

Job Description



FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

Post	Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in Natural Theology, Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion
Division	The Humanities Division
Department	Faculty of Theology and Religion
Location	University of Oxford, Gibson Building, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6GG
Grade and salary	Grade 7: £31,604- £38,883 with a discretionary range to £42,418
Contract Type	Full-time, fixed term from 1 September 2018 to 31 August 2020
Reporting to	Prof Alister McGrath
Vacancy Reference	131765
Further Information	Interviews will take place in Oxford during February or early March 2018

The role

The University proposes to appoint a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow (henceforth “the Fellow”) who will conduct research in the field of natural theology.

The post is funded by the Issachar Fund, an American philanthropic organization with a particular interest in theological education and cultural engagement. This appointment is a key component of a two year research project entitled “Renewal of Natural Theology: Academic Engagement and Church Outreach”, based at the Ian Ramsey Centre, which will focus on the potential of natural theology to engage “big questions”, and serve as a creative and generative interface between the natural sciences (especially physics, biology, psychology and anthropology) and the Christian faith, with a special concern to engage with the outreach of churches to the broader culture.

The postholder will report to Professor Alister McGrath, Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion at the University of Oxford, and Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion. The appointment is a fixed-term position for two years, tenable from 1 October 2018.

The Fellow will help develop the concept of “natural theology” as a robust and productive interface between Christianity and the natural sciences, ideally adapted to holding together religious and scientific truths. Although natural theology is sometimes understood in a very restrictive sense as offering proofs for God’s existence based on pure reason, for the

purposes of this project it is understood in a richer sense as the articulation of an intellectual and imaginative framework, based on core themes of the Christian tradition, which enables the natural world to be seen and understood in a richer and more engaging manner, thus leading into the fields of spirituality and apologetics. Such an approach is set out in recent publications by Professor McGrath, including:

McGrath, Alister E. *Re-Imagining Nature: The Promise of a Christian Natural Theology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016.

McGrath, Alister E. "Natürliche Theologie: Ein Plädoyer für eine neue Definition und Bedeutungserweiterung." *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 59, no. 3 (2017) 297-310. [A PDF of this article is available on request.]

Responsibilities

The Fellow will be required to develop research in the field of natural theology, with a particular focus on assessing its importance academically (as an intellectual interface between science and faith), apologetically (as a means of helping the churches engage with a scientific culture through theological education and preaching), and spiritually (in terms of helping Christians to see the natural world as God's creation, and explore how this impacts on their faith). Oxford's Faculty of Theology has a long tradition of ecclesial engagement, developing approaches to theology which resource and sustain the ministry of churches.

In addition to undertaking research in the field of natural theology, thus understood, the Fellow will also be required to provide a limited amount of teaching in this field at undergraduate and graduate levels for the Faculty of Theology and Religion at Oxford; engage with churches in exploring the potential of natural theology for preaching and other aspects of their outreach; and help plan and organize the 2020 Oxford conference of the Ian Ramsey Centre, which will be dedicated to the theme of natural theology.

In general terms, the Fellow will be responsible for developing and, where possible, implementing, in consultation with its Director, strategies for the Ian Ramsey Centre which will:

1. Encourage greater and more productive intellectual interaction between Christian theologians and natural scientists;
2. Help Christian churches to engage with a scientific culture, particularly in developing apologetic approaches that build bridges between science and faith;
3. Help Christian churches to develop a "spirituality of nature" which is scientifically informed and capable of encouraging a positive and productive appreciation of the natural world.

More specifically, the Fellow will be responsible for:

1. Developing and managing their own academic research and administrative activities within the Ian Ramsey Centre;
2. Adapting existing and developing new research methodologies in the field of natural theology, with a particular focus on engaging the natural sciences, and making connections with cultural and ecclesial engagement.
3. Contributing ideas for new research projects; developing ideas for generating future research income, and presenting detailed research proposals to senior researchers.

4. Collaborating in the preparation of research publications, and public engagement addresses and in the presentation and dissemination of such material in online and other public fora;
5. Acting as a source of information and advice to other members of the Ian Ramsey Centre on methodologies or procedures;
6. Presenting papers at academic conferences and delivering public addresses;
7. Representing the Ian Ramsey Centre at external events, either with other colleagues from the Centre, or individually;
8. Assisting with the development of the Centre's online presence, particularly in developing online resources relating to natural theology, and its potential for engaging the natural sciences and the ministry of churches.

Selection criteria

Essential

1. A PhD/DPhil in a discipline that is clearly relevant to the field of natural theology, in the broad sense of this term, outlined above.
2. A clear potential for producing or contributing to distinguished research in the field of natural theology;
3. Experience of public presentation of academic research or public engagement;
4. A willingness to engage with representatives of Christian churches in developing programmes and activities which might encourage apologetic approaches that build bridges between science and faith, or develop "spiritualities of nature."
5. Readiness and ability to contribute ideas for new research projects and research income generation;
6. Excellent oral and written communication skills, including the ability to present research in interdisciplinary settings, and to represent the Centre at meetings;
7. Basic competence in relevant software packages (Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint, and ability to produce documents as PDFs;

Desirable

1. Publications in fields of relevance to natural theology, or the work and outreach of the Ian Ramsey Centre;
2. Familiarity with the use of Social Media in promoting events.
3. A working knowledge of at least one modern European language. The Ian Ramsey Centre is presently extending its outreach in Eastern Europe, and a knowledge of Polish or Czech would be a particular advantage (although not necessary for this position).

About the University of Oxford

Welcome to the University of Oxford. We aim to lead the world in research and education for the benefit of society both in the UK and globally. Oxford's researchers engage with academic, commercial and cultural partners across the world to stimulate high-quality research and enable innovation through a broad range of social, policy and economic impacts.

We believe our strengths lie both in empowering individuals and teams to address fundamental questions of global significance, while providing all our staff with a welcoming and inclusive workplace that enables everyone to develop and do their best work. Recognising that diversity is our strength, vital for innovation and creativity, we aspire to build a truly diverse community which values and respects every individual's unique contribution.

While we have long traditions of scholarship, we are also forward-looking, creative and cutting-edge. Oxford is one of Europe's most entrepreneurial universities. Income from external research contracts in 2015/16 exceeded £537.4m and we rank first in the UK for university spin-outs, with more than 130 companies created to date. We are also recognised as leaders in support for social enterprise.

Join us and you will find a unique, democratic and international community, a great range of staff benefits and access to a vibrant array of cultural activities in the beautiful city of Oxford.

For more information please visit www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation

The Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion

The Ian Ramsey Centre (founded in 1985) is part of the Faculty of Theology and Religion in the University of Oxford, and has its offices within the Faculty building in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter of Oxford. Its core aim is to promote high quality teaching and research in the field of science and religion in Oxford and internationally. As part of its contribution to the academic work of the University, the Centre organizes a regular seminar series, bringing scientists, philosophers and theologians together to explore interests they have in common. The seminars are open to students and informed members of the public. In addition, the Centre sponsors regional conferences to encourage new networks through which connections between theology and the sciences can be explored, with particular concerns to develop the field of science and religion in Latin America and Eastern Europe. International workshops are organised to enhance the quality of courses on science and religion that are taught worldwide. The Centre also arranges an annual conference in Oxford on a theme of importance to the field.

The Centre is named after Ian Ramsey (1915-72), Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of Religion at Oxford University and later Bishop of Durham, who recognised the importance of communicating with experts from a wide range of disciplines, inspiring them to work together on the problems raised for theology and ethics by developments in science, technology and medicine. Its main officers are its Director (Professor Alister McGrath) and Research Director (Dr Andrew Pinsent).

For further information about the Ian Ramsey Centre, please visit:

<http://www.ianramseycentre.info/>

Faculty of Theology and Religion

The University is organised into about 140 different departments, each of which recruits its own staff. This post is in the Faculty of Theology and Religion, which has its office at the Gibson Building, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Woodstock Road. Theology is one of the oldest faculties in Oxford; Alexander Neckham from St Albans is recorded as giving biblical and moral lectures as early as 1193 on The Psalms of David and the Wisdom of Solomon. The modern Faculty is large, with 25 academic staff (professors and lecturers), and around 100 other Faculty members, who hold positions in colleges and halls of the University. The range of academic research interests encompasses biblical studies, ethics, Christian doctrine and Church history, as well as science and religion, philosophy, the psychology and sociology of religion, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, and Christian spirituality. Many have international reputations. With some 210 students on different undergraduate courses, and around 280 graduates pursuing both taught and research degrees, there is scope for a great deal of diversity as well as depth of study.

For more information, please visit: www.theology.ox.ac.uk

Humanities

The Humanities Division is one of four academic divisions in the University of Oxford, bringing together the faculties of Classics, English, History, Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, Medieval and Modern Languages, Music, Oriental Studies, Philosophy; and Theology and Religion, as well as the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art. The division has responsibility for over 500 members of academic staff, for over 4,000 undergraduates (more than a third of the total undergraduate population of the University), and for about 1,600 postgraduate students.

The Division offers teaching and produces research of the highest international quality, which is backed by the extraordinary resources of the University's libraries and museums. The Bodleian Library, one of the great libraries of the world, has a continuous history reaching back to the late sixteenth century. Its historical collections are outstanding, and as a legal deposit library it can claim a copy of every new title published in the UK. The Bodleian is now second in size only to the British Library. Every college has its own library, many of which have important holdings of their own.

The Division's faculties are among the largest in the world, enabling Oxford to offer an education in Arts and Humanities unparalleled in its range of subjects, from music and fine art to ancient and modern languages. The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH) fosters interdisciplinary engagement.

For more information about the Division, please visit: www.humanities.ox.ac.uk

How to apply

Before submitting an application, you may find it helpful to read the 'Tips on applying for a job at the University of Oxford' document, at www.ox.ac.uk/about/jobs/supportandtechnical/.

If you would like to apply, click on the **Apply Now** button on the 'Job Details' page and follow the on-screen instructions to register as a new user or log-in if you have applied previously. Please provide details of two referees and indicate whether we can contact them now.

You should also upload a CV, a supporting statement and a 500-word proposal for a research agenda for the duration of the post. The supporting statement must explain how you meet each of the selection criteria for the post using examples of your skills and experience. This may include experience gained in employment, education, or during career breaks (such as time out to care for dependants).

Your application will be judged solely on the basis of how you demonstrate that you meet the selection criteria stated in the job description.

Please upload all documents **as PDF files** with your name and the document type in the filename.

All applications must be received by **midday** on the closing date stated in the online advertisement.

Information for priority candidates

A priority candidate is a University employee who is seeking redeployment because they have been advised that they are at risk of redundancy, or on grounds of ill-health/disability. Priority candidates are issued with a redeployment letter by their employing departments.

If you are a priority candidate, please ensure that you attach your redeployment letter to your application (or email it to the contact address on the advert if the application form used for the vacancy does not allow attachments)

Should you experience any difficulties using the online application system, please email recruitment.support@admin.ox.ac.uk. Further help and support is available from www.ox.ac.uk/about_the_university/jobs/support/. To return to the online application at any stage, please go to: www.recruit.ox.ac.uk.

Please note that you will be notified of the progress of your application by automatic emails from our e-recruitment system. **Please check your spam/junk mail** regularly to ensure that you receive all emails.

Important information for candidates

Pre-employment screening

Please note that the appointment of the successful candidate will be subject to standard pre-employment screening, as applicable to the post. This will include right-to-work, proof of identity and references. We advise all applicants to read the candidate notes on the University's pre-employment screening procedures, found at:

www.ox.ac.uk/about/jobs/preemploymentscreening/.

The University's policy on retirement

The University operates an Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) for all academic posts and some academic-related posts. From 1 October 2017, the University has adopted an EJRA of 30 September before the 69th birthday for all academic and academic-related staff in posts at **grade 8 and above**. The justification for this is explained at:

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/end/retirement/acrelretire8+/.

For **existing** employees, any employment beyond the retirement age is subject to approval through the procedures: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/end/retirement/acrelretire8+/.

From 1 October 2017, there is no normal or fixed age at which staff in posts at **grades 1–7** have to retire. Staff at these grades may elect to retire in accordance with the rules of the applicable pension scheme, as may be amended from time to time.

Equality of Opportunity

Entry into employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each particular post and the relevant salary structure. In all cases, ability to perform the job will be the primary consideration. No applicant or member of staff shall be discriminated against because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Benefits of working at the University

University Club and sports facilities

The University Club provides social, sporting and hospitality facilities. It incorporates a bar, café and sporting facilities, including a gym. Staff can also use the University Sports Centre on Iffley Road at discounted rates, including a fitness centre, powerlifting room, and swimming pool.

See: www.club.ox.ac.uk and www.sport.ox.ac.uk/oxford-university-sports-facilities.

Information for international staff (or those relocating from another part of the UK)

If you are relocating to Oxfordshire from overseas, or elsewhere in the UK, the University's International Staff website includes practical information related to moving to and settling in Oxford such as advice on immigration, relocation, accommodation, or registering with a doctor.

See: www.internationalstaffwelcome.admin.ox.ac.uk/

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club is an organisation run by volunteers that aims to assist the partners of new staff to settle into Oxford and to provide them with an opportunity to meet people in the area. See www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk/

Childcare

The University has excellent childcare services with five University nurseries, as well as University-supported places at many other private nurseries.

For full details including how to apply and the costs, see www.admin.ox.ac.uk/childcare.

Family-friendly benefits

The University subscribes to My Family Care (www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/benefits/family/mfc/) and staff are eligible to register for emergency back-up childcare and adultcare services, a 'speak to an expert' phone line and a wide range of guides and webinars through a website called the Work + Family space.

Disabled staff

We are committed to supporting members of staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions. Please visit www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/staff for further details including information about how to make contact, in confidence, with the University's Staff Disability Advisor.

Staff networks

The University has a number of staff networks including the Oxford Research Staff Society, BME staff network, LGBT+ staff network and a disabled staff network. You can find more information at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/inpractice/networks/

Other benefits

Staff can enjoy a range of other benefits such as free visitor access to the University's colleges and the Botanic Gardens as well as a range of discounts.

See www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/benefits