



Job Description

Research Fellow

Department: Sainsbury Wellcome Centre

Grade: 7

Salary: £45,103 to £52,586 per annum inclusive of London Allowance

Hours: 36.5 per week (full-time, 1.00 FTE)

Reports to: Group Leader, Sonja Hofer



Context

We are looking for an excellent Postdoctoral Research Fellow for a joint project of the labs of Sonja Hofer and Tim Behrens at SWC. The project aims to determine how neocortical and subcortical circuits interact to mediate flexible behaviour.

The Hofer lab uses a wide range of multi-disciplinary methods: *in vivo* two-photon imaging and other imaging approaches, high-density acute and chronic electrophysiological recordings (such as next-generation Neuropixels technology), a large array of behavioural tasks and circuit modelling, together with molecular and genetic approaches to identify different cell types, record and manipulate their function and trace specific pathways.

The Role

The post is for studying the neural circuit mechanisms for how animals switch between goals and behavioural strategies and how the brain implements these, by mapping algorithmic theories (developed with the Behrens lab) onto specific microcircuits and neural pathways, focusing for instance on the median raphe nucleus (see Ahmadlou et al. Nature 2025) and its bidirectional interactions with frontal cortical and hippocampal circuits.

In the role, you will design and implement independent research projects, and be involved in a

range of activities both independently and in collaboration with others. Activities may include recording and/or imaging from identified neural populations, perturbation of specific neural circuit elements, animal behavioral training, setting up experimental equipment, data analysis, and scientific communication, including writing up manuscripts for publication and grant writing.

Crucial for the post are research experience in rodent work, neural circuit dissection techniques, neural recordings, and data analysis.

This post is funded for 2 years in the first instance with the possibility of extension.

Appointment at Grade 7 is dependent upon having been awarded a PhD; if this is not the case, initial appointment will be at Research Assistant Grade 6B (spine points 25 - 28) with payment at Grade 7 being backdated to the date of final submission of the PhD thesis.

Duties and responsibilities

- To design and conduct independent research projects, with input and feedback from the Laboratory Head.

- Work closely with the Laboratory Head and other lab members to set up, gather, collect, analyse and model data.
- To contribute to the induction, training, and supervision of staff members, students and visitors to the lab, in order to develop their skills and/or to achieve collaborative scientific goals.
- Write and contribute to the preparation of scientific manuscripts, reports, grants, presentations and records of experimental plans and results.
- Communicate lab results within divisional meetings to keep team members and other colleagues informed of developments and progress of the project.
- Maintain lab equipment, lab supplies and databases to ensure functions at the correct levels and that all work is carried out in accordance with statutory and UCL regulations as appropriate.
- Maintain the lab cleanliness and organisation of the laboratory space, including monitoring and maintaining levels of consumables within the laboratory and ensuring adequate stock control of reagents; organising servicing and maintenance of laboratory equipment.
- Set-up, calibrate and repair behavioural equipment to ensure it functions at the correct levels.
- Adhere to good laboratory practice at all times and observe all required health and safety procedures.
- Write and update laboratory SOPs and risk assessments and record these appropriately.
- Keep up to date with current ethical and legal requirements in relation to the use of animal models in research.

- Keep up to date with current required Data Protection and Security requirements.

General

- Carry out any other duties within the scope spirit and purpose of the job as requested by the line manager.
- Actively participate in UCL networks, meetings and committees relevant to the role, as required.
- All staff are expected to act professionally, co-operatively and flexibly in line with the post.
- UCL's Sustainability policies and objectives, attend management meetings and undertake such training and development as may be required for the post
- The post holder, like all academic, research and teaching staff, is expected to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to excellence in line with the Academic Career Framework
- Meet UCL's expectations set out in UCL's Core Behaviours Framework
- The above description is not exhaustive, and the post-holder will be required to undertake any other duties as may reasonably be requested within the scope, spirit, and purpose of the post.



Person Specification

Applicants are to copy and paste the following criteria (which are assessed on the application form) into the “Statement in support of your application” describing underneath each criterion how they meet it, giving examples.

Essential Criteria	Assessment method
Qualifications, experience and knowledge	
Hold a PhD in neuroscience or a related field, or have submitted your thesis before commencing in post.	Application
Expertise in rodent handling, stereotaxic surgery and behavioural training	Application/Interview
Experience in rodent neural circuit dissection techniques	Application/Interview
Experience in computer programming and data analysis (Python, R or MATLAB)	Application/Interview
Experience of in vivo electrophysiological recordings or imaging techniques with single-cell resolution	Application/Interview
Ability to contribute ideas for new research projects and research income generation	Application/Interview
Skills and abilities	
Strong written and oral communication skills, along with good presentation skills.	Application/Interview
Excellent analytical skills and understanding of statistics.	Application/Interview
Able to prioritise, manage your own time, and multi-task and integrate the demands of a range of different activities and deadlines in parallel.	Application/Interview
Works ethically, legally and with integrity.	Application/Interview
Accountable, reliable and resourceful.	Application/Interview
Other requirements	
A strong understanding of the SWC’s mission and research environment, and a commitment to establishing it as a world-leading research centre.	Application/Interview

Desirable Criteria	
Experience in molecular biology and histology	Application
Experience in microscopy/imaging	Application
Commitment to and knowledge of advancing equality, diversity and inclusion	Application



UCL benefits and policies apply equally, whatever the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of employees. Benefits and policies relating to employees partners, includes both different sex and same sex partners.

Apply

To apply for this position visit:

ucl.ac.uk/work-at-ucl/search-ucl-jobs

Please complete the online application form and use the supporting statement section to outline your interest in joining SWC and how you meet the essential and desirable criteria for the role.

If you have any queries regarding the application process, please email: swc.hr@ucl.ac.uk

For informal enquiries about the role plea

All candidates will be notified of the outcome of their application.

Annual leave

Annual leave is 27 working days for a full-time member of staff + 6 UCL closure days in addition to 8 Bank Holidays.

Pension

Post-holders will be eligible to join the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), subject to the Scheme's rules and eligibility conditions.

Hours of Work

UCL's full time working week is 36.5 hours per week. SWC is willing to consider flexible-working arrangements, subject to discussion and agreement with your line manager.

Other benefits

UCL is a dynamic, global university based in one of the most exciting capital cities in the world. Not only does working at UCL offer the opportunity to work with some of the greatest intellects in the world, it also offers competitive terms, conditions and benefits to its staff.

As part of the UCL community you can access free lunch hour lectures, exhibitions and museums and collections. On campus UCL has the Bloomsbury theatre hosting a range of performances and a series of bars, cafes, and other facilities, which UCL staff can use.

In addition to 41 days annual leave (inclusive of public holidays and closure days) and generous pension schemes, UCL provides a number of other staff benefits which are linked from the page below:

✓ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/pay->

