



JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE	Postdoctoral Researcher	
FACULTY SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	& Genes Environment Lifespan laboratory, Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, Department of Psychological Sciences	
REPORTS TO	Research Supervisor, Dr Angelica Ronald	
SUPERVISES	Interns or students as required	
POST REFERENCE	10649	
GRADE	Grade 7	DATE February 2012

Birkbeck is a world-class institution, a vibrant centre of academic engagement and excellence and the UK's leading provider of part-time, research-led evening education for mature students. There are nearly 19,000 students studying short courses, certificates, diplomas, first degrees, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research degrees. Birkbeck provides Londoners with the unique opportunity to fit study around their busy lives. Founded in 1823 as the London Mechanics' Institute, Birkbeck was incorporated in the University of London in 1920.

Genes Environment Lifespan (GEL) laboratory

The Genes Environment Lifespan (GEL) laboratory conducts behavioural genetic, molecular genetic, and developmental research on typical and atypical behaviour across the lifespan. The lab's director, Dr Angelica Ronald, is leading a new Medical Research Council (MRC)-funded project on psychotic experiences in adolescence using a large population twin cohort. For more information on the laboratory, please refer to the web site: <http://www.gel.bbk.ac.uk>

Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development (CBCD)

The GEL lab is part of the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development, which incorporates a group of researchers studying brain and psychological development in typically and atypically developing individuals from infancy to adolescence using behavioural testing, behaviour genetics, and brain imaging methods. The Centre, led by Mark Johnson, currently involves about forty people all part of a strong team in a friendly working environment. The Centre's web address is <http://www.cbcd.bbk.ac.uk/>.

Genetics Grouping

The GEL laboratory is central to Birkbeck's Genetics Grouping. This group conducts genetic research on human development and behaviour in Birkbeck's School of Science. The group was founded in 2009 and reflects part of the strategic initiative within the School of Science to develop genetic expertise. Further information about the grouping can be found here: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/psychology/our-research/research-groups/genetics-grouping>.

Overview of the Role

A 24-month postdoctoral position is available for a highly motivated postdoctoral scientist to work on a new project investigating the genetic and environmental causes of psychotic experiences in late adolescence using a classic twin design. This project specifically investigates the degree to which genetic and environmental influences contribute to risk for psychotic experiences in adolescence. The main set of studies will employ the classic twin design and will involve collaborating on the Twins Early Development Study (<http://www.teds.ac.uk>), a UK-based general population cohort of monozygotic and dizygotic twins. The role will involve analyzing existing data as well as collecting new data through in-person interviews and observational assessments. There may also be the opportunity to conduct non-twin parametric analyses and molecular genetic analyses during the project.

Candidates should hold, or expect to hold by the time of appointment, a doctoral qualification and have a relevant research background in quantitative genetics or a psychiatry-related topic. Other desirable criteria are sound knowledge of the classic twin design and the statistical methods involved in twin data analysis. The successful candidate will have proven ability to express ideas and disseminate findings effectively. Experience testing participants in person is desirable. Applicants should be able to work independently as well as co-operate with other members of the research team, the GEL lab and the CBCD. The successful applicant will be based at the GEL laboratory, which is part of the CBCD at Birkbeck.

The two selected articles (below) describe findings from twin studies on the genetic and environmental causes of autism spectrum disorders and autistic traits. Similar types of methods and analyses will be employed on the new MRC-funded study of psychotic experiences on which the successful candidate will work.

Ronald, A. & Hoekstra, R.A. (2011). Autism spectrum disorders and autistic traits: A decade of new twin studies. *Neuropsychiatric Genetics*, 156, 255-274.

Ronald, A., Simonoff, E., Kuntsi, J., Asherson, P. and Plomin, R. (2008). Evidence for overlapping genetic influences on autistic and ADHD behaviours in a community twin sample. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 49, 535-542.

PURPOSE OF THE JOB

To contribute to the development of the research proposal, research objectives, and to conduct and write up both individual and collective research projects for publication.

MAIN DUTIES OF THE JOBHOLDER

Research and Scholarship

- To carry out quantitative genetic analyses on psychiatric symptoms in adolescence
- To conduct research including contacting families, scheduling testing, conducting standardised interviews on adolescent twins with psychiatric symptoms, and processing and analysing behavioural and interview data
- To write reports and articles for publication based upon research findings
- To update knowledge and understanding in field or specialism, attend relevant scientific seminars, and translate knowledge of advances in the subject area into research activity.
- To support the development of other staff as necessary and appropriate
- To ensure that research content and the methods used are in accordance with equal opportunities.
- Assist the line manager in the overall running of the project, providing admin and data handling support where required.

- Assist in the overall running of the GEL laboratory including health and safety issues, maintain and ordering specialist equipment and supplies and assisting in the development of new grant applications
- Uphold the ethical and research-excellence standards of the laboratory
- Any other duties appropriate to the grade as directed by the line manager

Teaching & Learning

- To contribute to the assessment of student knowledge and supervision of their projects.
- To assist in the development of student research skills.

Communication

- To prepare proposals and applications to external bodies, for example, for funding and contractual purposes.
- Communicate complex conceptual ideas and information of a highly technical and specialist nature to peers and various non-experts, both in oral and written media.
- Present information on research progress and outcomes at conferences.
- Communicate in a clear, polite and confidential manner to participants and their families.
- Maintain confidentiality of communications regarding research data, for example, when interacting with other researchers.
- Prepare scientific manuscripts based on research for publication in peer-reviewed journals.
- Maintain good public relations with participating families and other outside bodies who visit the laboratory by providing appropriate feedback about research within the GEL lab and the CBCD.
- Contribute to writing information about the GEL lab and CBCD's research for lay-persons to use in leaflets, on the web site and in newsletters.

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AND CONTACTS

People Management and Teamwork

- To manage own research and the administrative activities of the lab, with guidance if required.
- To work collaboratively with Dr Ronald and with academic colleagues on this project and on areas of shared research interest.
- To attend and contribute to relevant meetings.
- Participate in and contribute to didactic activities in the lab (journal clubs and discussion groups).
- To provide support and supervision where required for other research assistants, students and interns associated with this project.

Liaison and Networking

- To liaise with colleagues, students, parents, and relevant community organizations.
- To build internal contacts, and participate in internal networks for the exchange of information and to form relationships for future collaboration.
- To liaise with external bodies and networks to share information and identify potential sources of funds.
- To ensure that participants' clinical concerns are known and dealt with in a professional manner according to specified procedures.

Dimensions

Problem Solving and Impact

- To learn and use new research techniques and methods.
- To use own initiative and creativity to identify areas for research, help to develop new research methods, and extend the research portfolio.

- To use creativity to analyse and interpret research data and draw conclusions on the outcomes.
- To contribute to collaborative decision making with colleagues in areas of research.
- To deal with problems, which may affect the achievement of research objectives and deadlines
- To understand equal opportunity issues as they may impact on areas of research content and methods.

Resource Management

- To plan and manage own day-to-day research activity within the framework of the agreed programme, ensuring the effective and appropriate use of resources.
- To contribute to the planning of research projects and co-ordinate own work with that of others to avoid conflict or duplication of effort.

Working Environment

- To balance the competing pressures of research and administrative demands and deadlines.
- To carry out tasks that require the learning of certain skills.
- To engage in continuous professional development.
- To be aware of the risks in the work environment and their potential impact on their own work and that of others

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

These are standard to all Birkbeck Job Descriptions

- To adhere to the College's Equal Opportunities policy in all activities, and to actively promote equality of opportunity wherever possible.
- To be responsible for your own health and safety and that of your colleagues, in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and relevant EC directives.
- To work in accordance with the Data Protection Act and to ensure that all new systems are reported to your Data Protection Controller.
- To undertake such other duties as may be reasonably expected.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job Title: Postdoctoral Researcher

Post No: 10649

Department of Psychological Sciences

ATTRIBUTES	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possess sufficient breadth or depth of specialist knowledge in quantitative genetics of complex traits or disorders or psychiatric research and of research methods and techniques to work within established research programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant knowledge in psychosis or psychiatric research ▪ Relevant knowledge of quantitative genetic research and twin model-fitting research
Technical/Work-based Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills in research relevant to the subject area ▪ Effective oral and written communication skills, to write up complex research findings and to convey specialist/technical material accurately and clearly. ▪ Computer proficiency in standard packages (e.g. word processing, spreadsheets, e-mail and internet use, including statistical packages such as SPSS) ▪ Statistical skills for quantitative analyses ▪ Record of relevant research publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experience with R statistical package is desirable ▪ Experience with Mx statistical package is desirable
General Skills/Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initiative and creativity to ensure research is effective ▪ Effective presentation skills. ▪ Proven organisation and administration skills ▪ Commitment to working with diversity ▪ Willingness to travel and to work flexibly including some weekend work when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to respond effectively to pressure in peaks of workload
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experience of utilising research methods and techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experience of behaviour genetic twin model-fitting analyses, using Mx

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experience publishing in peer-reviewed journals ▪ Experience of conducting advanced statistical analyses 	<p>statistical programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experience of working with adolescents in a research/clinical or educational setting ▪ Experience of working with large datasets ▪ Experiences of working with participants with mental health issues
Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PhD (or equivalent) in quantitative genetics, psychiatry-related topic or related discipline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PhD in quantitative genetics that involved twin modelling

FURTHER PARTICULARS & INFORMATION ON THE POST

Salary:	£31,020 per annum on Grade 7 of the salary scales, plus £2,946 London Allowance per annum. With annual incremental progression rising to £35,938 per annum, plus £2,946 per annum London Allowance
Ref No:	10649
Probation:	The appointment may be subject to a probationary period of six months.
Duration of post:	Fixed term for 24 months with the possibility of extension.
Hours:	Full-time, 35 hours per week
Annual leave entitlement:	25 days per year, plus an additional six days when the College is closed during the spring and winter breaks. This is in addition to the eight bank holidays.
Superannuation:	The normal retirement age for all staff is 65. The post is superannuable under the USS scheme (Universities Superannuation Scheme). This is a defined benefit scheme, and is often substantially more beneficial to the employee than a "money-purchase" scheme.
Closing date:	12 March 2012
Interview date:	tbc
Start date:	tbc

To apply for this post please visit www.bbk.ac.uk/jobs (Search using Ref No. 10649)

If you have difficulty applying for a post, please contact Human Resources email: humanresources@bbk.ac.uk

Informal enquiries can be made to:

Informal enquiries can be made up to Dr Angelica Ronald, Department of Psychological Sciences, Birkbeck, University of London, Malet street, London. Email: a.ronald@bbk.ac.uk.

General Information for Prospective Job Applicants

The College

Birkbeck is a unique institution within the UK higher education system. We are the UK's leading provider of part-time face-to-face courses for mature students and the largest single provider of such courses in London.

Birkbeck has an international reputation for the quality of its research and teaching. But, more than that, Birkbeck has a unique social mission – to provide universal access to the benefits of learning and particularly to provide opportunities in higher education to students who may be in full-time employment, or who may not have had the opportunity to study at an earlier stage in their lives. This has always been the central mission of Birkbeck, ever since it was established over 180 years ago, and it is one that we are proud to stand by.

Today, Birkbeck offers students, from diverse educational, cultural and social backgrounds, an extensive range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across the disciplines, as well as an unrivalled choice of both vocational and non-vocational courses through our Faculty of Continuing Education. This is what makes Birkbeck a special place to study.

Birkbeck is also a special place in which to work. Feedback from both staff and students clearly shows that the expertise, hard work and commitment of colleagues across the College, from academics to catering staff, school administrators to researchers, is the foundation upon which Birkbeck has forged its reputation as a centre of teaching and research excellence.

There are over 7,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled at the College in a wide range of subjects in the Arts, Sciences, and Social Sciences. Through the College's Faculty of Continuing Education, a further 13,000 students are taught at centres throughout the London area. There are approximately 320 teaching staff in the Schools and associate Centres and over 600 staff engaged in areas of research, technical, computing, secretarial, library, and central administrative support services.

Equal Opportunities & Diversity

The University of London was established to provide education on the basis of merit alone and without regard to race, creed or political belief, and was the first University in the United Kingdom to admit women to its degrees. This tradition continues into the field of employment and the University will not tolerate unfair discrimination. Birkbeck is an equal opportunities employer.

The College and the trade unions represented in the College are committed to the development of positive policies to promote diversity and equality of opportunity in employment. Therefore, the equal opportunities and diversity policy of the College is that the only consideration in recruitment, training, appraisal and promotion of employees must be how the requirements of the post are met or likely to be met by the individual under consideration. These requirements being met, no regard should be taken (except where the law allows) of that person's race, creed, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, religion, religious belief, language, political or other opinion affiliation, connections with a national minority, property, birth or other status, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status, family connections, or membership or non membership of a trade union. Except for the normal retirement age, the College does not discriminate on the basis of age, and applications from people over 50 years of age are welcome.

Location

The main Birkbeck building is in Malet Street, WC1, located in the Central University precinct in Bloomsbury, next to Senate House (the administrative centre of the federal University of London).

The College's administrative offices, library and other facilities, and certain academic schools are based in the main building. Other academic departments are in smaller premises, all within five minutes' walk from the Malet Street building. The Faculty of Continuing Education is located in houses in Russell Square, Tavistock Square and Torrington Square.

Birkbeck has good transport connections. The mainline stations of Kings Cross and Euston, underground stations Goodge Street, Euston Square, Warren Street, Tottenham Court Road, Euston and Russell Square are all within walking distance. A number of bus routes run parallel to Malet Street. There are cycle routes into Birkbeck and bicycle stands are located close to the main building.

As it is located so centrally, Birkbeck is close to many cultural institutions, such as the British Museum. Moreover, shopping districts such as Covent Garden, Soho, and Oxford Street can all be reached easily during your lunch break. There are a number of bookshops close by: one of the largest Waterstones bookshops in London is located at the end of Malet Street.

Facilities

There are snack bars in the Main Building, and the Gordon Square premises for tea, coffee, lunch, and evening meals. Staff are welcome to use the Students' Union bar and snack counter in the main buildings. The catering facilities of the other Colleges in the precinct, including the central London University Students' Union (ULU), which is next door to the College in Malet Street, are also open to staff.

'Energy Base' at ULU in Malet Street includes a 33-metre swimming pool, a large gym, and other facilities including a wide range of exercise classes. Staff may join as associate members. Staff may use the badminton court in Senate House, and arrangements may be made to play squash at certain halls of residence.

The College runs an evening nursery for the children of students and staff. Birkbeck is currently looking at introducing a childcare voucher scheme for staff.

Staff may borrow books from the Library and the majority are eligible to enrol on College courses. There are various staff common rooms and rest areas.

Birkbeck is a member of the Central University Institutions Health Service, which offers full medical facilities for staff and students. The College has a contributory pension scheme and staff may be eligible for a discount of up to 30% off subscriptions for the BUPAcare private medical insurance scheme. In an effort to provide a healthy and comfortable working environment, smoking is prohibited except in designated smoking areas.

Three trade unions are recognised for the local and national negotiation of pay and conditions of service, the Association of University Teachers (AUT), for academic, research and administrative staff, UNISON for clerical and manual staff, and Amicus for technical and craft staff.

Interest-free loans are available for the purchase of annual season tickets and bicycles for use to travel to work.

For further information regarding benefits available to employees at Birkbeck, please visit the website at <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/jobs/working-at-birkbeck/facilities>
