

## Research Associate (*Understanding the Everyday Sharing of Misinformation on Private Social Media*)

REQ200769

As part of the University's ongoing commitment to redeployment, please note that this vacancy may be withdrawn at any stage of the recruitment process if a suitable redeployee is identified.

### Department summary:

<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/online-civic-culture-centre/>  
<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/subjects/communication-media/>

### Project Description

The Online Civic Culture Centre (O3C) at Loughborough University is seeking to appoint an enthusiastic and highly motivated postdoctoral researcher to work with Professor Andrew Chadwick and Professor Cristian Vaccari on a new, Leverhulme-funded, research project *Understanding the Everyday Sharing of Misinformation on Private Social Media*.

### Job Description

**Job Grade:** Specialist and Supporting Academic Grade 6

This is an exciting, full-time, three-year postdoctoral role. The researcher's main responsibilities will be to contribute to project management, gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative data, organise and manage project data, arrange events and meetings relating to research, and contribute to the dissemination of the research in academic publications and public reports. Qualitative skills, including experience of in-depth interviews, focus groups, and thematic coding of these sources of data are essential. Experience of using Nvivo or similar will be an advantage. Quantitative skills, including knowledge of multivariate statistical analysis and random assignment survey experiment design are essential. Experience of using R will be an advantage. Familiarity with basic concepts and methods from social network analysis is also desirable.

### Leverhulme-Funded Project

Developments over recent years, including the global Coronavirus pandemic, indicate that addressing the problem of online misinformation requires much richer and contextual understandings of why people share false and misleading information. This project situates this problem in the contexts of people's everyday interactions. Digital platform affordances, technologically mediated and face-to-face social networks, local, national, and international media, political and cultural elites, and community and family structures all play a role in shaping how false and misleading information circulates. Understanding these factors is a key challenge for societies.

The successful candidate will primarily work with Professor Andrew Chadwick (Principal Investigator) and Professor Cristian Vaccari (Co-Investigator). They will also collaborate with the PhD student who will also be funded by the project and with the project's International Advisory Board. Applicants should hold, or be very close to being awarded, their PhD.

The successful applicant will be an experienced researcher with PhD-level social science training in either communication and media, political science, sociology, social psychology, or a cognate discipline or interdisciplinary field, such as behavioural science. They will have substantial knowledge of research on misinformation, be a team player, have excellent written English, presentational, and time management skills, be highly technologically literate, and be committed to the development of original social science theory and concepts.

In the latest UK Research Excellence Framework (2014), Communication and Media at Loughborough was ranked 2nd in the UK for research intensity, with 90% of its research “world leading” or “internationally excellent.” It was ranked Top in the UK in the Times Good University Guide in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021, and Top in the UK in the Complete University Guide for 2021.

## **Job Duties**

### **Project Specific (organizational duties)**

- Take shared responsibility for qualitative and quantitative research on online misinformation
- Manage and coordinate specific areas of the research including recruitment of respondents, interview and survey design, audio-visual data capture, online and/or in person
- Sort and categorize quantitative and qualitative datasets
- Transcribe the project’s qualitative interviews
- Collaborate with the project’s funded PhD researcher
- Take responsibility for negotiating and maintaining research contacts and relationships with research participants
- Manage and develop the project website, online materials, blog posts, and social media as appropriate
- Participate in the analysis and presentation of findings
- Manage and organize project meetings online and/or in person
- Attend and contribute to meetings with survey companies, project partners, and other stakeholder organisations online and/or in person
- Share research progress with the Investigators and International Advisory Board
- Maintain and update an online repository of data and research notes
- Write up regular progress reports and present outcomes to all Investigators and Collaborators.
- Attend and contribute to regular weekly internal meetings online and/or in person

### **Project Specific (research duties)**

- Conduct literature searches and collect background information on the research area
- Manage the design and delivery of the interviews and surveys
- Negotiate with, and follow up, research contacts
- Participate in research design and data collection using qualitative interviewing techniques online and/or in person
- Participate in research design and data collection using surveys and survey experiments online
- Employ thematic coding of qualitative data, using Nvivo or similar
- Employ multivariate statistical analysis using quantitative data, using R.
- Engage with other relevant stages of data analysis
- Contribute to the design and delivery of project events and associated scholarly activities (e.g. research symposia)
- Manage the development of materials for knowledge transfer and networking
- Author/co-author research articles suitable for publication in high quality academic journals
- Present/co-present at conferences, seminars and related events, online and/or in person
- Author/co-author scholarly articles and public reports based on this research

### **Other duties**

- Be responsible for ensuring the day to day running of the project, working with the PI and Co-I

- Formulate detailed plans for the project based on broad guidance from the project team.
- Attend and take part in continual professional development events online and/or in person.
- Support the project team by enhancing relationships with existing collaborators and by assisting the establishment of relationships with new collaborators.
- Complete Loughborough University training on GDPR regulations and intellectual property (IPR) agreements and work with the University's Research Support Office to ensure project compliance with them
- Engage in training programmes in the University (or elsewhere) that are consistent with the needs and aspirations of the project and those of the Department.
- Undertake other duties as may be reasonably requested and that are commensurate with the nature and grade of the post.

### **Points To Note**

The purpose of this job description is to indicate the general level of duties and responsibility of the post. The detailed duties may vary from time to time without changing the general character or level of responsibility entailed.

### **Special Conditions**

All staff have a statutory responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves, others and the environment and to prevent harm by their acts or omissions. All staff are therefore required to adhere to the University's Health, Safety and Environmental Policy & Procedures.

All staff should hold a duty and commitment to observing the University's Equality & Diversity policy and procedures at all times. Duties must be carried out in accordance with relevant Equality & Diversity legislation and University policies/procedures.

Successful completion of probation will be dependent on attendance at the University's mandatory courses which include Respecting Diversity and, where appropriate, Recruitment and Selection.

### **Organisational Responsibility**

Reports to the Principal Investigator, Professor Andrew Chadwick and the Co-Investigator, Professor Cristian Vaccari.

## Person Specification

Your application will be reviewed with respect to meeting the essential and desirable criteria listed below. Your application will be reviewed against the essential and desirable criteria listed below. Applicants are strongly advised to explicitly state and evidence how they meet each of the essential (and desirable) criteria in their application. Stages of assessment are as follows:

- 1 – Application
- 2 – Test/Assessment Centre/Presentation
- 3 – Interview

### Essential Criteria

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Substantial knowledge of research on misinformation	1, 2, 3
	Experience of using qualitative social research methods, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and thematic coding of these sources of data	1, 2, 3
	Experience of using quantitative social research methods, including knowledge of multivariate statistical analysis, survey design, and random assignment survey experiment design	1, 2, 3
	Experience of authoring high quality, original work for academic journals and conferences	1, 3
	Experience of presenting research at conferences and symposia	1, 3
Skills and abilities	Ability to work independently <u>and</u> as part of a team and to collaborate with others	1, 3
	Excellent written and spoken English	1, 2, 3
	Self-motivated with ability to meet deadlines	1, 2, 3
	Excellent interpersonal, organisational, and collaboration skills	1, 2, 3
	Ability to write project reports and make presentations in academic and public-facing settings	1, 2, 3
	Excellent time management and ability to complete agreed work commitments on time	1, 2, 3
	Competence in IT skills and digital media (e.g. website editing and updating, social media dissemination)	1, 3
Training	A willingness to undertake further training as appropriate and to adopt new procedures as and when required	3
Qualifications	PhD (or very close to completion) with social science training in either communication and media, political science, sociology, social psychology, or a cognate discipline or interdisciplinary field, such as behavioural science.	1, 2, 3
Other	A degree of flexibility and commitment to meet deadlines as appropriate.	3

### Desirable Criteria

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Knowledge of basic concepts and methods in social network analysis	1,3
	Proven ability to publish in academic journals and present at academic conferences	1
	Experience of using R	1,3

	Experience of using Nvivo or similar	1,3
	Working in a high quality academic research environment	1,3
	Experience of authoring or co-authoring public-facing research reports	1,3
Skills and abilities	Authoring original work, in the highest quality refereed academic journals	1,3
	A strong publication track record	1,2,3
	Sensitive understanding of the complex and contentious issues raised by the project, and ability to effectively conduct research and work with people holding different, including passionately contrasting, views.	1,3
	A commitment to advancing the field of misinformation studies	1,2,3

## Conditions of Service

The position is **full-time** and **fixed-term** until January 2024 (*term length will be reduced if candidate commences role post January 2021 due to funding restrictions*). Salary will be on Supporting and Specialist Academic, Grade 6 (£30,942 - £40,322 per annum), at a starting salary to be confirmed on offer of appointment.

The appointment will be subject to the University's Terms and Conditions of Employment for staff grades 6 and above, details of which can be found [here](#).

The University is committed to enabling staff to maintain a healthy work-home balance and has a number of family-friendly policies which can be found [here](#).

The University offers a wide range of employee benefits which can be found [here](#).

We also offer an on-campus nursery with subsidised places, subsidised places at local holiday clubs and a childcare voucher scheme (further details are available at: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/hr/a-z/childcare-information---page.html>)

In addition, the University is supportive, wherever possible, of flexible working arrangements. We also strive to create a culture that supports equality and celebrates diversity throughout the campus. The University holds a Bronze Athena SWAN award which recognises the importance of support for women at all stages of their academic career. For further information on Athena SWAN see <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/hr/athena-swan/>