



**Sainsbury Wellcome Centre**

**Research Assistant (Erlich Laboratory)  
Information for Candidates**



**Sainsbury Wellcome Centre for Neural Circuits and Behaviour at UCL**



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## JOB DESCRIPTION

<b>Vacancy Reference:</b>	1886202
<b>Job Title:</b>	Research Assistant
<b>Department:</b>	Sainsbury Wellcome Centre
<b>Salary:</b>	£32,217 - £33,958 per annum inclusive of London Allowance.
<b>Grade:</b>	6B
<b>Hours:</b>	36.5 per week (full-time, 1.00 FTE)
<b>Reports to:</b>	Jeffrey C. Erlich

### About the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre

The [Sainsbury Wellcome Centre \(SWC\)](#) brings together world-leading scientists to investigate how brain circuits process information to generate perception, form memories and guide behaviour. Developed through the vision and partnership of the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and Wellcome, and with substantial investment from these partners, the mission of the SWC is to generate experimentally testable theories of brain function.

The Centre will comprise around 14 highly interdisciplinary experimental research groups accommodated in a new, purpose-designed building, offering an outstanding and unparalleled research environment. SWC scientists use a broad spectrum of the latest advances in molecular and cellular biology, imaging, electrophysiology and behavioural techniques and enjoy state-of-the-art research laboratories, cutting-edge scientific equipment, technologically-advanced prototyping and fabrication laboratories and custom in-house high-performance computing facilities. The full complement of scientists in the Centre is expected to reach around 150 together with circa 50 dedicated support staff.

### Background, Mission and Research Environment

Neuroscience is entering a new and exciting period in which it will be possible to decipher the neural codes underlying perception, cognition and action. The Sainsbury Wellcome Centre for Neural Circuits and Behaviour is positioned at the heart of this development

The Centre, located within University College London (UCL) and close to its main campus in central London, fosters a culture of bold, innovative research and collaboration. Experimental groups benefit from interaction with the Gatsby Computational Neuroscience Unit located within the Centre, facilitating collaborations in data analysis, computational modelling and theory.

SWC staff interface closely with academic staff within the Faculties of Life Sciences and Brain Sciences and are part of the UCL Neuroscience Domain which brings together over 450 principal investigators and offers extensive opportunities for interaction and collaboration. The Centre offers additional opportunities for collaboration, networking and intellectual stimulation through its visitor programme, regular seminar series and the hosting of world-class scientific conferences and workshops.

The Centre provides extensive conceptual and methodological bridges between areas of existing neuroscience strength at UCL, from which it directly benefits. Existing work at UCL is closely interwoven via the cross-cutting themes of development, behaviour and plasticity, and with the creation and use of transgenic models. A strong culture of close interaction between experimental and theoretical approaches is a thread running through the Centre, tying together complex phenomena at different levels of description, by linking informational and computational concepts to their circuit and cellular counterparts, all in relation to model behaviours.

### Sainsbury Wellcome Centre Scientific and Administrative Support

The Centre and its staff are provided with significant administrative, technical and scientific support, including a Centre Manager responsible for overseeing local management of staff responsible for estates, health and safety, IT, finance, HR, research and student administration, and ensuring compliance with UCL policies and statutory requirements.

In addition, there are dedicated managers for the Centre's scientific support services, including for its state-of-the-art prototype and fabrication laboratories, animal facilities and high-end computing facilities, and on-site managers responsible for the building, its maintenance, facilities and services.

### Work Environment

The SWC offers staff an award-winning work environment in the heart of Fitzrovia with an on-site brasserie, access to lockers and changing facilities, secure bicycle storage, and access to pleasant outdoor spaces. The Centre also offers the full range of [UCL staff benefits](#), including a generous annual leave entitlement, occupational pension schemes, excellent family-friendly policies such as occupational shared parental pay, a work-life balance policy, and a range of financial benefits such as a season ticket loan scheme and staff discounts.

### About Jeffrey C. Erlich's Laboratory

Our lab is generally interested in the neurobiology of cognition. There are currently two major research directions in lab: economic choice and spatial cognition. We study mice, rat, human and synthetic agents to investigate how real and artificial neural networks generate behavior. What sets us apart from many other labs studying behavioral and computational neuroscience is that we use a highly automated facility to train hundreds of rodents per day. This facility uses modern tools from the information technology industry: databases, web dashboards, pub/sub messaging frameworks, deployment tools, version control, issue tracking and project management software.

### Main Duties and Responsibilities

### The Role of Research Assistant

The lab is looking for a motivated and organised Research Assistant with a strong programming and machine learning background to contribute to the lab. The role will be 50% infrastructure development and maintenance and 50% research software engineering. For the infrastructure portion of the position, you will write and/or maintain software tools and services to support the high throughput infrastructure. You will also help maintain and build hardware associated with the lab. The main skills required for this portion of the work will be expertise with python, git, SQL, API, linux system administration and software engineering.

For the research portion of the position, you will work closely with lab members to employ modern machine learning techniques for neural and behaviour data analysis and simulation. For this portion of the work, expertise in pyTorch or tensorflow, reinforcement learning, recurrent neural networks, and strong mathematical, statistical background are required.

For an interested candidate there is also the option to contribute experimentally to the work in the lab: including train rats and/or mice on decision-making tasks, helping to perform stereotaxic surgeries, handling and care of animals. You could also assist other team members in data collection, such as optogenetic perturbation, calcium imaging or high-density silicon probe recordings in awake behaving animals.

Candidates should have excellent organisation and communication skills and the ability to work independently and to use your initiative. Candidates will be expected to work in a collaborative and multidisciplinary research environment, communicate regularly with all other lab members and SWC staff, and work in especially close collaboration with members of the Neurobiological Research Facility.

This post is funded for one year in the first instance with the possibility of extension.



## JOB DESCRIPTION

### Core Duties

- To contribute to the overall activities of the research team and the department as appropriate.
- Work closely with the Laboratory Head and other team members to write and maintain code in the service of the high throughput training facility.
- Work closely with the Laboratory Head and other team members to write and maintain code in the service of the computational modelling and machine learning techniques for data analysis.
- Participate in the building and maintenance of the hardware and electronics associated with the high throughput training facility.
- Maintain lab equipment, lab supplies and databases to ensure that all work is carried out in accordance with statutory and UCL regulations as appropriate.
- Maintain a meticulous record, write up results, and document work, maintaining a permanent record of the methodologies and the experiments.
- To contribute to the induction and direction of other research staff and students if so requested by the Principal Investigator.
- Maintain the lab cleanliness and organisation of the laboratory space.
- Calibrate and repair behavioural set up to ensure it functions at the correct levels.
- Adhere to good laboratory practice at all times and observe all required health and safety procedures.
- Observe all ethical and legal requirements in relation to the use of animal models in research.
- Observe all required Data Protection and Security requirements.

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. Job descriptions are reviewed on a regular basis including at the annual appraisal. As duties and responsibilities change, the job description may be amended in consultation with the post-holder.

The post-holder will be expected to actively follow all UCL policies and procedures including Equal Opportunities, maintain an awareness of Fire and Health & Safety Regulations, attend management meetings and undertake such training and development as may be required for the post.

All staff are required to act professionally, co-operatively and flexibly in line with the requirements of the post.

**Selection Criteria**

The selection criteria outline the skills, knowledge and experience required in order to perform this role. Applicants will be selected based on how well they demonstrate that they meet the essential, and if appropriate, desirable criteria for this particular role.

	Essential	Desirable
<b>Qualifications</b>		
A bachelor's degree in Neuroscience, Computer Science, Engineering, Physics, or a related field.	Essential	
<b>Knowledge and experience</b>		
The ability to contribute to research projects within the laboratory.	Essential	
Independent research experience, with evidence of achievement within the appropriate subject area (e.g. presented posters, given research talks).		Desirable
Experience with best practices of software engineering (including version control, documentation, unit and integration tests)	Essential	
Experience with python	Essential	
Experience with pyTorch or other framework for training neural networks		Desirable
Experience with databases (ideally MySQL)		Desirable
Experience with linux/unix command line and administration	Essential	
<b>Skills</b>		
Strong written and oral communication skills, with the ability to present complex information effectively.	Essential	
Able to prioritise, manage your own time, and multi-task and integrate the demands of a range of different activities and deadlines in parallel.	Essential	
<b>Personal attributes</b>		
Able to work effectively alone, but also contribute and work well as part of a team.	Essential	
Accountable, reliable and resourceful.	Essential	
Works ethically, legally, and with integrity.	Essential	
<b>Other Requirements</b>		
An understanding and appreciation of the mission and research environment of the SWC, and a commitment to the establishment of the SWC as a world-leading research centre.	Essential	
Able and willing to work flexibly to meet the needs of the Centre.	Essential	

### Contact Us

If you have any queries relating to the vacancy or how to apply please contact the SWC HR team, [swc.hr@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:swc.hr@ucl.ac.uk)

### Applying for the Role

#### *Redeployment Candidates*

To begin the online application process, please access the advertisement by searching for it via the [UCL Redeployment Service](#) using the vacancy reference number.

Please complete the online application form, and use the supporting statement section to outline how you meet the selection criteria. Applications will be shortlisted based on the strength of the examples used to demonstrate that the applicant meets the selection criteria.

#### *External Candidates*

To begin the online application process, please access the advertisement by searching for it on the [UCL vacancy search page](#) using the vacancy reference number, and click on the “Apply Now” button at the bottom of the vacancy advertisement.

In addition to completing the online application form please also upload the following supporting documents to your application:

- A current CV
- Any supporting documents you wish to include as evidence of completed research.
- A 1 page statement of interest explaining your interest in the position and your future goals

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

## TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

### Pre-employment Checks

Confirmation of appointment will be subject to receipt of satisfactory references, verification of proof of right to work in the UK and to satisfactory pre-employment health and security screening. The Centre will provide overseas candidates who may require sponsorship with support in seeking an appropriate visa.

### Salary

Starting salary will be on the Grade 6 scale according to relevant skills, knowledge, experience and achievement. Staff incrementally progress along the salary scale; the effective date of incremental progression is 01 August each year. You must have completed the period of service stipulated in your contract of employment (typically your probationary period) to be eligible to increment. Incremental progression does not include the discretionary contribution points on the salary scale. Cost of living pay awards are negotiated nationally and are normally effective from 1 August each year.

### Pension

Post-holders will be eligible to join SAUL (Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London), subject to the Scheme's rules and eligibility conditions.

### Conditions of Service

Conditions of Service for Research, Teaching and Professional Services Staff can be found online [here](#).

### Probation

Appointments are subject to a probationary period of 9 months.

### Hours of Work and Overtime

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.

Pre-agreed overtime will be offered as equivalent time off in lieu.

### Annual Leave

Staff are entitled to 27 days annual leave per year (pro rata for part-time staff). In addition, staff are entitled to 8 days public and statutory holidays, and around 6 UCL closure days with pay per year.

### Location

The Sainsbury Wellcome Centre is located in the heart of London around five minutes' walk from the main UCL campus. The mainline railway stations at Euston, King's Cross, St Pancras, Marylebone and Paddington are within easy reach as are the London Underground stations located at Warren Street and Goodge Street.

### Equal Opportunities

SWC is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion for its staff, students and visitors and is fully supportive of UCL's policy; the full equality policy statement is available online [here](#).

SWC holds an [Athena SWAN](#) Bronze award.

## OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

### Background Information

#### The Gatsby Charitable Foundation

[Gatsby](#) is a Trust set up by David Sainsbury to realise his charitable objectives.

We focus our support on a limited number of areas:

- Plant science research
- Neuroscience research
- Science and engineering education
- Economic development in Africa
- Public policy research and advice
- The Arts

We are proactive in devising projects to achieve our aims.

We are enthusiastic about supporting innovation.

We are analytical as we believe it is important to understand the opportunities and problems we tackle.

We take a long-term view as we do not think much can be achieved by short, one-off projects.

We are always eager to form partnerships with organisations who share our goals.

#### Gatsby Neuroscience

“Supporting world-class theoretical and experimental research on neural circuits and behaviour, and activities which further enhance our investments in this area.”

Gatsby's pioneering investment in neuroscience began in the 90s with the establishment of the Gatsby Computational Neuroscience Unit (GCNU) at UCL. A small number of research projects and meetings were supported across the UK over the following years until in 2007 the Trustees made the decision to expand Gatsby's efforts, specifically to link the GCNU with experimental neuroscience. For this new endeavour Gatsby has continued to be bold and innovative. In a funding partnership with Wellcome it has developed a new research institute, the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre (SWC) for Neural Circuits and Behaviour at UCL. As part of this new initiative the Foundation has invested

in a number of innovative collaborative research programmes in the broad area of neural circuits and behaviour around the world. These programmes reflect the types of research we envision in the SWC and the people we support bring a wealth of expertise to help our thinking and development of the scientific focus.

## OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

### Wellcome

[Wellcome](#) is the largest medical charity in the United Kingdom and presently, after the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the second largest such charity in the world. It funds a wide variety of biomedical science, including research in developing countries, with its mission being to achieve extraordinary improvements in human and animal health. In pursuit of this the Trust supports the brightest minds in biomedical research and the medical humanities.

Wellcome funds a significant portfolio of neuroscience and mental health research - ranging from studies of molecular and cellular components to work on cognition and higher systems. It also has strong interests in applied clinical research on neurological and mental health disorders and support activities that explore historical, ethical, social and artistic perspectives on the mind and mental health. Current major investments include Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging at UCL, the Wellcome Trust Centre for Mitochondrial Research at Newcastle University, the Oxford Centre for Neural Circuits and Behaviour and the Behavioural and Clinical Neurosciences Institute at the University of Cambridge.

Wellcome has several grant schemes including Investigator Awards and numerous prestigious Fellowship schemes ranging from the most senior Principal Research Fellowships for world-class scientists through to the new Henry Wellcome Fellowship scheme for recent PhD graduates. These Awards and Fellowships are awarded competitively and judged by peer review through the Neuroscience Expert Review Groups.

## The Neuroscience Environment at UCL

The UCL student community comprises 29,000 students from 150 countries. UCL currently offers 275 undergraduate programmes and more than 220 taught postgraduate programmes as well as the opportunity to carry out postgraduate research in all of its subjects.

In the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, which evaluates research performance in all UK universities, UCL was ranked the top higher education institution for research strength.

UCL is consistently rated among the top five universities in the UK (alongside Cambridge, Imperial College and Oxford) and in the top 25 universities in the world. The 2018 QS global rankings placed UCL seventh among the world's top ten universities.

UCL is a powerhouse in neuroscience, whether measured by published output, citations, grant income, or prizes and honours. UCL Neuroscience currently includes 26 Fellows of the Royal Society and 60 Fellows of the Academy of Medical Sciences. It has over 480 neuroscience PIs from some 30 academic departments and is ranked first in Europe (and second worldwide) for ISI citations in Neuroscience and Behaviour. UCL has an existing cadre of internationally competitive research groups in the fields of neural circuits and behaviour, and numerous strengths in related aspects of neuroscience, plus allied fields such as physics, chemistry and nanotechnology. UCL is the only institution in the UK – and one of the few in the world – with sufficient concentration and infrastructure in neuroscience and related disciplines to support the ambitious goals of the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre.

The environment at UCL will be further enhanced by the development of the Francis Crick Institute and its integration with UCL and other academic institutions including Imperial College and King's College.

UCL provides an environment of excellence for training future generations of interdisciplinary researchers in neuroscience. Graduate training programmes include; the 4-year Wellcome Neuroscience programme; two further related 4-year Wellcome programmes; the Gatsby Computational Neuroscience Unit's 4-year

programme; the BBSRC London Interdisciplinary Biosciences PhD Consortium (a 4-year programme led by UCL) and the CoMPLEX PhD programme.

These surrounding strengths show UCL's capacity for bringing neuroscientists together with other biomedical scientists, plus mathematicians, physical scientists, computer scientists and engineers, to tackle the most challenging multidisciplinary problems. At the same time, UCL's unique clinical links via its major postgraduate institutes and partner hospitals facilitate eventual translation to new treatments for neural disorders.

Further details of UCL Neuroscience can be found at [www.ucl.ac.uk/neuroscience](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/neuroscience)

**The UCL School of Life and Medical Sciences (SLMS)** brings together four UCL Faculties to create one of the largest and most prestigious aggregations of academics in biomedical, life and population health sciences worldwide. The School has a global reputation for teaching, informed by cutting-edge research. A full profile of the School can be found online [here](#). The School structured into four Faculties: Brain Sciences; Life Sciences; Medical Sciences; and Population Health Sciences.

The School coordinates [nine Research Domains](#) which are networks that bring together researchers regardless of their host Faculty. Colleagues engage with as many of the Domains as are relevant to their area of research activity, encouraging interdisciplinarity across the School and beyond.

**The UCL Faculty of Life Sciences** combines the strengths of UCL's basic biological and preclinical sciences. Some of the constituent departments have long and distinguished histories that can be traced back to the early nineteenth century and the foundation of UCL. There are nine Nobel Prize winners associated with Life Sciences at UCL. It presents an unrivalled environment for students and researchers in life science disciplines, ranging from neuroscience to the biology of molecules, cells and organisms. The Faculty provides outstanding opportunities for research-led and research-based study. The Faculty is home for

over 500 graduate students studying on some of the UK's most prestigious PhD programmes.

[The UCL Faculty of Brain Sciences](#) undertakes world-leading research and teaching in neuro. You will have a bachelor's degree in Neuroscience, Computer Science, Engineering, Physics, or a related field as well as experience with best practices of software engineering. Excellent communication and organisation skills are essential, as well as the ability to work independently and to use your initiative.

Expertise with python, Git, SQL, API, linux system administration and software engineering are essential for the infrastructure development portion of the role. Expertise in pyTorch or tensorflow, reinforcement learning, recurrent neural networks, and strong mathematical, statistical background are required for the research software engineering portion of the role.

You will be expected to work in a collaborative and multidisciplinary research environment, communicate regularly with all other lab members and SWC staff, and work in collaboration with members of the Neurobiological Research Facility. aklogy and neural pathways, neuroscience, language, cognition, psychology and psychiatry. It takes an integrative approach to the study of mind and brain by focusing on the determinants of human perception, cognition, emotion and behaviour. The Faculty and its component parts create an outstanding and vibrant environment for study and research.

In order to make use of basic science discoveries, UCL works closely with major Hospital Trust

partners to develop further its outstanding academic health science environment. UCL Partners is an academic health science partnership that brings together UCL with four of its NHS partner Trust organisations (Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust (GOSH); Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust; Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust; University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) in order to create Europe's leading health research powerhouse; see <http://www.uclpartners.com/>. The intention is to deliver real improvements in health for patients in London, and around the world. UCL Partners will support over 3,500 scientists, senior researchers and consultants, with a combined annual turnover of around £2 billion. By pooling resources and expertise, UCL Partners, which together treat over 1.5 million patients every year, is able to produce world-class research in key areas, each of which poses a major health challenge. These include the nervous system, children's health, heart disease, transplantation, immunology, ophthalmology, deafness and hearing impairment, dental and oral disease, cancer and women's health.

The Sainsbury Wellcome Centre for Neural Circuits and Behaviour is critical to the ambition of UCL to enhance its international leadership in neuroscience. It will deliver the conceptual and technological focus necessary for providing a causal account of how specific patterns of activity in neural circuits process information to direct behaviour to transform understanding of brain function.