

Research Associate (VIEWS)

Faculty of Classics

Closing Date: Friday 30 May 2025
Job Reference: GE45708



Research Associate

Salary:

£37,174-£45,413

Contract:

Fixed-Term for 18 months

Location:

Central Cambridge

Faculty / Department:

Faculty of Classics

Working pattern:

Full-time (We welcome applications from individuals who wish to be considered for part-time working or other flexible working arrangements)

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.

Applications are sought for a Research Associate on the 'Visual Interactions in Early Writing Systems' (VIEWS) project, directed by Dr Philippa Steele. The position is fixed term for a period of 18 months, starting on the 1st October 2025 or as soon as possible thereafter. The successful applicant will conduct research on a pre-determined aspect of the project detailed in the following pages.

The VIEWS Project

Writing is a highly visual and visible phenomenon. Even so, writing systems research has never capitalised on the potential to enhance our understanding of writing through a study of its visual aspects. In fact, visual features of writing systems are usually seen as incidental to properties that are considered more fundamental, such as the way they encode language, an aspect strongly entrenched in their categorisation. Up to now, research on visual elements and properties of writing systems has often been conducted by scholars working in isolation from each other, pursuing different disciplinary approaches to different groups of material. Even more importantly, there is no widely accepted blueprint for what visual approaches to writing should look like, what methodology they should follow or what kind of terminology we should use to talk about them.

VIEWS takes writing systems research in a new direction. It probes important questions, such as the relationship between writing and visual culture, and the ways in which people encounter and interact with writing. It asks how we might reach a more nuanced understanding of writing systems if we were to categorise them by their visual properties, and investigate the ways in which visual and linguistic features interact. It seeks to establish innovative, interdisciplinary research methods, bringing archaeological, cognitive, linguistic, social-anthropological and visual-cultural approaches into dialogue with each other in order to pursue a more holistic picture of writing as a cultural phenomenon and practice.

Although a significant part of VIEWS research focuses on historical writing systems especially in the ancient world, the word "Early" in the project name is not intended to be prescriptive. We have interests in writing systems across a very broad chronological range: some may be early in the sense that they were used thousands of year ago, others may be early in the sense that they have recently been created or codified, or are in the process of undergoing significant changes. We take writing to refer to visual systems of communication in many different forms, including ones that have been marginalised in writing systems studies.

Research Associate

Our research also helps us to understand and navigate issues of writing system vitality, and for historical systems we have the advantage of being able to study the long-term trajectories of scripts that were eventually lost – with important lessons for the present day. In connection with the VIEWS project's Endangered Writing Network, this research will make an important contribution to addressing the global language crisis that sees more than half of the world's languages and as many as 90% of its distinctive writing systems in danger of loss.

For more information on the project, please visit our blog website: <https://viewsproject.wordpress.com/>.

Visibility, Visuality and Vitality of Writing

The appointed researcher will study the relationship between the visibility or visuality of a writing tradition and its vitality. How do visual features of a writing tradition interact with its robustness (or, conversely, its vulnerability) to social and linguistic changes, and its effectiveness as a support for the language(s) written in it?

Historically, some writing traditions have been very short-lived while others have shown significant longevity. However, the factors relevant to the ongoing use of a writing system have been little studied beyond the notion of linguistic fit (the idea that a language can have an ideal written representation). Visual aspects of writing have typically been overlooked as agents in a script's vitality: for instance distinctive sign shapes, links with other areas of visual culture or the degree of visibility in the social landscape. Such features will be the focus of this new research.

VIEWS is a project with a global outlook and the results of its case studies will have implications far beyond their own fields. This post is **open to any specialisation in terms of place and period studied and disciplinary approach** (e.g. linguistic, archaeological, anthropological, visual-cultural). However, all other things being equal, there will be a preference for areas underrepresented in the project's current case studies: e.g. the Pacific; South and East Asia; Africa other than the northern coastal regions.

An important application of this research will be for the study of language (and writing) endangerment. Although writing is universally acknowledged to be an important part of language maintenance and revitalisation, there are no widely agreed principles as to how writing should effectively support an endangered or minoritised language. Case studies have shown some tension between linguistic representation and the wishes of language communities (for instance in devising Roman orthographies), but other principles such as the visual context and features of writing have been largely ignored. The case study pursued by this researcher will also be a significant contribution to this area of study.

The successful candidate will have demonstrable prior experience of studying writing traditions within their own area of expertise, as well as the willingness and ability to develop academic interests in other comparable approaches and writing traditions. Some scope will be given to the holder of this post to design their own research programme.

The successful applicant will also be expected to play a significant role in the project's flagship impact initiative, the Endangered Writing Network. This will involve planning and facilitating events, strategising for work with affected communities, social media activities, awareness raising and other tasks on an ad hoc basis.

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Purpose of the role

The successful candidate will contribute to excellence in research as a member of the VIEWS team, carrying out research at a similar level to that undertaken by lecturing staff, with substantial scope for academic judgement, originality, interpretation and presentation of results.

They will undertake to publish their project research either in a monograph by or after the end of their term of employment, or in shorter form publications; as well as pursuing short-term dissemination goals such as working on peer reviewed journal articles and contributing to conferences in their area of specialism.

They will also be expected to play a full role in regular VIEWS project team meetings and to take on extra project-related activities such as conference and seminar organisation, collaborative publications with other team members, participation in outreach activities and contributions to the project website. Participation in the Endangered Writing Network is particularly important for this role as described above. There may be opportunities to contribute to teaching undergraduate students if desired and to participate in the Faculty's programme of research seminars for senior members and graduate students.

The VIEWS project provides some financial support for project-related travel as well as open access costs for publishing. The successful applicant will also be provided with IT facilities if needed and will be able to work in the VIEWS project office and to benefit from the resources of the Faculty of Classics.

Key responsibilities

Research and scholarship

- develop research objectives for own research and collaborative research;
- conduct individual and collaborative research;
- write up research work for presentation and publication;
- continually update knowledge and understanding in field or specialism;
- translate knowledge of advances in the subject areas into research activity;
- manage own research and administrative activities, with guidance if required;
- communicate material of a specialist or highly technical nature.

Teaching and learning support

- plan and deliver seminars relating to research area;
- may provide limited teaching/supervision for undergraduate students if opportunities arise.

Liaison and networking

- liaise with colleagues;
- build internal and external contacts and participate in networks for the exchange of information and to form relationships for future collaboration.

Planning and organising

- plan and manage own research activity in collaboration with others;
- contribute to planning of joint research projects led by principal investigator.

Person specification

	Essential	Desirable
Education and Qualifications		
PhD in a relevant specialist discipline (or clear evidence that the completion of such a doctorate is imminent)	✓	
Specialist Knowledge and Skills		
Expertise in studying writing systems, practices or traditions via one or more disciplinary approaches (e.g. linguistic, archaeological, anthropological, visual-cultural)	✓	
Ability to work as part of a team	✓	
Willingness and ability to develop academic interests in other comparable approaches and writing traditions	✓	
Prior interest or expertise in minoritised, indigenous and/or endangered languages and/or writing systems		✓
Relevant Experience		
Record of relevant research publications (or evidence that such publications are in progress) commensurate with stage of career	✓	
Experience of collaborative research and/or the co-organisation of academic events such as seminars or conferences		✓
Experience of comparative and/or interdisciplinary research		✓
Experience of collaborative research and/or the co-organisation of academic events such as seminars or conferences		✓

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>

The Faculty of Classics

Cambridge is one of the leading centres for the study of Classics in the world. Greek and Latin have been taught here for many centuries; the Regius Professorship of Greek was established in 1540. The Cambridge Faculty today has an unsurpassed record of achievement in research in all the main areas of classical scholarship: Greek and Latin Language and Literature, Ancient Philosophy, Ancient History, Ancient Art and Archaeology, Classical Linguistics and Philology, and Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Ancient World.

The Faculty attracts postgraduate and undergraduate students of high ability and with strong commitment to the subject. There are over 100 registered postgraduate students, many from overseas. The annual intake of undergraduates reading for the Classical Tripos is currently between 80 and 90. Cambridge is also one of two universities in the UK whose education departments offer the PGCE in Classics.

The Faculty, which falls within the University's School of Arts and Humanities, is housed on Sidgwick Avenue, on a site which now contains most of the other Arts faculties. The building contains the Museum of Classical Archaeology, the Faculty Library (an excellent specialised library of c. 70,000 items, to which all University Teaching Officers and graduates have 24-hour access), a computer room, offices and teaching rooms, and is very close to the University Library (a copyright deposit library).



The School of Arts and Humanities



The School of Arts and Humanities is one of six schools in the University and it is currently comprises:

- 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

Combined, these institutions have a total annual budget in excess of £45million, 700 staff and 3,500 students. 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 for a period of 18 months. 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 full-time, working Monday – Friday. 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.

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.

Equality and Diversity

We particularly encourage women and /or candidates from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background to apply for this vacancy as they are currently under-represented at this level within our University.

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's HR Team on 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.

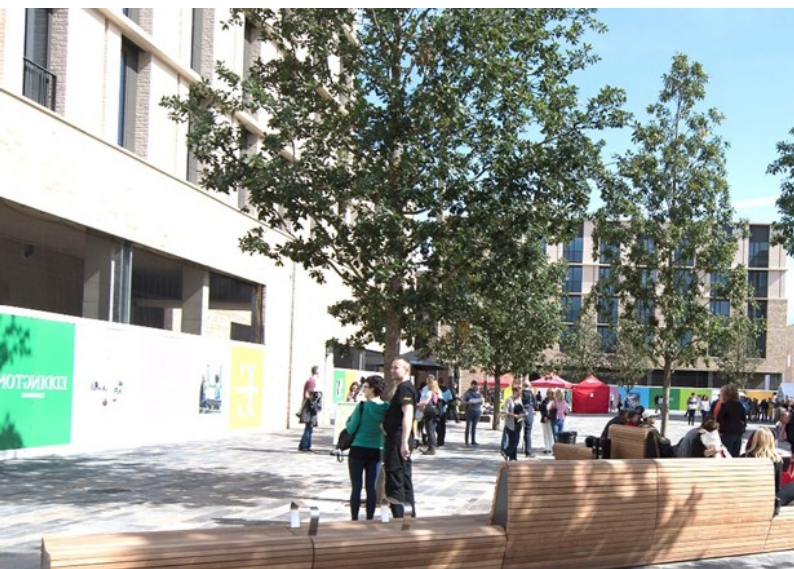
If you prefer the faster pace of life, London is a 45-minute train journey away. For those travelling from overseas, Stansted Airport is just 45 minutes away and Heathrow Airport under 2 hours away. The University is a short distance from a host of other attractions such as Ely Cathedral, Newmarket Races 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 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:

- CV
- Cover letter (In your cover letter, please include a section explaining what you would hope to work on and to achieve during the tenure of this post (1,000 words maximum))
- List of publications
- Sample of work
- Name and contact details of two referees

Informal enquiries are welcomed and should be directed to Dr Philippa Steele, pms45@cam.ac.uk. If you have any queries regarding the application process please contact the School HR Team on sahhr@admin.cam.ac.uk.

The closing date for applications is midnight (BST) on Friday 30th May 2025. Interviews will be held remotely and are planned to take place on Monday 7th July 2025, subject to confirmation and change.

Please quote reference GE45708 on your application and in any correspondence about this vacancy.

