

Job Description

Research Assistant – Parliament and Brexit

Department: Political Science

Specific Unit: The Constitution Unit

Location: London – Bloomsbury

Grade: 6B

Salary: £30,922 per annum including London allowance

Hours: Full time

Reports to:

Professor Meg Russell

regular events, has a popular blog and newsletter, and its senior staff are frequently consulted by policymakers and appear in national and international news media.

Context

University College London (UCL) is among the world's top universities. At the heart of London, it has a population of over 38,000 students, from more than 150 different countries, and offers degree programmes in a wide range of subjects. UCL's Department of Political Science is recognised for its excellence, ranked 2nd in the UK in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF). It conducts teaching and research in all fields of politics, including British and comparative politics, international relations, political theory, human rights, public policy-making and administration.

[The Constitution Unit](#) is the Department's largest and longest-established research centre. Created in 1995, it conducts timely, rigorous, independent research into constitutional change and the reform of political institutions. Our publications include reports, books, and articles in both academic journals and mainstream media. We have always prioritised providing evidence to policymakers, and our research has significant real-world impact – both in the United Kingdom and around the world. The Unit is led by [Professor Meg Russell](#), a specialist on parliament, and the Deputy Director is [Dr Alan Renwick](#), an expert on electoral systems and referendums. Other areas of interest include political parties, devolution, the judiciary, and central government. Major recent projects have included research into parliament's policy impact, the hosting of a citizens' assembly on Brexit in 2017, and the organisation of an independent commission reviewing the role of referendums in the UK. The Unit also organises

Main purpose of the job

Constitution Unit Director Professor Meg Russell has recently won a prestigious three-year Fellowship on 'Brexit, Parliament and the Constitution', funded by the [ESRC's UK in a Changing Europe initiative](#) (UKICE). This will involve a mixture of public outreach activities (e.g. public speaking, events, media appearances and blog posts) on the general theme, and a detailed programme of research focussed on parliament and Brexit.

We wish to recruit a full-time researcher to support Professor Russell's work on this exciting and timely project. The successful candidate's primary role will be to support the detailed research-based parts of the Fellowship, which will focus on different ways in which debates over Brexit have affected parliament's role, and how this role is perceived. Likely themes include tensions between direct and representative democracy, how parliament has impacted on the Brexit process, and what procedural changes might be needed in parliament in response to recent developments. Research methods will include content analysis of parliamentary documents and media sources, and interviews with parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and other groups. Several academic journal articles are planned, as well as a possible Constitution Unit report, and a possible book.

In addition to supporting the research, the successful candidate will also support Professor Russell in her other activities on the Fellowship, including preparing for public-facing activities, drafting blog posts and media articles, and organising events. The appointee will also contribute to the Constitution Unit as a member of the broader team.

Duties and responsibilities:

The Research Assistant will be expected to undertake duties in connection with the project as directed by Professor Russell, including the following:

- gathering and analysing data from the parliamentary record: e.g. debates, votes and committee reports from both chambers;
- gathering and analysing data from media sources;
- identifying interviewees, organising, conducting, documenting and analysing research interviews;
- designing and maintaining systems for the storage and analysis of the above data;
- conducting literature reviews, summarising articles, reports and books and maintaining annotated bibliographies;
- drafting background briefings based on the above and on contemporary political events;
- planning and contributing to outputs such as blogposts, media articles and social media interventions;
- contributing to planning and drafting of the final project publications;
- planning and contributing to organisation of events related to the project, hosted by the Constitution Unit or others;
- updating the project website;
- liaising with staff at the UKICE as appropriate on the above;
- contributing more widely to the work of the Constitution Unit, for example through attending team meetings and assisting in the planning of events, future research projects, and the Unit's blog and newsletter.

Job descriptions cannot be exhaustive and so the post holder may be required to undertake other duties which are in line with the scope, spirit and purpose of the job as requested by the line manager.

As duties and responsibilities change and develop the job description may be reviewed and be subject to amendment in consultation with the post holder.

Person specification

Criteria	Essential or Desirable
Qualifications, experience and knowledge	
A first-class Bachelor's degree, or a Master's degree at merit/distinction level, in political science, law or a related field	Essential
Clear and demonstrable knowledge of the key institutions of British politics.	Essential
A keen interest in, and demonstrable knowledge of, the UK parliament and Brexit (including the interaction between the two).	Essential
Prior research experience on the topics of parliament and/or Brexit.	Desirable
Knowledge of literatures in legislative studies, democracy and representation.	Desirable
Experience of content analysis, or of content analysis software (e.g. Nvivo).	Desirable
Experience of designing databases for research.	Desirable
Experience of organising and/or conducting research interviews.	Desirable
Experience of writing briefings for policy-makers.	Desirable
Experience of working with websites and social media.	Desirable
Experience of working in a political environment, academic research centre or think tank.	Desirable
Skills and abilities	
The ability to gather and systematically organise complex material from a range of sources.	Essential
Clear critical thinking, including the ability to relate day-to-day events to larger themes and political ideas.	Essential
Excellent written communication skills, including writing fluently and without errors for both specialist and non-specialist audiences.	Essential
Excellent planning and organisational skills, including ability to meet tight deadlines, prioritise a varied workload and work with limited supervision.	Essential
Sound judgement, and a well-developed ability to understand and balance political evidence.	Essential
Personal attributes	
An ability and willingness to demonstrate professional political neutrality, including on the Brexit question.	Essential

Apply

To apply for this position visit:

ucl.ac.uk/jobs

Please ensure that you do **all** of the following:

- Complete the required sections of the online form.
- Upload a CV, including details of your educational qualifications (with full details of grades) and your prior work experience.
- Upload a covering letter (maximum two pages) setting out clearly why you are interested in the position and how you meet the essential (and, where relevant, desirable) criteria.

Please do not upload other documents (e.g. samples of written work or degree certificates).

Interviews will take place on 30 July 2019.

Any queries regarding the vacancy or the application process should be directed to Edd Rowe
e.rowe@ucl.ac.uk

Information about the School and Department can be found at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/political-science>

Our department is working towards an Athena SWAN award. We are committed to advancing gender equality within our department.

This appointment is subject to UCL Terms and Conditions of Service for Research and Support Staff.

Please use these links to find out more about [UCL working life](#) including the benefits we offer and [UCL Terms and Conditions](#) related to this job.