

Research Assistant – Centre for Effective Innovation in Agriculture

Job Description

The Role

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| Job title: | Research Assistant, Centre for Effective Innovation in Agriculture (CEIA) |
| Department: | School of Agriculture, Food & Environment |
| Responsible to: | Manager of CEIA, RAU |
| Location: | RAU (or secondment option at Harper Adams University) |
| Salary: | Grade 7; £30,497 to £35,326 salary range DOE |
| Term: | Fixed term for 24 months from June 2022, full-time |
| Relationships with: | Manager (CEIA), Elizabeth Creak Chairs at University of Reading, Harper Adams University, Royal Agricultural University, University of Warwick and Newcastle University; Chair and university representatives of the Agricultural Universities Council (AUC-UK); AUC-UK research strategy project lead and team. |

Purpose

Farming needs to change fast to meet the challenges of our time, including net zero, conserving biodiversity and food security. Accelerating and better targeting innovation is an urgent priority.

While some technologies have been widely taken up by UK farmers, the adoption of innovation is patchy. Indeed, the overall return on recent public and private investment in UK agricultural R&D has been questionable: total factor productivity growth lags behind our competitors (Heisey & Fuglie, 2018); wheat yields have flat-lined, despite better varieties, more input applications and long being a top R&D priority (Marchant et al., 2019); and the industry's environmental performance remains off-target. This is despite consistent UK public spending of over £300 million/year on agricultural R&D (ONS, 2020) and performing strongly in standard measures of scientific excellence (Scimago, 2018).

Centre for Effective Innovation in Agriculture

The Centre for Effective Innovation in Agriculture (CEIA) is a new initiative set up in April 2021 to ensure agricultural and horticultural research has an impact on the ground. Specifically, it helps funders and investors to ensure the research they are supporting is relevant to farmers and growers. The gap between science funding and producer priorities is a key factor that currently limits the adoption of innovation in agriculture.

The CEIA is a partnership between five universities (Harper Adams, Newcastle, Reading, RAU and Warwick), founded with five years' funding from the Elizabeth Creak Charitable Trust. The Trust already funds chairs at each of these universities who have shared interest and expertise in agricultural innovation. The CEIA coordinates, supplements and targets work by these chairs and their colleagues, bringing their expertise together to deliver impact on the ground for farmers and growers through better targeted funding and research.

This role will be expanding the CEIA team and based at RAU or Harper Adams, reporting to the CEIA manager.

CEIA activities include:

Growing a community of interest among funders and researchers who become passionate about the impact of innovation, through meetings, social media, regularly updated resources and commentary. Collating the extensive research evidence on innovation, uptake and adoption into policy and practice briefings, creating a practical knowledge base about effective R&D funding.

Providing advice and support to agricultural R&D funders on effective fund, call and programme design. Providing advice and support to researchers and farmers on effective R&D project development. Developing and offering relevant consultancy, for example evaluating the impact of R&D spend on behalf of funders or industry partners.

Working with UK and international partners to develop practical toolkits and frameworks for R&D funders, policy-makers and industry to predict rates of innovation and technology diffusion.

Agricultural Universities Council

The CEIA is supporting the work of the Agricultural Universities Council (AUC-UK), which is a collaboration of 16 UK universities with agricultural schools or departments across all four nations. AUC-UK works together to coordinate agricultural teaching and research, to make a bigger contribution towards a resilient and sustainable future for agriculture, land management and food systems. CEIA hosts the secretariat and is leading on the AUC-UK project developing a UK research strategy for agriculture as announced by Rt Hon. George Eustice MP in January. This project is mapping existing agricultural research capacity across the UK for the first time in a decade, and working with farmers, as well as environmental, welfare and community groups, food businesses, and other stakeholders, to shape future research priorities. The strategy will provide the research priorities policymakers and funders need in order to drive the necessary increase in impact of publicly-funded research.

Key Responsibilities

- Working with the team lead on AUC’s research strategy project involving: surveying research institutions (targeting university research directors and heads of departments) and stakeholders, reviewing relevant existing strategies and academic literature, coordinating stakeholder/research institution workshops, analysing outputs, report writing, and coordinating dissemination activities of the high-profile strategy launch for policymakers, public funders, research and industry communities.
- Managing the secretariat for AUC-UK, involving liaising with the Chair at Newcastle University, AUC members (senior academics within member institutions), interacting with the AUC advisory board of senior academic and industry representatives, coordinating meetings, arranging workshops, and wider stakeholder institutions/organisations. You will also be responsible for managing the AUC-UK website and supporting communications, monitoring and reporting.
- Supporting the activities and development of the CEIA in line with the strategic direction agreed by the manager and management board.
- Supporting CEIA’s manager in the delivery of activities such as evidence reviews, briefing papers for policymakers and public funders, reports, organising high profile events for industry, policy and funding audiences, web/social media and press releases.
- Managing the monitoring of engagement and progress of CEIA objectives.

General Responsibilities

- The University is committed to equality of opportunity. All staff are required to comply with current legislation, University policies and good practice guidance.
- All staff are required to act in a way that safeguards the health and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults at all times. The post holder must be familiar with and adhere to appropriate safeguarding policies and guidance and participate in related mandatory/statutory training. Managers have a responsibility to ensure their team members understand their individual responsibilities with regard to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- All staff are required to participate in the University appraisal process and should ensure they are familiar with the process and plan time to prepare for their appraisal. Following the appraisal, staff are expected to undertake in any necessary learning and development and work towards the objectives that have been set.
- The University expects staff to attend any training designated as mandatory and to undertake learning and development activities to support their role. Managers must facilitate learning and development within their teams.
- It is a condition of employment that staff will not disclose any information obtained in the course of their duties other than to those entitled to receive it. The post holder must ensure that the confidentiality of personal data remains secure and that restricted information or highly restricted information to which they have access remains confidential during and after their employment at Royal Agricultural University. All staff must undergo appropriate data protection training as required.
- All absence from work must be reported in accordance with the University's absence procedures and recorded on iTrent.
- The University acknowledges its responsibility to provide a safe, smoke free environment, to its employees, service users and visitors. It is the policy of the University not to allow smoking on University premises other than in specifically designated areas.

Person Specification

| Requirements | Essential or Desirable | Measured By |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| The post holder must be able to demonstrate: | | A) Application Form B) Interview |
| Qualifications: | | |
| Educated to Masters or PhD level or equivalent experience highly relevant to the role | E | A, B |
| Educated to Hons degree level or equivalent | E | A |
| Knowledge, Experience, Skills & Qualities: | | |
| Understanding of the strategic context of the Centre | E | A, B |
| Understanding of research & innovation systems & policy | E | A, B |
| Understanding of challenges in agriculture & horticulture | E | A, B |
| Experience of agricultural or related research | E | A, B |
| Strong project management skills | E | A, B |
| Experience of coordinating and reporting events and meetings | E | A, B |
| Excellent verbal & written communication skills | E | A, B |
| Excellent relationship & partnership building skills | E | A, B |
| Experience of working with policymakers and/or public funders | D | A, B |
| Proven IT skills, especially MS Office | E | A |

| Requirements The post holder must be able to demonstrate: | Essential or Desirable | Measured By A) Application Form B) Interview |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Experience of working with farmers & growers | D | A, B |
| Experience communicating via media and social media | D | A, B |
| Website design and management | D | A, B |

References:

- Heisey, P. W. & Fuglie, K. O. (2018). *Agricultural Research Investment and Policy Reform in High-Income Countries*. Retrieved from www.ers.usda.gov
- Marchant, B. et al. (2019). Establishing the precision and robustness of farmers' crop experiments. *Field Crops Research*, 230 (October 2018), 31–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fcr.2018.10.006>
- ONS (2020) Government expenditure on science, engineering and technology. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/researchanddevelopment/expenditure/datasets/scienceengineeringandtechnologystatisticsreferencetables>
- Scimago (2018) *Country Rank for Agricultural & Biological Sciences*. <https://www.scimagojr.com/countryrank.php?area=1100&order=ci&ord=desc>

General Terms and Conditions of Employment

- This post is a full-time appointment, offered on a fixed-term basis. It will be remunerated on the single pay spine, at Grade 7 – up to £35,326 DOE. The appointment is subject to meeting all pre-employment clearances and requirements of the Person Specification.
- All new employees undergo a period of twelve months' probation and confirmation of employment is dependent on the satisfactory completion of that probationary period.
- The nature of this post is such that it is expected that you will respond to the operational requirements of the University in order to fulfil your duties in a professional manner. You will be required to work such hours as are reasonably required to discharge your duties effectively and competently. The exact number of hours in any week will vary in accordance with institutional requirements, but will not be less than 35 hours a week.
- The University holiday year runs from January to December. The post carries an entitlement to 30 working days of paid leave during the course of the holiday year (pro rata if the appointment is made during the holiday year), in addition to Statutory Bank Holidays. There may also be discretionary days and days when the University is closed on particular dates in the interests of efficiency.

Pensions and Auto Enrolment

If you meet the criteria set out below, and are not already an active member of any of our pension schemes, the University is required to auto-enrol you into a suitable pension scheme. The criteria for auto-enrolment is:

- Age - if you are 22 or over but no more than State Pension Age
- Earnings - a minimum of £10,000 per year
- Working in the UK

The pension schemes supported by the RAU are:

AVIVA CATEGORY X - all eligible RAU employees (except teachers) are automatically enrolled

- 5% (minimum) contribution by employee and
- 3% contribution by RAU

AVIVA CATEGORY Y1 - RAU Group Pension Scheme (defined contribution) - employees are able to upgrade to this scheme before their 6 month probation.

- 6.5% (minimum) contribution by employee and
- 6.5% contribution by RAU
- life assurance is an additional benefit (two times annual salary)

Staff Benefits

We offer a range of Staff Benefits including a 35 hour working week, a generous annual leave entitlement plus bank holidays (pro rata for part time posts), pension scheme, free and guaranteed parking on campus and free shuttle bus from campus to Cirencester town centre, free gym, discounted catering facilities, free library services, employee assistance programme, occupational health and counselling services, cycle to work scheme and staff development opportunities.

Further details of the full range of staff benefits available can be found on our [website](#).

Application Procedure

If you are interested in applying for this role, please send:

- A University [Application Form](#) together with the [Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form](#) available on the University website www.rau.ac.uk – Please attach your up to date CV to add additional information
- A covering letter explaining your interest and motivation for applying, along with how your experience and qualifications suit you for the role
- Details for two professional or academic referees who must be people who can comment authoritatively on you as a person and as an employee in relation to the level of the post, and must include your current or most recent employer or their representative.
- Please forward to the HR Team, Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6JS or via email to jobs@rau.ac.uk stating where you saw the advert for the role.
- In this first instance, for an informal discussion about the position, please contact Prof Tom MacMillan (tom.macmillan@rau.ac.uk), Elizabeth Creak Chair in Rural Policy & Strategy.
- **Closing date:** 10th July 2022 with **Interviews on:** 19th July 2022.
- Should you be selected for interview please be aware that we are unable to reimburse interview expenses.

General Data Protection Regulations: Applicant Privacy Notice

The Royal Agricultural University collects and processes your personal data so that it can meet its statutory and legal obligations, and when it has a legitimate interest in processing personal data before, during and after the end of the employment relationship.

The data which forms part of your job application (for example, application form, CV, references, Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, shortlisting and interview records) will be stored in a range of different places, which will include the University's HR and recruitment management systems (electronic and paper based), and in IT systems (including the University's email system). Your information may be shared internally with the HR Department and with employees who are involved in the recruitment and

selection process, but only if access to your data is absolutely necessary for the performance of those roles.

The University may share your data with third parties in certain circumstances. Personal data that the University uses for the purposes of equal opportunities monitoring and reporting is anonymised or is collected with the express consent of applicants, which can be withdrawn at any time. Applicants are entirely free to decide whether to provide such data and there are no consequences of failing to do so.

The University takes the security of your data seriously and has internal controls in place to try to ensure that your data is not lost, accidentally destroyed, misused or disclosed, and is not accessed except by the above employees in the performance of their duties. If your application is unsuccessful, your applicant data will be destroyed 6 months following the advertised closing date of the post you have applied for. If your application is successful, your applicant data will be retained during your employment and for 6 years following your leaving date. You can access and obtain a copy of your data on request and you can ask the University to change incorrect or incomplete data.

In certain circumstances you can ask the University to stop processing your data, or you can object to the processing of your data. If you believe that the University has not complied with your data protection rights, you can complain to the Information Commissioner. Further information about your rights in accordance with Data Protection and the GDPR Regulations can be obtained from the University Data Protection Officer. A detailed Employee Privacy Notice is available to view [here](#).

