

Job title	Senior Research Associate
Grade	Grade 9
Salary range	£41,526 - £52,559
Staff Group	Research
Department / Institution	Centre for the Study of Existential Risk

Project Information

The Centre for the Study of Existential Risk (CSER) invites applications for a Senior Research Associate from any relevant field of expertise or experience who is best able to contribute to our urgent mission. This is a fixed term post where the funding available is until July 2024 in the first instance. We study global risks, including those that could lead to human extinction or civilizational collapse, develop collaborative strategies to reduce them, and foster a global community of academics, technologists and policy-makers working to safeguard humanity. The challenges that CSER and our collaborators focus on will only grow more pressing over the years to come.

Humanity's long-term potential is threatened by a range of global risks, which could have catastrophic consequences, including the possibility of civilizational collapse or human extinction. Some of these risks relate directly to advances in scientific and technological capabilities, including artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and nuclear weapons. Others stem from the unsustainable pressures humanity is placing on vital planetary systems. The complex, inter-related nature of the 21st century's global challenges means that none of these risks can be studied in isolation. The empirical challenges in assessing these risks are complicated by their global scale, complexity and unprecedented nature. This makes CSER's work and its approach ever more essential.

CSER has already had global impact in its main areas of work. Over the last five years, this has included:

- Playing a leading role in the development of a field of technical AI safety, and in defining key questions about the global impacts and future of AI.
- Contributing to a range of international governance processes relating to emerging technologies and conducting influential horizon-scanning and foresight exercises.
- Producing leading scholarly work in biodiversity loss and governance, and informing the global public discussion through collaboration with high profile partners.
- Initiating novel approaches to risk management and governance, from a UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for Future Generations, and reform of business school rankings to account for environmental, social and governance Issues, to an international partnership on food security.
- Developing novel methodologies for studying emerging global risks, and playing a leading role in developing a worldwide community of scholars, industry-experts and policy makers focused on mitigating these threats.

CSER is building a substantial research team and over the next few years we will engage in further ambitious, longer-term research projects, and build on our unparalleled networks to translate our findings into strategies for global risk reduction. We will strengthen our focus on moving from attention to action on global risk, and our approach will continue to emphasise methodological rigour, creativity, interdisciplinarity and engagement with diverse stakeholders. In this way, CSER and others engaged in global risk research can make significant contributions to safeguarding humanity's long-term future.

Supported by CSER's research team and expert advisory board, the Senior Research Associate will produce independent and collaborative research outputs targeted at academic, government, industry and other audiences. The Senior Research Associate will join an interdisciplinary team working to better understand global risks, their interconnections, and management options. They will also work with CSER's management team in the coordination and development of CSER's projects and overall profile, and to build and maintain our collaborative networks. This is likely to include some line management responsibilities.

Our main existing areas of work include:

- A science of global risk – developing tools and methodologies that can be used by all those engaged in work to understand and manage global risks;
- Risks from artificial intelligence;
- Global catastrophic biological risks;
- Extreme risks and the global environment;
- Global justice and the governance of global catastrophic risk.

We are interested in candidates who can contribute to these existing strands of work, and candidates who might lead the development of work in additional areas of, or approaches to, global risk. You might bring insights into individual and societal responses to risks and disasters; knowledge of specific sectors of risk (AI, biological, environmental, nuclear, food systems, etc.) or at the intersection of such areas; expertise in addressing uncertainty, complexity, or systemic risk; experience in developing / applying interdisciplinary methods, tools and approaches for analysis and understanding of risks and appropriate responses, or of translating research for policy, governance and broader societal impact. A longer, indicative list of topics and approaches can be found on CSER's website at <https://www.cser.ac.uk/about-us/careers/pdrasra-indicative-topics-and-approaches/>

More important than a particular disciplinary background is the ability to work with us to develop and deliver ambitious research projects, translate our findings into strategies for global risk reduction, and take advantage of high-impact opportunities to contribute to the management of global risk.

Role-Specific Information

Role Summary

The Senior Research Associate will be expected to contribute to the production of individual and collaborative research outputs relevant to their particular focus area, and to more broadly participate in the scholarly and outreach activities of the Centre. Candidates should also be able to demonstrate a strong interest in the research foci of the Centre.

Candidates will have a high level of education, with at least three years experience at a postdoctoral level, or equivalent experience within a relevant setting (e.g. policy, industry, think tank or NGO) and should provide strong evidence of potential for research and publication at a high level. CSER is home to a community of researchers who work together on the complex challenges of managing global risks. We are looking for candidates who would contribute to such a community, and work as part of a growing team, both within CSER, and with our many research partners.

Part of the application process includes submitting a two-page indicative research proposal outlining what you plan to achieve during your time in the role. We welcome proposals that engage with and / or expand our research themes, demonstrate some connection with wider communities and practice, and have potential for significant impact. We expect the proposal to explicitly address issues of catastrophic and existential risk, such as dealing low probability, high impact scenarios, and the long-term future of humanity.

On our webpage <https://www.cser.ac.uk/about-us/careers/pdrasra-indicative-topics-and-approaches> we provide a list of some indicative topics and approaches, which connect to our existing research and future plans. This list is non-exhaustive; applicants are encouraged to generate their own ideas and break new research ground. We are interested in proposals that draw on any relevant field of expertise to create an ambitious project aligned with CSER's mission.

Key Responsibilities

The Senior Research Associate will report to CSER's Executive Director. Additional guidance will be provided by relevant senior academic advisors and other colleagues.

Post-holders will be expected to:

<p><i>Research and Scholarship</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct independent and collaborative research within CSER's broad focus areas, to be published as papers in leading academic journals, and reports for government, industry, and other relevant organisations. • Plan, coordinate, develop and contribute to the implementation of CSER's research programmes and collaborations. Research and write relevant reports for the Centre (such as strategy documents; reports to funders). • Participate in Centre-wide activities such as team meetings, work-in-progress seminars, and public events. • Organise and participate in meetings, workshops and conferences; leverage Cambridge's convening power to assemble world-leading expert meetings on topics relevant to extreme risks. 	60%
<p><i>Management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support other members of CSER's research team in applying their knowledge in production of research outputs, including through supervisory or mentorship roles. • Contribute to the management of the Centre's research and administrative staff, and serve on selection panels for the appointment of postdoctoral and administrative staff. 	20%
<p><i>Liaison and networking</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain coordination and active dialogue about Centre activities with CSER's management board, collaborating centres, financial supporters, and other stakeholders. Support CSER's broader communication and outreach activities. • Act as an ambassador for the Centre's research, both within Cambridge and externally, engaging with academics, the media, policy-makers, or other external audiences. • Develop collaborations with leading researchers and research centres within and outside Cambridge, and with key contacts in government, international organisations, and industry where relevant. 	10%
<p><i>Fundraising</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Centre's management team to support financial planning and reporting to funders, and actively seek additional funding for the activities of the Centre, including identifying opportunities, developing and drafting grant applications. 	10%

(Percentages are indicative. The proportion of time spent on various responsibilities will vary through the course of the project, and flexibility is expected.)

Person Profile

This section details the knowledge, skills and experience we require for the role.

Education & qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high level of education, preferably to a PhD level, and at least three years postdoctoral research experience or equivalent experience in a relevant setting (e.g. policy, industry, NGO).
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Specialist knowledge & skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise in some area relevant to CSER’s mission and work, and the ability to acquire quickly a technical understanding of other relevant fields where necessary. • Excellent organisational skills, including the ability to organise own workload effectively, maintain a high level of research productivity, and support others in managing competing demands. • Demonstrable ability to engage in financial and strategic planning, and to contribute to the Centre’s grant writing and fundraising efforts. • Ability to contribute to the development of research programmes, and to support development of individuals and their engagement and interaction within an interdisciplinary team. • The inclination and the intellectual versatility to engage with a range of ‘big-picture’ questions and the ability to pursue such questions in a rigorous way, integrating findings from different academic disciplines using a variety of analytic methods, and the ability to guide others in doing the same.
Interpersonal & communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of ability to work in collaborative environments. • Excellent written and oral communication and presentation skills, including the ability to represent CSER and its research to diverse stakeholders and expert communities - including academics across disciplines, industry partners, policy-makers and funders. • Fluency in English.
Relevant experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally, have experience in project management and supporting personal and professional development of others, and willingness to take on line management responsibilities.
Additional requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An enthusiasm and strong commitment to the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk’s core research aims is expected. The Senior Research Associate is expected to conduct most of their research in Cambridge and be based there but travel elsewhere for research, conferences and meetings.

Terms and Conditions

Location	The Senior Research Associate will be based in CSER’s offices in 16 Mill Lane at the University of Cambridge.
Hours of work	The appointment is full time. There are no conditions relating to hours and times of work but you are expected to work such hours and days as are reasonably necessary for the proper performance of your duties. Your times of work should be agreed between you, the PI and your head of institution.
Length of appointment	The start date is March 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter, for a duration of a four year period or until the end of the project (whichever is earlier).
Limited funding	The current position is funded by a research grant or contract. In the first instance, the funding supporting the post ends on 31 July 2024 and the Head of Department, or his/her nominee, will keep the role holder informed of the funding situation.
Probation period	Six months.

Annual leave	Full-time employees are entitled to annual paid leave of 6.6 weeks (or 33 days for those working full time), plus public holidays.
Pension eligibility	Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)/ Cambridge University Assistants' Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS)/NOW:Pensions Scheme. Pension scheme details, including information about the legal requirement for the University to automatically enrol its eligible jobholders into a qualifying workplace pension scheme from 1 March 2013, is available at: http://www.pensions.admin.cam.ac.uk/ .
Retirement age	The University does not operate a retirement age for assistant staff/research staff/unestablished academic staff/unestablished academic-related staff OR For established academic and academic-related staff, the University operates a retirement age which is at the end of the academical year in which the University officer reaches the age of 67.

Screening Check Requirements

We have a legal responsibility to ensure that you have the right to work in the UK before you can start working for us. If you do not have the right to work in the UK already, any offer of employment we make to you will be conditional upon you gaining it. If you need further information, you may find the Right to Work page within the 'Applying for a job' section of the University's Job Opportunities pages helpful (please see <http://www.jobs.cam.ac.uk/right/have/>).

Application Process

Applications should be made via the University's Web Recruitment System, where you will need to register an account (if you have not already) and log in before completing the online application form. Applications are due by midnight (GMT) on Sunday **16th February 2020** and should include:

- **A Curriculum Vitae**, including a list of publications.
- A **cover letter** outlining your interest in the role and its fit to your skills and experience (maximum of 2 pages).
- An **indicative research proposal** (maximum of two pages long) outlining a proposed research direction within CSER's general remit. (Illustrative examples of potential topics and approaches are provided at <https://www.cser.ac.uk/about-us/careers/pdrasra-indicative-topics-and-approaches>)
- The names and contact details of **two referees** who are familiar with your work.

Please ensure that you **upload all requested documents**, in the Upload section of the online application (Please note that if you send any additional documents, which have not been requested, we will not be able to consider these as part of your application.)

Interviews are planned for week commencing 2 March 2020 subject to change and we regret that we will only contact shortlisted candidates. If you have any questions about this vacancy you can contact Catherine Rhodes (cr573@cam.ac.uk).

Research Environment

CSER's research focuses on the identification, management and mitigation of possible extreme and existential risks associated with human activity. Our goal is to bring together some of the best minds from

academia, industry and the policy world to tackle challenges such as avoiding catastrophic impacts of releases of pathogenic and novel organisms and ensuring that developments in powerful new technologies are safe and beneficial. We focus especially on under-studied high-impact risks; those that might result in a global catastrophe, or even threaten human extinction, even if only with low probability.

We are housed in 16 Mill Lane at the University of Cambridge. Our administration is based within the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence (LCFI). Within the University of Cambridge, CSER has several collaborative links relevant to this project. Through our distinguished expert Advisory Board, we also have excellent links to policy and technology communities.

General Information

The University of Cambridge

The University of Cambridge is one of the world's oldest and most successful Universities, with an outstanding reputation for academic achievement and research. It was ranked first in the 2011 QS World University Rankings and its graduates have won more Nobel Prizes than any other university in the world. The University comprises more than 150 departments, faculties, schools and other institutions, plus a central administration and 31 independent and autonomous colleges.

The University and the Colleges are linked in a complex historical relationship. The Colleges are self-governing, separate legal entities which appoint their own staff. They admit students, provide student accommodation and deliver small group teaching (supervisions). The University awards degrees and its faculties and departments provide lectures and seminars for students, determine the syllabi for teaching and conduct research.

There is much more information about the University at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/univ/works/index.html> which we hope you will find helpful.

The School of Arts and Humanities

The School of Arts and Humanities is one of six Schools in the University of Cambridge. The term "School" refers to an administrative grouping of related Faculties, departments and subjects. The School of Arts and Humanities comprises the Faculties of Architecture and History of Art; Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Classics; Divinity; English (including Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic); Modern and Medieval Languages; Music; and Philosophy. Also within remit of the School are the interdisciplinary Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), and the University of Cambridge Language Centre.

Centre for the Study of Existential Risk

CSER's research focuses on the identification, management and mitigation of possible extreme and existential risks associated with human activity. Our goal is to bring together some of the best minds from academia, industry and the policy world to tackle these risks. We focus especially on under-studied high-impact risks, those that might result in a global catastrophe, or even threaten human extinction, even if only with low probability.

What the University can offer you

One of our core values at the University of Cambridge is to recognise and reward our staff as our greatest asset. We realise that it's our people who have built our outstanding reputation and that we will only maintain our leading position in the academic world by continuing to attract and retain talented and motivated people. If you choose to come and work with us, you will find that we offer:

- **Excellent benefits** – You will be eligible for a wide range of competitive benefits and services, including numerous discounts on shopping, health care, financial services and public transport. We also offer defined benefits pension schemes and tax-efficient bicycle, car lease and charity-giving schemes.

We will help you balance your home and work life by providing you with generous annual leave entitlement and procedures for requesting a career break or flexible working arrangements if you need them. You will also have access to a range of well-being support services, including in-house Occupational Health and Counselling services. If you have childcare responsibilities, you may also benefit from the enhanced maternity/adoption pay, two nurseries and a holiday play scheme that we provide.

We are keen to welcome new employees from other parts of the UK and other countries to Cambridge. If you will be relocating to Cambridge on a centrally funded appointment of two years or more, you may be eligible for our relocation expenses scheme. The University Accommodation Service (<http://www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk/>) will also be available to help you find suitable rented accommodation and to provide advice on renting arrangements and local facilities, if required. In addition, certain academic and academic-related appointments are eligible for the Shared Equity Scheme which offers financial assistance with the purchase of living accommodation.

- **A welcoming and inclusive environment** - We will help you settle into your new role and working environment through a central University induction event, local induction activities and our online induction package. Where appropriate to your role, you will have a probation period to provide a supportive framework for reviewing your progress and discussing your training and development needs.

If you are relocating to Cambridge, you and your family will be welcome to attend the Newcomers and Visiting Scholars Group, which provides an opportunity to find out more about Cambridge and meet other people new to the area.

- **Extensive development opportunities** - The encouragement of career development for staff is one of the University's core values. We put this into practice through various services and initiatives, including:
 - A wide-range of training courses and online learning packages.
 - The Staff Review and Development (SRD) Scheme, which is designed to enhance work effectiveness and facilitate career development post-probation.
 - Leave for career and personal development, including long-term study leave for assistant staff and sabbatical leave for academic staff.
 - The CareerStart@Cam programme, which supports assistant staff roles without higher education qualifications to develop their skills, experience and qualifications. Assistant staff may also apply for financial assistance for study which results in a qualification.
 - Reduced staff fees for University of Cambridge graduate courses.
 - The opportunity to attend lectures and seminars held by University departments and institutions.
 - Policies and processes dedicated to the career development of researchers and the implementation of the principles of the Concordat, which have led to the University being recognised with an HR Excellence in Research Award by the European Commission.

You can find further details of the benefits, services and opportunities we offer can be found in our CAMBens Employee Benefits web pages at <http://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/pay-benefits/cambens-employee-benefits>. A range of information about living and working in Cambridge is also available to you within the University's web pages at <http://www.jobs.cam.ac.uk/> and <http://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/hr-staff/information-staff>.

Equality of Opportunity at the University

We are committed to a proactive approach to equality, which includes supporting and encouraging all under-represented groups, promoting an inclusive culture and valuing diversity. We make selection decisions based on personal merit and an objective assessment against the criteria required for the post. We do not treat job applicants or members of staff less favourably than one another on the grounds of sex (including gender reassignment), marital or parental status, race, ethnic or national origin, colour, disability (including HIV status), sexual orientation, religion, age or socio-economic factors.

We have various diversity networks to help us progress equality; these include the Women's Staff Network, the Disabled Staff Network, the Black and Minority Ethnic Staff Network and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Staff Network. In addition, we were ranked in the top 100 employers for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) staff in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index 2013 and we hold an Athena SWAN silver award at organisation level for promoting women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine.

We are supportive of staff with caring responsibilities, such as through our flexible working, career break and returning carers schemes. We encourage individuals to include details of any breaks in employment due to caring responsibilities in applications for employment so that these can be taken into consideration in assessments made, where appropriate.

Information if you have a Disability

The University welcomes applications from individuals with disabilities and we are committed to ensuring fair treatment throughout the recruitment process. We will make adjustments to enable applicants to compete to the best of their ability wherever it is reasonable to do so, and, if successful, to assist them during their employment. Information for disabled applicants is available at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/staff/disabled/>.

We encourage you to declare any disability that you may have, and any reasonable adjustments that you may require, in the section provided for this purpose in the application form. This will enable us to accommodate your needs throughout the process as required. However, applicants and employees may declare a disability at any time.

If you prefer to discuss any special arrangements connected with a disability, please contact Helen Aston, Human Resources Administrator, who is responsible for recruitment to this position, on 01223 764332 or by email on SAHHR@admin.cam.ac.uk. Alternatively, you may contact the HR Business Manager responsible for the department you are applying to via hradmin@admin.cam.ac.uk.