

# Research Associate

## Faculty of Divinity

Closing Date: Monday 10th March 2025

Job Reference: GF45161



# Research Associate

**Salary:**

£36,924—£45,163 (pro rata)

**Contract:**

Fixed-Term: 17 months (until the  
31 August 2026)

**Location:**

Central Cambridge

**Faculty**

Faculty of Divinity

**Working pattern:**

Part-time (0.5 FTE)

The University of Cambridge has a Hybrid Working Policy that aims to enable as many staff as possible to work in a hybrid way if they so wish, whilst recognising that some roles will include tasks that can only be performed on University premises.

**Role Background**

The Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge wishes to appoint a Research Associate for a fixed term period at 0.5 FTE to work on the project entitled “God, Language and Diversity: Spiritual Flourishing in Neurodiverse and Multilingual Communities.” The appointment will be from 1 April 2025 (or as soon as possible thereafter) until 31 August 2026.

The Cambridge Project is part of a multi-University grant funded by the John Templeton Foundation. The larger multi-university grant investigates the relationship between linguistic diversity, religious language, and human flourishing by bringing together ten theologians, psychologists, and cognitive scientists.

The Cambridge project explores connections between the linguistic, theological, and ethical dimensions of classical rabbinic midrash (scriptural interpretation), on the one hand, and empirical-linguistic approaches to processes of human language comprehension and interpretation, on the other. While midrashic interpretations of scriptural language have often been characterized as surprising, creative, and unusual, we aim to explore whether these approaches to text and language may be drawing on forms of cognitive processing that in fact occur in everyday language interpretation, but which are less available to conscious awareness. We will draw upon previous empirical psychological research in the ways that adults, children, and neurodivergent individuals process language, and use this to design and carry out empirical studies of our own to assess the prevalence and properties of ‘midrash-like’ processes in human language interpretation.

Our project will use the empirical research to arrive at new framings and understandings of midrash, and draw upon midrash’s distinctive approaches to language to uncover new understandings of human language processing through experiments. In addition, we will draw upon the ethical and theological dimensions of midrash to assess whether engagement in ‘creative’ modes of language interpretation can enhance creativity in convergent and divergent thinking as well as ethical sensitivity and the ability to look at situations or other people from multiple points of view. Our outputs will include academic articles in the fields of scriptural interpretation/Jewish Studies as well as experimental linguistics and psycholinguistics, and will also include materials and interactive workshops that enable the broader public to engage with our approaches and findings.

# Research Associate

## **Key Responsibilities**

The Research Associate, who will be of postdoctoral standing, will work on the project under the supervision of which Professor Weiss, the Principal Investigator. One component of the duties will involve conducting an analysis of midrashic interpretation, in relation to theories of linguistic pragmatics, that characterizes these interpretations in precise linguistic terms (e.g. ambiguity, polysemy, implicature, vagueness, at different levels of linguistic analysis, indicatively phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics), focusing on the uncovering of non-obvious meanings, multiple meanings, and the role of the interpreter in shaping the meaning that is produced.

A second component of the duties will involve work to characterize the ethical and theological aspects of classical rabbinic midrash, particularly in relation to patterns of departing from socially-dominant or habitual responses to other people and social situations. In particular, characterize how the rabbinic conception of 'God's text' is linked to aspects of newness and creativity, and of learning to respond to challenging situations with hope and awareness of alternative possibilities.

A third component will involve working with the other team members with expertise in experimental linguistics (Professor Napoleon Katsos and Holly Sutherland) to help design linguistic experiments that use midrash-inspired interpretations, involving involve participants engaging with and responding to midrash-like interpretations, as well as assessing participants' abilities to generate their own creative midrash-inspired interpretations of new sentences. In addition, the RA will help design and participate in public-impact workshops and events, conveying the results of the research to wider audiences.

## Declaration on Research Assessment

The University of Cambridge is a signatory to the San-Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), and in recruitment or promotion evaluations will assess research on the basis of its merits rather than the journal or venue in which it is published. Applicants should not include Journal Impact Factors or uncontextualized metrics in their applications. Full details are at: <https://www.research-strategy.admin.cam.ac.uk/research-policy/DORA>.

# Person specification

	Essential	Desirable
<b>Education</b>		
Educated to degree level with a PhD in a relevant area of Jewish Studies.	✓	
<b>Specialist Knowledge and Skills</b>		
Prior knowledge of classical rabbinic midrashic texts. Ability to analyze conceptual and linguistic dynamics of midrashic texts and interpretation.	✓	
Ability to bring traditional rabbinic texts into dialogue with other academic disciplines in the humanities, particularly linguistics and/or philosophy of language.	✓	
Ability to carry out high quality research on theological and conceptual elements of rabbinic thought.	✓	
Strong command of Rabbinic Hebrew.	✓	
<b>Interpersonal and Communication Skills</b>		
Excellent written and oral communication skills.	✓	
Ability to work productively and harmoniously as part of a team.	✓	
Ability to communicate to a range of audiences within and beyond academia.	✓	
Excellent time-management	✓	
A high level of attention to detail	✓	
<b>Relevant Experience</b>		
Experience in academic analysis bridging rabbinic texts and philosophy of language.		✓
Experience organising events that enable wider audiences (academic and non-academic) to engage with rabbinic texts.		✓
Experience in academic analysis of theological understandings of language in wider Jewish tradition.		✓



# The Faculty of Divinity



The academic staff complement of the Faculty of Divinity comprises 23 University Teaching Officers. In addition there are several Early Career Research Fellows and Research Associates. The Faculty delivers one three-year undergraduate programme for BA (Hons), the Theology, Religion, and Philosophy of Religion (TRPR) Tripos, as well as two one-year postgraduate programmes, the Advanced Diploma in TRPR and the MPhil in TRPR.

We recruit about 40-50 students a year to the Tripos, and we aim to recruit around 35 students a year to the two taught postgraduate programmes. In addition, the Faculty admits 20-25 research students a year to the PhD. We are committed to widening participation and we see potential for growth in student numbers, especially at postgraduate level. The Faculty is home to the Cambridge Interfaith Programme (CIP), which pursues academic research and public engagement to promote better understanding about and between different religious traditions. The academic staff and students of the Faculty are supported by 4 full-time and 4 part-time administrative staff.

The Faculty is housed in an elegant modern building on the Sidgwick Site, Cambridge's hub for the Arts and Humanities, just off West Road, and conveniently located just a few hundred metres from Cambridge University Library, one of Britain's, and the world's greatest scholarly libraries. Our building, designed by Edward Cullinan around the turn of the century, with its open and welcoming aspect, has well equipped lecture and seminar rooms, social spaces for staff and students, and offices for all academic staff. It is crowned by its striking circular library.

The Faculty of Divinity regularly appears at or near the top of national and international rankings for departments within its field – for example, topping the Complete University Guide table for UK theology and religion departments in 2025 and the Guardian table for 2024, as well as figuring second in Europe and fourth in the world in the latest available (2024) QS Rankings.

Further information about the faculty can be found at [Faculty of Divinity |](#)

# The School of Arts and Humanities



The School of Arts and Humanities is one of six schools in the University and its comprised of:

- Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
- Faculty of Architecture and History of Art
- Faculty of Classics
- Faculty of Divinity
- Faculty of English
- Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics
- Faculty of Music
- Faculty of Philosophy
- Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities
- University of Cambridge Language Centre
- Institute for Technology and Humanity

The School's institutions together have over 700 staff and 3,500 students, with an annual budget in excess of £45 million. The School has recently agreed a new strategic plan, which sets out its overarching vision and objectives.

## **Vision**

The Strategic Vision of the School of Arts and Humanities is to retain its position in the world top five. We see this not as a simple metric but as a challenge for which we must foster a culture and practice of openness: to countries and traditions around the globe, to major themes, to new ways of teaching, to diversity in our student intake and staff recruitment, to inclusiveness in our career development, and to the breaking down of structures that prevent us achieving the ambitious goals we set ourselves.

# Terms of appointment

## Tenure and probation

Appointments will be made on a fixed-term basis until the 31st August 2026, due to limited funding. Appointments will be subject to satisfactory completion of a six month probationary period.

## Hours of Work and Working Pattern

The hours of work for the position are part time (0.5FTE), working 18.6 hours per week. We welcome applications from individuals who wish to be considered for part-time working or other flexible working arrangements.

## Pension

You will automatically be enrolled to become a member of USS (Universities Superannuation Scheme) – a defined benefits pension scheme. For further information please visit:

[www.pensions.admin.cam.ac.uk](http://www.pensions.admin.cam.ac.uk)

## Annual leave

Full time employees are entitled to annual paid leave of 41 days inclusive of public holidays. For new part-time employees, annual leave will be pro rata'd based on days worked.

## General information

### Pre-employment checks

### Right to work in the UK

We have a legal responsibility to ensure that you have the right to work in the UK before you can

start working for us. If you do not have the right to work in the UK already, any offer of employment we make to you will be conditional upon you gaining it.

### Health declaration

Once an offer of employment has been made the successful candidate will be required to complete a work health declaration form.

### Qualifications

The person specification for this position lists qualifications that are essential and/or desirable. Please note that if you are offered the post you will be asked to provide your relevant original certificates of these qualifications.

### References

Offers of appointment will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory references.

### Screening Checks: Information if you have a disability

The University welcomes applications from individuals with disabilities. We are committed to ensuring fair treatment throughout the recruitment process. We will make adjustments to enable applicants to compete to the best of their ability wherever it is reasonable to do so and, if successful, to assist them during their employment. Information for disabled

applicants is available at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/staff/disabled/>

We encourage you to declare any disability that you may have, and any reasonable adjustments that you may require, in the section provided for this purpose in the application form. This will enable us to accommodate your needs throughout the process as required. However, applicants and employees may declare a disability at any time.

If you prefer to discuss any special arrangements connected with a disability, please contact the School HR Team at [sahhr@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:sahhr@admin.cam.ac.uk), who are responsible for recruitment to this position.



# The University

**The University of Cambridge is consistently ranked one of the best universities in the world, achieving academic excellence through its Faculties, Departments and other Institutions, together with the 31 Colleges.**

The University is renowned for its record of discovery and innovation. It is one of the great institutions, with a regional, national and global reach, attracting the very best and brightest minds. Our staff and students shape the world around us for the better: we attract and partner with like-minded people.

Whether contributing to the development of new anti-cancer drugs, adding to the understanding of how black holes are formed, revolutionising the study of ancient settlements, convening academic expertise to offer solutions to the climate crisis, or analysing public attitudes towards democracy around the world, the University's research is remarkable in its breadth, quality and impact. The University also sits at the heart of Europe's largest technology cluster and has catalysed more than 1,500 high-tech companies. And yet what inspires our 24,000 students and 13,000 staff is not what has already been achieved, but what is possible in the future.

The education and experience of our students, based on a partnership between the University's academic Departments and Faculties and the 31 Colleges, is second to none. Every student is a member of one of the Colleges, each a community of students, academics and staff drawn from across the University's comprehensive range of subject areas.





The University is a self-governing community, with a system for decision-making that provides a high degree of accountability and transparency to its members. Each Department and Faculty is part of one of six academic Schools, but each of them, and each individual academic, has a great deal of autonomy. The Colleges are independent and self-governing, working in a symbiotic relationship with the University.

The University has a number of Institutions that are independent of any Faculty or Department and are not part of the academic Schools. These include the Institute of Continuing Education (which provides high-quality education to adults throughout their lives), the Fitzwilliam Museum, Kettle's Yard (an historic house and gallery that holds important collections of modern art) and the University Library. In addition to their diverse contributions to University and public life, these non-School Institutions are also important centres of teaching and research.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment provides academic publishing, examinations and learning materials worldwide, supporting the dissemination of research, academic development at school and in higher education, and international student mobility. Legally, the Press & Assessment is a department of the University. It provides very important funds to invest in the academic purposes of the University.

The University has made truly remarkable contributions to the sum of human understanding, with breakthrough ideas and discoveries that have changed the way we understand ourselves, our planet, and the universe around us. Yet the global and national contexts in which it operates are fast-changing and increasingly filled with uncertainty. In a world that is becoming - politically, economically, socially, and technologically – ever more interconnected but even less equal, the University's mission – “to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and



# About Us

**The University is one of the world's leading academic centres. It comprises 150 faculties and departments, together with a central administration and other institutions. Our institutions, museums and collections are a world-class resource for researchers, students and members of the public representing one of the country's highest concentrations of internationally important collections.**

The University has an annual income of £2 billion. Research income, won competitively from the UK Research Councils, the European Union (EU), major charities and industry, exceeds £500 million per annum and continues to grow.

The Colleges and the University remain committed to admitting the best students regardless of their background and to investing considerable resources both in widening access and financial support. The 31 Colleges are self-governing, separate legal entities which appoint their own staff. Many academic staff are invited to join a College as a Teaching Fellow, which provides a further social and intellectual dimension. The Colleges admit undergraduate students, provide student accommodation and pastoral support and deliver small group teaching for undergraduates.

The University awards degrees and its faculties and departments provide lectures and seminars for students and determine the syllabi for teaching.

Our instinct for seeking out excellence and setting up enduring and mutually beneficial collaborations has led us to establish strategic partnerships across the globe. Whether it is the successful Cambridge-Africa Programme involving universities in Ghana, Uganda and elsewhere on the African continent; or the close association with the government of India to pursue new research in crop science; or the creation, with Germany's Max Planck Institutes, of a Cambridge-based centre for the study of ethics, human economy and social change – international partnerships are now an inextricable part of the University's make-up.

“Through its outstanding education, research and innovation, the University of Cambridge has made - and continues to make - a lasting contribution to human knowledge and is flourishing. By working at the University of Cambridge, you will be joining a vibrant community of students, scholars and professional services staff, committed to supporting and enhancing the University's mission to contribute to society.”

Professor Deborah Prentice,  
Vice Chancellor, 2023





# Working at the University

**Working at Cambridge you will join a diverse, talented and innovative community, with more than 24,000 students and over 13,000 staff from all walks of life and corners of the world.**

The University continually explores strategies to attract and retain the best people. It is committed to supporting its staff to achieve their best. We are a fair, diverse and inclusive society and we believe our staff are our greatest asset. There is strong commitment to developing institutional leadership and supporting and encouraging staff development at all levels.

We offer a variety of roles including academic, research, professional, managerial and support roles. We also offer extensive benefits and excellent learning opportunities within a stimulating working environment.

## **Equality & diversity**

The University has built its excellence on the diversity of its staff and student community. We aim to be a leader in fostering equality and inclusion, and in promoting respect and a sense of belonging for all. We encourage applications from all sections of society. All appointments are made on the basis of merit. We have an Equal Opportunities Policy, along with a range of diversity groups, including the Women's Staff Network, Race Equality Network and LGBT+ Staff Network. More details are available here: <http://www.equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

The University's estate is undergoing the most significant transformation in its history. Cambridge has been able to create a new science and technology campus to the west of the city centre, and is now expanding further to the north west of Cambridge including investing in affordable homes for University key workers and community facilities. Even with our continued development, the University remains within walking or cycling distance across the campus. The University is a major partner on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus and we continue to redevelop our historic city centre sites demonstrating our determination to ensure that we can offer the best facilities and opportunities for our staff and students.



The University has a bronze Race Equality Charter award, with a framework for improving the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education. Furthermore, the University's silver Athena swan award recognises and celebrates good practice in recruiting, retaining and promoting gender equality.



# Living in Cambridge

**Cambridge is rich in cultural diversity. From beautiful University and College buildings, museums and art galleries, quaint gardens and punts on the River Cam, to a vibrant restaurant and café scene, our employees are surrounded by the wonderful features of this unique city.**

You can find a wide-range of high street shops and 3 shopping centres, with independent alternatives at the historic market and nestled within the passageways in the city centre. You will find a cinema, bowling alley, a nightclub and various live performances at the Cambridge Leisure Park, with further entertainment options at the Corn Exchange, Arts Theatre and the ADC Theatre. Further information can be found on the Visit Cambridge website.

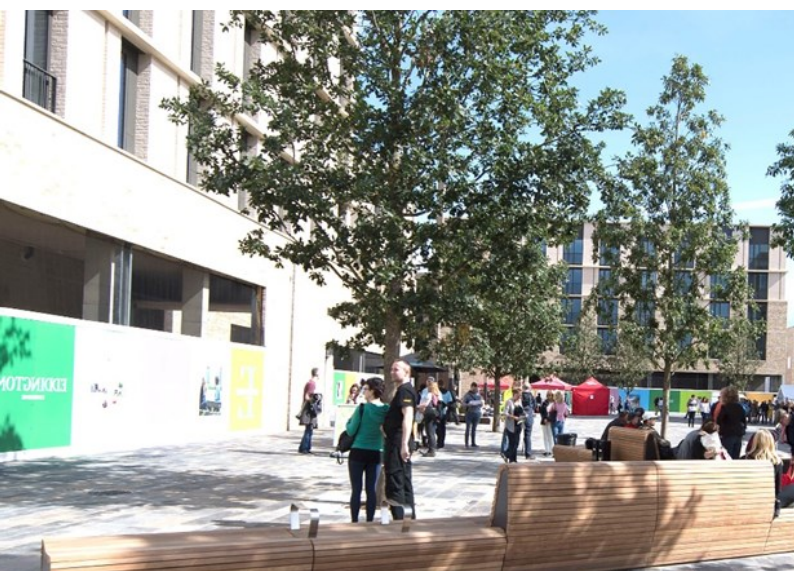
If you prefer the faster pace of life, London is a 45-minute train journey away. For those travelling from overseas, Stansted Airport is just 45 minutes away and Heathrow Airport under 2 hours away. The University is a short distance from a host of other attractions such as Ely Cathedral, Newmarket Races and various wildlife parks and stately homes. Cambridge is also within easy reach of the beautiful Broads and coastlines of Norfolk and Suffolk.

## Relocation Support

The University recognises the importance of helping individuals to move and settle into a new area. We provide support and guidance to those relocating internationally or domestically to take up a post at the University of Cambridge, liaising with other University offices and selected partners to ensure comprehensive relocation support is available. This includes: accommodation, childcare, schools, banking, immigration and transport. If you would like further information, please visit <https://www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk/RelocationService/>. The Shared Equity Scheme and the Reimbursement of Relocation Expenses Scheme provide financial assistance to qualifying new members of staff with the costs of relocating to Cambridge.

## Accommodation Service

The University Accommodation Service helps staff, students and visiting scholars who are affiliated to the University in their search for suitable accommodation in Cambridge. The dedicated accommodation team can provide access to a wide range of University-owned furnished and unfurnished properties, and has a database of private sector accommodation available for short and long-term lets. For further information and to register with this free service please visit: <https://www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk/>



# What Cambridge can offer

**We offer a comprehensive reward package to attract, motivate and retain high performing staff at all levels and in all areas of work.**

The University offers a wide range of competitive benefits, from family leave entitlement, to shopping and travel discount schemes. Our generous annual leave package contributes to the positive wellbeing of our University employees. Sabbatical leave enables academics to focus on research and scholarship, whilst still maintaining their full salary. The University also has a career break scheme for academic and academic-related staff, with additional flexible working policies for all other staff.

## Pay and benefits

The University salary structure includes automatic service-related pay progression in many of its grades and an annual cost of living increase. In addition to this, employees are rewarded for outstanding contribution through a number of regular pay progression schemes. The University offers attractive pensions schemes for employees, with an additional benefit of a salary exchange arrangement providing tax and national insurance savings.



## CAMbens employee benefits

The University offers employees a wide range of competitive benefits, known as CAMbens. CAMbens offers something for everyone across a range of categories, including:

- Financial Benefits, including shopping discounts (both local and national) and a Payroll Giving scheme;
- Relocation and Accommodation Benefits, including relocation assistance and interest-free Rental Deposit Loans;
- Travel Benefits, including Cycle to Work, discounts on train season tickets and interest-free Travel to Work loans;
- Family Friendly and Lifestyle Benefits, including support with childcare and family friendly policies;
- Health and Wellbeing Benefits, including a University Staff Counselling Service, discounts at the University Sports Centre, and other local gyms, and healthcare schemes.





# What Cambridge can offer

## Family-friendly policies

The University recognises the importance of supporting its staff. We have a range of family-friendly policies to aid employees' work-life balance including a generous maternity, adoption and shared parental leave entitlement of 26 weeks' full pay, and paid emergency leave for parents and carers.

Other family-friendly support includes:

Our highly regarded workplace nurseries, a childcare salary exchange scheme and a high-quality holiday Playscheme are available to help support University employees with caring responsibilities (subject to demand and qualifying criteria). Further childcare information can be found here: <https://www.childcare.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

The Newcomers and Visiting Scholars Group (<https://www.nvs.admin.cam.ac.uk/>) is an organisation within the University that welcomes the partners and families of visiting scholars and new members of the University. Run by volunteers, the group offers opportunities to visit interesting Cambridge venues, learn about the community, take part in social events and gain local knowledge while developing a strong support network of both residents and other newcomers.

## Your wellbeing

The University's Sport Centre, Counselling Services and Occupational Health are just some of the support services available to University employees to promote their physical and mental wellbeing. The University delivers The Festival of Wellbeing annually, which is a programme of stimulating talks and activities, which aim to promote wellbeing and good mental and physical health. The University also hosts the Cambridge Festival, which is a great opportunity to get your first taste of public engagement, through volunteering, supporting hands-on activities or proposing a talk.

## Development opportunities

We support new employees to settle in through various activities as well as supporting their professional and career development on an ongoing basis. Our Personal and Professional Development (PPD) team provide development opportunities for all University employees, including face-to-face sessions, online learning modules and webinars. All employees also have unlimited access to LinkedIn Learning to support their development. Both new and existing employees can undertake funded Apprenticeships, which lead to a range of vocational and professional qualifications. We offer reduced staff fees for University of Cambridge graduate courses and the opportunity to attend lectures and seminars held by University departments and institutions. A range of University training providers also offer specialist learning and development in their own areas e.g. teaching and learning, digital literacy, finance, health and wellbeing, safety.





# How to Apply

Applications should be submitted online via the University of Cambridge jobs page [www.jobs.cam.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.cam.ac.uk) by clicking “Apply online” in the job advert. You will need an email address to register for our online system.

Conversations about flexible working are encouraged at the University of Cambridge. Please feel free to discuss flexibility prior to applying (using the contact information below) or at interview if your application is successful.

For your application to be considered please upload the following documents:

- your Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- a covering letter
- A full list of Research Publications, and, if available one recent published research article

Enquiries about the post may be made to Professor Daniel Weiss at [dhw27@cam.ac.uk](mailto:dhw27@cam.ac.uk). For questions on the application process or procedure, please contact the Schools HR team on [SAHHR@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:SAHHR@admin.cam.ac.uk).

The closing date for applications is midnight (GMT) on **Monday 10th March 2025**. Interviews are expected to take place towards the end of March, subject to confirmation.

