Job Description

Research Assistant (Akrami Lab)

Department: Sainsbury Wellcome Centre
Grade: 6B
Salary: £37,332 - £39,980 per annum including London Allowance
Hours: 36.5 hours per week (full time 1.00 FTE)
Reports to: Athena Akrami
Available until: Funded for one year in the first instance

Context

The Akrami lab is generally interested in the neurobiology of cognition. We study mice, rat, human and synthetic agents to investigate how real and artificial neural networks generate behaviour.

Our approach integrates cross-species experiments and computational modelling, to understand complex cognitive processes related to working memory and statistical learning.

Our lab is a diverse group, both in scientific training—ranging from fields such as engineering, psychology, and biology—and in cultural backgrounds, with members coming from countries all over the world, as befits a modern systems neuroscience lab located in a world-class neuroscience department in a metropolitan city.

Main purpose of the job

We are looking for a Research Assistant to run experiments investigating the neural mechanisms of spatial working memory.

You will perform stereotaxic surgeries, and assist in recording neural activity with high-density electrophysiology, and perturbing activity with optogenetics or pharmacological manipulations.

We seek a candidate who is detail-oriented, conscientious, and self-motivated. Additionally, the ideal candidate must be able to demonstrate (or learn) precision and care in tasks involving fine manual skills, and be able to communicate their science in a clear manner.

This position is ideal for candidates seeking additional research experience before applying to graduate degree programs in Neuroscience or related fields. We welcome applications from all qualified candidates and particularly encourage applications from underrepresented groups in science.

The post will be for one year in the first instance, and is part of a Wellcome Trust Early Career grant led by Dr. Edmund Chong.
Duties and responsibilities

- To contribute to the overall activities of the research team and the department as appropriate.
- To assist other members of the group with experiments where needed.
- To set up and run experiments with the guidance of other lab members.
- To prepare and present findings of research activity to colleagues on a weekly basis.
- 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, techniques and duties performed.
- To contribute to the induction and direction of other research staff and students, if requested by the Principal Investigators or line manager.
- Maintain the lab cleanliness and organisation of the laboratory space.
- Always adhere to good laboratory practice 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.

General

- Carry out any other duties within the scope, spirit and purpose of the job as requested by the line manager.
- Actively follow and promote all UCL policies including those on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Maintain an awareness and observation of Fire and Health & Safety Regulations.
- There may, on occasion, be a requirement to work extended hours.
- 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.
- Adhere to 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

### Selection Criteria
Applicants will be selected based on how well they demonstrate that they meet the essential, and if appropriate, desirable criteria for this particular role. They should give examples of how they meet each criterion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Criteria</th>
<th>Assessment method (Application/ Interview/Practical Test)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualifications, experience and knowledge</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A bachelor’s degree in Neuroscience, molecular biology, or a related field.</td>
<td>Application/ Interview</td>
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<td>Independent research experience, with evidence of achievement within the appropriate subject area.</td>
<td>Application/ Interview</td>
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<td>Experience with rodent behavioural assays.</td>
<td>Application/ Interview</td>
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<td><strong>Skills and abilities</strong></td>
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<td>The ability to contribute to research projects within the laboratory.</td>
<td>Application/ Interview</td>
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<td>Strong written and oral communication skills, with the ability to present complex information effectively, as evidenced by a short presentation during the interview.</td>
<td>Application/ Interview</td>
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<td>Able to prioritise, manage your own time, and multi-task to integrate the demands of a range of different activities and deadlines in parallel.</td>
<td>Application/ Interview</td>
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<td>Able to work effectively alone, but also contribute and work well as part of a team.</td>
<td>Application/ Interview</td>
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<td>Accountable, reliable and resourceful</td>
<td>Application/ Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Works ethically, legally, and with integrity</td>
<td>Application/ Interview</td>
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<td><strong>Personal Attributes &amp; UCL Core Behaviours</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accountable, reliable and resourceful</td>
<td>Interview</td>
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<td>Demonstrates an interest in personal development.</td>
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<td>Having a positive and helpful approach to work.</td>
<td>Interview</td>
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<td><strong>Other Requirements</strong></td>
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<td>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.</td>
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<td>Able and willing to work flexibly to meet the needs of the Centre.</td>
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<td><strong>Desirable criteria (only be scored if there is a tie break for shortlisting).</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience in calibration, maintenance and repair of animal behavioural setups.</td>
<td>Application</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience with rodent electrophysiology / optogenetics.</td>
<td>Application</td>
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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.

**About 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 comprises 12 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.

SWC is part of the UCL School of Life and Medical Sciences (SLMS). 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. SWC is most closely linked with the Faculties of Brain Science and Life Sciences, and is aligned administratively with Life Sciences. The Faculty of Life Sciences leadership team works closely with the SWC leadership to support and enable their mission and facilitate research excellence.

Further details about UCL can be found at www.ucl.ac.uk.

**Professional Services at the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre**

SWC has a specialist and experienced professional services team. It is structured to efficiently support research activity and deliver effective management

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**Apply**

To apply for this position visit: https://www.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

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

**Probation**

Appointments are subject to receipt of satisfactory references and a probationary period of 9 months.

**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:

1. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/pay-benefits/staff-benefits
and operational leadership of the SWC. SWC prides itself on offering a high quality administrative, technical and operational support function, and fully supports the professional development and progression of its staff, actively encouraging colleagues to learn new skills and broaden their experience. The SWC is supported in this aim by UCL’s Organisational Development team who run a wide range of training programmes for all staff types and grades.

**Work Environment**

SWC offers staff an award-winning work environment in the heart of Fitzrovia with an on-site brasserie, secure bicycle storage, and access to pleasant outdoor spaces.

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, including excellent family-friendly policies such as occupational shared parental pay, a work-life balance policy, career break policy and a range of financial benefits such as a season ticket loan scheme and staff discounts.

Further information can be found online:

2. [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/pay-benefits/staff-benefits](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/pay-benefits/staff-benefits)

**Accreditations**

The Sainsbury Wellcome Centre and Gatsby Computational Neuroscience Unit recently received an Athena Swan Bronze Award. Find out more about our commitment to promoting gender equality.

SWC recently received full accreditation from the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) International. Find out more about our commitment to supporting a culture of care.