

Research Associate for the Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS) Programme – Development Finance Full-time and Fixed Term to March 31st 2025

Job Ref: REQ230873

As part of the University's ongoing commitment to redeployment, please note that this vacancy may be withdrawn at any stage of the recruitment process if a suitable redeployee is identified.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

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

We are looking for a candidate with experience of the financing of energy access initiatives and/or development finance more generally, particularly results-based financing mechanisms and working with multilateral funders on large programmes. The experience does not necessarily have to be within the energy sector as the core skills and expertise are transferable across different sectors.

The post-holder will join a team of researchers who have a wide breadth of experience, working across the many thematic streams within the programme including carbon finance, supply chains, innovation, gender and equality, consumer habits, integrated energy planning, modelling, humanitarian and displacement settings, and energy governance.

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.

In your application you should explain explicitly how your experience and skills are relevant to the post.

Job Description

Job Grade: Specialist and Supporting Academic Grade 6

Job Purpose

To support the overall delivery of the Modern Energy Cooking Services programme with a specific focus on working closely with MECS in-country partners, articulating research findings to a range of stakeholders, and leading on research uptake within your thematic area. Please note, this is a research focused role, not a project management role.

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 sharable research findings.
- To formulate detailed plans and ideas for the scale-up of modern energy cooking services using the findings from work on the development finance theme. This will be done in partnership with other MECS colleagues and partners.
- Formulate and articulate headline research findings from the development finance theme, tying these in across the programme, and making them suitable for a range of audiences and stakeholders.
- Lead on research uptake for the development finance workstream.
- 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- Interview

Essential Criteria

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

Desirable Criteria

| Area | Criteria | Stage |
|----------------------|---|-------|
| Experience | Experience of research on clean cooking in addition to thematic expertise | 1 |
| | Experience of using social media to promote research outcomes | 1 |
| | Experience of activity planning, proposal, and budget development | 1 |
| Skills and abilities | Ability to support others to produce high-quality research outputs | 1 |
| Other | Willingness to travel on behalf of the project including overseas | 1 |

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 grade 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/>