

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

Behavioural Interventions (Sub-Saharan Africa)

Full-time (37 hours per week); Fixed-term for 2 years

Job Ref: REQ240577

As part of the University's ongoing commitment to redeployment, please note that this vacancy may be withdrawn at any stage of the recruitment process if a suitable redeployee is identified.

Internationally recognised for its contribution to the study of sport, exercise and health, the School has wide-ranging expertise, encompassing such diverse areas as biomechanics, medicine, molecular and cellular biology, nutrition, pedagogy, psychology, physiology, sociology, economics and sport management.

The School has an active and ambitious plan to grow capacity and influence through developments as part of the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine, Loughborough in London, and StemLab.

The School is extremely proud to have held an [Athena Swan Silver Award](#) since 2013, recognising the commitment and work of the School in addressing gender inequalities in Science, and to improving career progression for female academics.

The School is committed to ensuring that female students and staff are able to achieve their full potential, and provides a flexible and open working culture to enable staff to maintain a work-life balance.

We support our Athena SWAN initiatives by investing in:

- Bespoke leadership programmes to encourage and build confidence in women to take leadership roles.
- Working lunches, where needed, to enable meetings to be held between 10.00am and 4.00pm (as per our Silver Action Plan).
- Monthly coffee mornings which provide opportunities for networking and develop a sense of community within the School.
- Extra Mile Awards which recognise the 'above and beyond' contributions of staff from all job families and research students.

We also welcome applications from those who are looking to work part-time.

Research and Innovation

Research and Innovation within the School is characterised by excellence and breadth, and its quality was recognised in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework where Loughborough University ranked top for research power (GPA x volume) in Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism. Loughborough University has also placed Number 1 in the QS world ranking for sport-related subjects for six consecutive years (2017-2022, every year since the category was introduced). A broad range of social and natural sciences contribute to the School's research and innovation activity which is organised within three overlapping themes:

- **Sport performance**, understanding and supporting the enhancement of athletes' performance in competitive sport;
- **Lifestyle for health and well-being**, encompassing research across several disciplines with the common goal of facilitating healthy living and ageing across the lifespan; and
- **Sport, Business and Society**, exploring how individuals, communities and organisations engage with and facilitate sport and exercise opportunities.

The School's research themes articulate in particular with the Sport and Exercise Beacon and the Health and Wellbeing Global Challenge which are key elements of the University's [CALIBRE](#) (Collective Ambition at Loughborough for Building Research Excellence) framework.

Project Summary

Project: The development of implementation strategies for the delivery of physical activity and nutrition interventions among adolescents in Ghana and Kenya

We are looking for a Research Associate to work on a project funded by EU Horizon. This project will identify and develop implementation strategies to be tested in physical activity and nutrition interventions among adolescents in Ghana and Kenya.

Over 80% of adolescents worldwide are physically inactive, and adolescent diet quality is often insufficient for optimum health and well-being. Given the rapid technological and environmental changes in low-income countries, such as Ghana and Kenya, Non-Communicable Diseases such as obesity are increasing at an alarming pace. There is a lack of evidence on physical activity and nutrition interventions for adolescents living in countries in SSA. Interventions to increase physical activity and improve nutrition among adolescents are often complex, meaning that they may be especially difficult to implement in different contexts. Implementation strategies, such as approaches to facilitate, strengthen, and sustain the delivery of evidence-based practices and services are often overlooked in the development of interventions and thus the best ways to implement contextually relevant strategies for promoting physical activity and healthy nutrition in adolescents living in SSA is lacking. Given the unique and often challenging contexts for physical activity and nutrition in low-income countries in SSA, understanding the key influences on the implementation of interventions is essential for the development and implementation of effective interventions.

The project will include working alongside local planning teams in Ghana and Kenya to identify actions needed to implement physical activity and nutrition interventions among adolescents, barriers and facilitators of implementation, and to develop implementation materials and evaluation protocols to be used in the interventions.

Job Description

Job Family & Grade: Specialist and Supporting Academic (Research) Grade 6

Job Purpose: To jointly manage this project, funded by EU Horizon and UKRI, in accordance with the above requirements.

Job Duties:

To work closely with the Principal Investigators, collaborators, and local planning sites in Ghana (Accra) and Kenya (Nairobi) to ensure the successful management and delivery of the projects, including the following:

- To jointly manage all aspects of this project in accordance with the study's principal- and co-investigators.
- Arrange and co-lead focus groups and/or interviews with stakeholders in Ghana and Kenya including adopters (e.g. schools/FBOs), implementers (e.g. teaching assistants and youth group leaders in FBOs), and those responsible for maintaining the evidence-based physical activity and nutrition interventions (e.g. senior leaders in schools, FBOs and the local health and education departments).
- Develop and write reports outlining the key findings from the focus groups/interviews
- Plan and design implementation materials
- Co-write implementation protocols and logic models
- Contribute to the writing of funder reports, study updates or other requests.
- Process and analyse data collected from participants (qualitative) and present findings for reports, academic papers, community and professional publications.
- Report research progress and discuss project issues with the co-Leads, co-Investigator and external project partners.
- Work with other members of the research team and maintain good working relationships with the research team, the participants, and the research partners.
- Provide skills development (where relevant) and mentoring for early career researchers (e.g. postgraduate students, research assistants) involved in the project.
- Contribute to the writing of scientific research papers and to publish the outcomes of research in high quality journals.
- Collaborate on research initiatives and contribute ideas for new research projects to move forward the area of research.
- Uphold high ethical research standards, maintain confidentiality, and ensure that data protection requirements are met at all times.
- Engage in training programmes in the University (or elsewhere) that are consistent with the needs and aspirations of the project and those of the School, including any training relevant to the administration of the proposed project.

- 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 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy and procedures at all times. Duties must be carried out in accordance with relevant Equity, Diversity and Inclusion legislation and University policies/procedures.

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

Organisational Responsibility:

Reports to Prof Paula Griffiths, Principal Investigator

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

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Experience in research in physical activity and/or nutrition interventions among adolescents	1,2,3
	Knowledge of physical activity, diet, and health in Sub-Saharan Africa	1,2,3
	Experience of preparing research for publication in scientific journals	1,3
Skills and abilities	Ability to effectively communicate with individuals and organisations to aid project development and recruitment	1,2,3
	Ability to keep up-to-date with knowledge and understanding in the fields of intervention implementation, physical activity and nutrition and global health	1,3
	Good time management, organisation, and interpersonal skills	1,3
	Ability to work remotely and flexibly and use initiative to drive projects forward according to their objectives and timelines.	1,3
	Competence in data analysis packages for qualitative data	1,3
	Ability to write research at a level suitable for publication in academic journals	1,3
	Oral communication skills sufficient to be able to address audiences clearly and effectively	1,3
	To organise, attend and contribute to relevant meetings	1,3
	Ability to work as part of a team and to collaborate with others	1,3
Training	Willingness to undertake appropriate further training and to adopt new procedures as and when required	1,3
	Ability or willingness to learn how to effectively communicate/present research questions, ideas, analyses and findings to both scientific and non-scientific audiences	1,2,3
Qualifications	PhD (or near completion) in physical activity/nutrition and global health, or exercise psychology, behavioural epidemiology, human biology, sports science, public health, or a related subject	1
Other	Willingness to travel to Ghana and/or Kenya to undertake data collection if needed and/or for collaboration purposes	3
	Commitment to observing the University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy at all times	3

DESIRABLE

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Experience in conducting research in Sub-Saharan Africa	1,3
	Experience of conducting focus groups and/or interviews	1,3
	Experience in implementation science	1,3
	Experience of using theories and models of behaviour change	1,3
	Experience in managing externally funded research projects	1,3

	Experience of data collection in community settings	1,3
	Experience working with external partners	1,3
Knowledge	Knowledge of evaluation frameworks within Implementation Science	1,3
Skills and abilities	Skills in community based participatory approaches	1,3

Conditions of Service

This part-time post is offered on a fixed-term contract for 2 years, within the *Specialist and Supporting Academic (Research)* job family at Grade 6 (£33,966 to £44,263 per annum pro rata). Starting salary to be confirmed on offer of appointment.

The appointment will be subject to the University's normal [Terms and Conditions of Employment](#) for staff on Grade 6 and above.

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

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: [Childcare Support](#)).

In addition, the University is supportive, wherever possible, of flexible working arrangements. We strive to create a culture that supports equity 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.

Loughborough University is committed to allowing its employees to work [dynamically](#) with a combination of working on campus and remotely, where possible. This has been identified as a role that could work dynamically and, if successful, your line manager will discuss these informal arrangements with you. Please note that there is a general expectation that the successful candidate will spend the majority of time working on the Loughborough campus.