.
- Details of two referees. One must be your present or most recent employer. We will take up references for the successful candidate at the offer stage.
- A completed Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form (downloadable via this link and from the SFC Jobs web page). It is not essential to provide this, but this data is valuable in supporting our equality and diversity aims. We will treat your diversity data in the strictest confidence. It is not provided to the selection panel and will not affect your application in any way. For each of the questions on the form you have the option to select ‘prefer not to say’.

If relevant, you should also tell us:

- If you are applying for this role as a secondment opportunity.
- If you wish to claim a guaranteed interview under the Disability Confident Scheme. Under this Scheme, all applicants who consider themselves to be disabled in terms of the Equality Act 2010, and who meet the essential minimum criteria for the post will be guaranteed an interview. You can find further guidance on the definition of disability for these purposes on the DirectGov website here: Disability and the Equality Act 2010.

If you give any information which you know is false, or if you withhold relevant information, this may lead to your application being rejected, or if you have already been appointed, to your dismissal.

If you have not heard from us within 21 days of the closing date, please assume that your application has been unsuccessful.
Pre-employment checks

As part of our pre-employment process we will ask you to provide relevant documentation to show that you are eligible to work in the UK and a Basic Disclosure Scotland certificate. You must be eligible to work in the UK to apply for this role; we do not offer sponsorships. We also take up references as part of this process.

Reserve candidates from interview process

Please note that if we have more appointable candidates than vacancies available, we may keep details of the highest-scoring unsuccessful candidates on file for a period of up to 12 months and we may contact those candidates should the same or a similar role (based on the same selection criteria) become vacant in that time. In such cases we reserve the right to appoint from this list without further testing of merit via an interview process.

This means that unless you advise us to the contrary, we may keep your application on file for this purpose.

Your privacy

To read more about how we collect, store and share your data please read our privacy notice which can be accessed on our website here: Privacy Notice (sfc.ac.uk).

The selection process

Shortlisting

The selection panel will assess your application by considering the evidence you have provided in your CV and supporting statement. Please ensure your application demonstrates how you meet the criteria in the Person Specification for the role. The selection panel will then select the shortlist of candidates to take forward to interview stage.

Interviews

If you are shortlisted, we will invite you to attend a panel interview in which you will be invited to discuss your interest in the post and to give evidence of your experience and professional competence in relation to the Key Responsibilities and the criteria in the Person Specification. You may find it helpful to use the STAR model to prepare for this.

We may also invite you to prepare an exercise and/or give a brief presentation to the panel as part of the selection process.
Indicative Timeline

This timeline below indicates the date by which decisions are expected to be made. If you are selected for interview we will aim to advise you as soon as possible. Please note that these dates are indicative and may be subject to change. If you are unable to meet the proposed interview dates, please tell us in your application.

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<th>Key stage</th>
<th>Indicative date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Closing date for applications</td>
<td>5pm on Wednesday 20 September 2023</td>
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<td>Shortlist agreed</td>
<td>By Wednesday 27 September 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interviews will most likely be held between 6 –13 October 2023</td>
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