

Research Associate for the Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS) Programme

Full-time and Fixed Term to 31st March 2025

REQ230292

As part of the University's ongoing commitment to redeployment, please note that this vacancy may be withdrawn at any stage of the recruitment process if a suitable redeployee is identified.

Project Description

1.8 billion people have access to electricity but still cook with biomass. Load shedding, weak grids, affordability of electricity, accessibility of liquid petroleum gas (LPG), tradition, perceptions, energy governance, and a lack of suitable cooking appliances all act as barriers to scaling up the use of electricity or gas for cooking – clean cooking. The Modern Energy Cooking Services Programme (MECS), is a £39.8 million, 8-year programme funded by UKAid through the Foreign and Commonwealth Department Office, led by Loughborough University.

We already know that increasing access through renewable energy generation is becoming more affordable and opening new windows of opportunity. New business models and smart monitoring are improving the reliability of LPG distribution, appliances can be made more energy efficient but still cook favourite foods so they taste right, and cooking with electricity is becoming increasingly affordable with issues of reliability and sustainability being overcome. We want to build on these opportunities and the new knowledge emerging from the MECS programme to break out of business-as-usual approaches and rapidly accelerate the transition from biomass to clean cooking on a global scale. The MECS programme is organized into four core workstreams; UK universities and innovators, southern partners, a challenge fund and scale-up. These four workstreams come together to achieve the ultimate ambition of the programme which is to change the narrative on clean cooking.

MECS has a very strong focus on research uptake, the researcher will be expected to travel to countries to engage at high levels with public and private sector stakeholders.

An extension for the programme is currently being processed. The likelihood of contracts being extended up to March 2026 is very high.

The post holders will take responsibility for leading the work in at least 1 MECS priority country (possibly 2). The post holder will also provide leadership on a thematic stream from within the programme.

We are looking for a researcher with skills and experience in one or more of the following thematic areas: (in alphabetical order)

- Climate and Carbon finance
- Consumer habits
- Energy policy and governance
- Energy systems modelling (on and off-grid)
- Finance (e.g. climate and carbon finance, RBF, multilaterals)
- Finance (e.g. saving and credit behaviour, intra household decision making)
- Gender and inclusion
- Humanitarian and displacement settings
- Integrated energy planning

- Supply chain and logistics (global movement and local assembly and manufacturing)
- Urban studies

Previous experience of applying these specialisms in an international development setting is desirable but not essential. In your application you should explain explicitly how your experience and skills are relevant to the thematic areas identified.

Job Description

Job Grade: Specialist and Supporting Academic Grade 6

Job Purpose

To support the delivery of the Modern Energy Cooking Services programme with a specific focus on working closely with MECS in-country partners, articulating headline research findings to a range of stakeholders, and leading on research uptake.

Job Duties

- Provide technical and research mentoring, advice and assistance to MECS partners in any of the MECS priority countries, ensuring a high quality of work and timely delivery of outputs.
- To formulate detailed plans for the scale-up of modern energy cooking services, in partnership with other MECS partners in relation to the overall programme objective of changing the narrative on clean cooking.
- Formulate and articulate headline research findings from across the programme making them suitable for a range of audiences and stakeholders.
- Lead on research uptake in assigned MECS priority country and on thematic stream.
- Write up regular progress reports and feed back to the project team on progress and make recommendations for next steps.
- Travel to attend meetings and make presentations both within the project partners working group and to external stakeholders.
- To support the project team by enhancing relationships with existing collaborators and by assisting the establishment of relationships with new collaborators.
- To write research papers suitable for publication in high quality academic journals.
- To attend and contribute to conferences.
- To contribute to project promotion and public engagement events.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times and ensure that intellectual property (IPR) agreements are not violated.
- 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 MECS Programme Manager.

Person Specification

Your application will be reviewed with respect to meeting 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 – Assessment Day
- 3 – Interview

Essential Criteria

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Background in a relevant field (from list of thematic areas given)	1,3
	Experience of delivering training and/or workshops to a wide range of audiences	1,3
	Experience of working and/or conducting research in the global south	1,2,3
	Experience of building and maintaining relationships with government/industry/civil society/communities	1,2,3
	Experience of stakeholder mapping	1,2
	Authoring original work for academic journal papers, conference papers or technical reports	1,3
Skills and abilities	Excellent knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research approaches (data collection and analysis)	1,2,3
	Proven, excellent analytical skills (quantitative and/or qualitative)	1
	Demonstrated ability to provide technical and/or research support to partner organisations	1,2,3
	Excellent written and oral communication skills	1,3
	Self-motivated with ability to meet deadlines and manage own workload	1,3
	Excellent interpersonal and organisational skills	1,3
	Ability to write project reports and make presentations to a range of stakeholders	1,3
	Ability to work across different locations / environments	1,2,3
	Ability to develop creative ways for presenting research analysis and findings (research uptake)	1,2,3
Training	Demonstrate evidence of having undertaken further training	1,3
Qualifications	PhD (or near completion) in a relevant field	1,3
Other	Commitment to observing the University's Equal Opportunities policy at all times.	1,3

Desirable Criteria

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Experience of research on clean cooking in addition to thematic expertise	1,3

	Experience of using social media	1
	Experience of activity planning, proposal, and budget development	1, 2
	Experience of developing communications materials	1
Skills and abilities	Ability to support others to produce high-quality research outputs	1, 2,3
Other	Willingness to travel on behalf of the project including overseas	1,3

Conditions of Service

The position is full-time and fixed term starting as soon as possible and ending on the 31st March 2025. Salary will be on Specialist and Supporting Academic Grade 6 £33,348 - £43,155 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 allowing its employees to work dynamically with a combination of working on campus and remotely, where possible. This role has been identified as a role that could work dynamically and if successful your manager will discuss these informal arrangements with you. Please note there is a general expectation that the successful candidate will spend the majority of time working on the Loughborough campus. (further information is available [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/>