1 Advertisement

Post Title: Research Fellow in Social Relations of Energy
School/department: Business School, Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU)
Hours: Full time hours considered up to a maximum of 1 FTE. Requests for flexible working options will be considered (subject to business need).
Contract: Fixed term for 18 months.
Reference: 5988
Salary: Starting at £33,797 to £40,322 per annum, pro rata if part time.
Placed on: 26 May 2021
Closing date: 21 June 2021 Applications must be received by midnight of the closing date.
Expected start date: By August 2021

The Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU), within the University of Sussex Business School at the University of Sussex, is seeking to appoint a Research Fellow in Social Relations of Energy, to work on three closely related research projects being undertaken at SPRU, funded by the UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC) and the Centre for Research on Energy Demand Solutions (CREDS). These projects involve examining the social and policy drivers of changes at a local level aiming to reduce energy demand whilst enhancing quality of life, as part of the transition to Net Zero carbon emissions and recovery from the Covid pandemic.

The role will involve the following:
- Undertaking interviews with policy and trades actors, and with homeowners
- Applying and developing Social Relations Mapping methodology
- Organising a local policy collaboration and innovation workshop
- Working closely with Brighton and Hove City Council
- Mapping and assessing values of groups of local stakeholders
- Interacting with energy and sustainability stakeholders in the Sussex region
- Collecting data through desk-based qualitative research, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and shadowing and observation.

Essential criteria for the position are:
- A PhD (obtained at the time of the appointment) in a relevant area
- the analytical skills or experience necessary to apply existing concepts and theories in the research area
- Strong knowledge and methods training, and experience, in qualitative techniques
- Evidence of the ability to communicate effectively to academic, policy and non-academic audiences.
- Basic knowledge of UK home decarbonisation policy and the Net Zero landscape
- Research interests in understanding social relations driving the adoption of low carbon solutions, and the policy mechanisms for supporting these.
- Ability to begin by August 2021, and be able and willing to work out of the Brighton and Hove City Council offices for at least one half day each week

Please contact Prof Tim Foxon or Dr Marie Claire Brisbois for informal enquiries.

For full details and how to apply see our vacancies page.
The University of Sussex values the diversity of its staff and students and we welcome applicants from all backgrounds.

2. The School, Department, and Projects

University of Sussex Business School
The University of Sussex Business School is a unique research-focused interdisciplinary school, which takes a strong policy-directed view on business practices while also developing the underlying core disciplines. It includes the Department of Accounting and Finance, the Department of Strategy and Marketing, the Department of Management, the Department of Economics and the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU).

As a dynamic, research-orientated and interdisciplinary School, we produce cutting-edge research that addresses real-world issues, pressing global policy agendas and business practices, whilst also being committed to developing the underlying core disciplines.

The School is committed to the University’s vision to understand and help address the grand issues of our time, by challenging conventional thinking and discourse, being creative and open in our approach and innovative in our methods in order to produce world-class research with impact.

Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU)
Founded in 1966 by Christopher Freeman, SPRU was one of the first interdisciplinary research centres in the field of science and technology policy. Today, with over 70 faculty members, SPRU remains at the forefront of new ideas, problem-orientated research, inspiring teaching, and creative, high impact engagement with decision makers across government, business and civil society. Our research addresses pressing global policy agendas, including innovation challenges posed by the digital economy, the future of industrial policy, inclusive economic growth, the politics of scientific expertise, energy policy, security, entrepreneurship, and pathways to a more sustainable future. SPRU researchers are driven by a desire to tackle real-world questions, whilst also contributing to a deeper understanding of how science, technology and innovation is shaping today’s world. With a community of over 140 MSc and doctoral students from all over the world, SPRU is also well known for its high quality, research-led teaching programmes.

The Projects

Whole Person Whole Place Project (UKERC)

New ways of governing the UK energy transition for housing are needed because current approaches are not working. The majority of residential energy policy initiatives are aimed at changing technologies or individual behaviour. Instead of addressing people only as ‘energy consumers’, we need to integrate different intellectual traditions to explain how energy demand is shaped, and how people experience energy policy within a wider social context. This project takes a ‘whole person, whole place’ approach to understand how we might successfully drive a wide-scale net-zero transformation of our homes. Our ‘whole person’ perspective means focussing on the building owners’ social relations around domestic renovation Our ‘whole place’ perspective means working directly with local authorities and communities to co-create place-sensitive policies for retrofit. The project forms part of the UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC) Flexible Fund project and involves three UK cities, Leeds, Glasgow and Brighton. The project is a collaboration between Leeds, Strathclyde and Sussex universities, with a formal partnership with the local authority and community organisations in each host location.
Place-based Business Models (CREDS)

The Place-based Business Models project aims to investigate how place-based business models for Net Zero are being developed through digital living/working and connections imposed by the global COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020, and how these place-based business models facilitate/shape reductions on energy demand. To do this the project proposes to closely examine 3 vignettes - 3 prominent and emerging areas for Net Zero action and collaboration in Sussex (and the UK nationally) involving:

i) new opportunities for financing Net Zero projects;

ii) nature-based solutions for Net Zero;

iii) capacity building for decarbonisation skills.

Local Green New Deals (CREDS)

This project will examine the challenge facing city-region authorities in how to assess and evaluate different choices so as to deliver wider social and environmental benefits, whilst stimulating economic opportunities. In particular, it will examine how community-focused and digitally-enabled local green recovery packages, including energy demand reduction measures, could be targeted, framed and assessed in terms of their wider economic, social and environmental benefits. The focus will be on developing and testing sets of metrics and criteria to assess these benefits, and how these relate to the social, environmental and economic values espoused by local people in this context. Focussing on selected city-regions, the project will:

(1) Examine the framing of local economic recovery and carbon reduction packages, as to how they aim to integrate other social and environmental goals;

(2) Undertake value-mapping of local citizens' social, environmental and economic values in the context of local projects aiming to deliver energy demand reductions;

(3) Develop and test with these city-region authorities, sets of metrics and criteria for assessing such projects in relation to these values and benefits;

(4) Develop the case for public capital investment in options assessed to be beneficial, in relation to these criteria for wider social, environmental and economic benefits.

3. Job Description

Job Title: Research Fellow in Social Relations of Energy

Grade: Research Fellow I, Grade 7
School: Business School
Location: Jubilee Building
Responsible to: Principal Investigator through to Head of School
Direct reports: N/A
Key contacts: Members of research group, members of faculty within the School and University.
Role description: Research Fellow I is an early career-grade research position. Post-holders will be expected to contribute to the work of the research team, and also to develop their research skills with support from more experienced members of staff.

PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES

1. To engage in individual and/or collaborative research activity resulting in high-quality publications; and to develop research funding and knowledge exchange income individually or in collaboration with others, as appropriate, depending on the size and scope of the bid.

2. To contribute to School teaching activities.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Research, Scholarship & Enterprise

1.1 Develop research objectives and proposals for own or joint research, at acceptable levels, with assistance if required.

1.2 Conduct research projects individually and in collaboration with others.

1.3 Analyse and interpret research findings and draw conclusions on the outcomes.

1.4 Produce high-quality research outputs for publication in monographs or recognised high-quality journals, or performance/exhibition, as appropriate, and contribute to the School’s REF submission at acceptable levels of volume and academic excellence.
1.5 Contribute to the preparation of proposals and applications to external bodies, for example for funding purposes.

1.6 Individually or with colleagues, explore opportunities for enterprise activity, knowledge exchange income and/or consultancy, where permissible.

1.7 Build internal contacts and participate in internal networks and relevant external networks in order to form relationships and collaborations.

1.8 Continually update knowledge and understanding in field or specialism, and engage in continuous professional development.

2. **Teaching & Student Support**

2.1 Undertake teaching duties, if required.

2.2 Assist in the assessment of student knowledge and supervision of student projects if required.

2.3 Assist in the development of student research skills, for example as part of a postgraduate supervision team.

3. **Contribution to School & University**

3.1 Attend and contribute to relevant School and project meetings.

3.2 Undertake additional duties, as required by the Principal Investigator and/or Head of School.

4. **Role-specific duties**

4.1 Undertake approximately 25 interviews with policy and trades actors, and with homeowners

4.2 Apply and develop Social Relations Mapping methodology, in collaboration with Research Fellows at Leeds and Strathclyde

4.3 Co-design, organisation and delivery of one local policy collaboration and innovation workshop
4.4 To be embedded within the Brighton and Hove City Council for 0.5 to 1 day/week for the duration of the Whole Person, Whole Place portion of the contract to help the Council develop proposals for support of energy efficiency retrofits.

4.5 Undertake work on mapping and assessing values of groups of local stakeholders in the Greater Brighton region, in relation to plans for local green investments to support economic recovery from the disruption due to Covid-19.

4.6 Interact with energy and sustainability stakeholders in the Sussex region.

4.7 Collect data through desk-based qualitative research, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and shadowing and observation.

This Job Description sets out current duties of the post that may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the post or level of responsibility entailed.

INDICATIVE PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- A PhD or equivalent scholarly or relevant professional activity
- Pursuing a line of independent research within a research group.
- Publishing research (either from a recently completed PhD or new original research).
- Other forms of externally recognised professional practice of creative output of a standing equivalent to regular publication of original research.
- Initiating, developing or participating in links between the University and external bodies such as business and industry, the professions, community organisations and policy-makers.
- Evidence of successful engagement in teaching or supervision.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA
1. Normally educated to doctoral level, or other equivalent qualification, or appropriate level of experience, as appropriate to the discipline (see role-specific criteria below).

2. Evidence of engagement in high-quality research activity.

3. Excellent presentation skills, with the ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, with students, colleagues and external audiences.

4. Ability to work individually on own initiative and without close supervision, and as part of a team.

5. Ability to exercise a degree of innovation and creative problem-solving.

6. Excellent organisational and administrative skills.

7. Ability to prioritise and meet deadlines.

8. Excellent IT skills.

**ESSENTIAL ROLE-SPECIFIC CRITERIA**

1. A PhD (obtained at the time of the appointment) in business studies, energy studies, energy policy, science and technology policy studies, energy geography, political science, public policy, innovation studies, sustainability transitions, or a related area

2. The analytical skills or experience necessary to apply existing concepts and theories about sustainability transitions, sociotechnical transitions, behavioural approaches to energy decision-making, participatory energy governance, energy justice and business models

3. Strong knowledge and methods training, and experience, in qualitative techniques such as interviewing, focus groups, stakeholder workshops, observations, database management, and data analysis

4. Evidence of the ability to communicate effectively to academic, policy and non-academic audiences.

5. Basic knowledge of UK home decarbonisation policy and the Net Zero landscape

6. Research interests in understanding social relations driving the adoption of low carbon solutions, and the policy mechanisms for supporting these.

7. Ability to begin by August 2021, and be able and willing to work out of the Brighton and Hove City Council offices for at least one half day each week for work on the Whole Person, Whole Place project (dependent on pandemic-related restrictions)
DESIRABLE CRITERIA

1. Emerging track record of high-quality publications in reputable journals and other appropriate media of similar standing.

2. Experience of generating research or knowledge exchange income.

3. Experience in designing and delivering qualitative social science research focussed on local and residential energy issues

4. Good knowledge of the challenges for decarbonisation of residential buildings

5. Good understanding of Net Zero policy and local decarbonisation plans/efforts/initiatives

6. Research experience of local authority energy and decarbonisation policies

7. Publication record in local or residential decarbonisation or energy social science