

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX
 JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title and Grade:	Senior Research Officer (ASR); Grade 8
Contract:	Full-time, fixed term for 18 months (or until 31 March 2020, the date on which the research grant ends). This post is fixed-term because there is uncertainty about its continued funding in the foreseeable future. Part-time working will be considered at a minimum of 0.8 FTE.
Hours:	A notional minimum of 36 hours per week (pro-rata for part-time)
Salary:	£32,548 – 38,832 per annum (pro-rata for part-time)
Department/Section:	Institute for Social & Economic Research (ISER)
Responsible to:	Head of Department (HoD)
Reports on a day to day basis to:	Principal Investigator, Professor Annette Jäckle
Purpose of role:	To provide support for a research project that aims to examine which factors influence the decision of survey respondents to consent to data linkage and to develop and test ways of maximising informed consent. Information about the “Understanding and improving data linkage consent in surveys” project can be found at the following link - https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/projects/

CONTEXT

The Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex wishes to appoint a talented and ambitious survey methods researcher to work on a research project related to *Understanding Society*: the UK Household Longitudinal Study. *Understanding Society* is a major longitudinal survey initially covering 40,000 households across the UK and includes an Innovation Panel that is used for methodological development and testing (<http://www.understandingsociety.org.uk>). The post is based in the survey methods research group at ISER and is part of a research project funded by the Nuffield Foundation.

One of the most promising avenues for empirical social science research involves linking administrative or process generated data with survey data. Administrative data (whether held by government or private entities) are useful on their own, but will be much more useful if we can use surveys to “fill the gaps”. Sometimes the gaps will be specific types of information, and sometimes it will be to provide a suitable frame to allow inference to the general population. In the UK, survey data can only be linked to administrative or other process generated data, if survey respondents give informed consent to the linkage. The aims of this project are to examine which factors influence the decision to consent and to develop and experimentally test ways of maximising informed consent, in particular in mixed mode surveys involving web data collection and when consent for linkages to multiple datasets are requested.

The project is led by Professor Annette Jäckle, with other collaborators within ISER (Dr Jonathan Burton), in the economics department (Professor Thomas Crossley), and internationally (Professor Mick Couper, University of Michigan). The successful candidate will collaborate with leading experts in survey methodology to produce and disseminate high quality research. The candidate will contribute to data analysis and writing of manuscripts for publication in academic journals, and could potentially lead on papers related to this work. They will also contribute to the development work for experiments, to monitoring fieldwork, and to preparing and documenting data collected for the project.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE POST

- To provide support for a research project on understanding and improving data linkage consent in surveys.
- To engage in collaborative research activity resulting in internationally excellent publications that is in keeping with REF criteria - <http://www.ref.ac.uk/>
- To enhance the scholarly reputation of the Department and the University by contact with the wider academic community and supporting knowledge exchange activity.
- To contribute expertise and knowledge to departmental and/or institutional initiatives as directed by their Head of Department.

MAIN DUTIES OF THE POST

Research

- To work to the research objectives set out in the Nuffield grant.
- To undertake or manage practical elements of research including developing, implementing and testing questionnaires and experiments, developing a coding frame to code audio-recordings of interviewer and respondent behaviours, supporting communications with the fieldwork agency, preparing documentation for submission of the data to the UK Data Service, preparing data and contributing to data analysis, and writing manuscripts for publication in academic journals as agreed with the line manager.
- To produce research outputs for publication at acceptable levels of volume and academic excellence and disseminate the result of research and scholarship through appropriate Knowledge Exchange activities (such as at relevant national and international conferences and scholarly publications not intended for the REF).
- To contribute to knowledge exchange activities within the wider academic community and other activities designed to ensure that appropriate impact of the research (outside academia) is achieved, including communications with the project Advisory Board and contributing to the organisation of an end of project conference.

Leadership and Citizenship

- To play an active and constructive role in the Department and engage in activities beyond your own research team, (e.g. open days, staff meetings and relevant committees), as may be reasonably required by the Head of Department.
- To proactively participate in and develop internal and external networks and establish links with relevant academic and professional bodies, contacts and employers.
- To support knowledge exchange activities, for example, by contributing to research projects funded by commerce, industry or public sector organisations.
- To engage in continuing professional development in relevant subjects/disciplines, incorporating the outcomes from research and scholarship, ensuring skills are up-to-date and applied in education and research.



These duties are a guide to the work that the post holder will initially be required to undertake. They may be changed from time to time to meet changing circumstances.

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

For a full description of the terms of appointment for this post please visit:

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/hr/current-staff/terms.aspx>



UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX
PERSON SPECIFICATION

JOB TITLE: Senior Research Officer (ASR); Grade 8	POST REF: REQ01557
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QUALIFICATIONS / PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION	Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Relevant doctoral level degree in survey methodology or quantitative social science or be close to completion of PhD; or a Master's degree with a track record of academic publications in survey methodology or quantitative social science. 	X	
EXPERIENCE/KNOWLEDGE	Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evidence of a developing research agenda, engagement in high-quality research activity and a developing research profile. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A developing record of publications in internationally recognised, reputable journals (and other media of similar standing) appropriate to career stage and discipline norms. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Experience of contributing to small research programmes or defined areas of larger projects, and of developing research objectives and proposals including: experience of writing manuscripts for publication in academic journals and survey methodology publications in peer review journals. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Experience of quantitative analysis using large-scale complex survey data. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Experience using Stata or similar software packages beyond beginner level for data management and statistical analysis. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Experience with questionnaire design. 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Knowledge of experimental designs. 		X
SKILLS/ABILITIES	Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The ability and willingness to engage in knowledge exchange and outreach activities. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong communication skills, both written and verbal, with a proven ability to write clearly and concisely. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A good standard of written and spoken English 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Excellent quantitative analysis skills, including the ability to analyse large complex data sets using advanced statistical methods. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Proficiency with advanced statistical packages, such as Stata or R. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An aptitude for team and collaborative working. 	X	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Self- motivation and proven ability to work independently, producing high quality work within deadlines. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A flexible approach and ability to manage a diverse workload and competing priorities. 	X	
PROFESSIONAL VALUES	Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A commitment to helping develop dynamic communities of research and education at the University. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A strong and well-articulated commitment to the University's values and mission to deliver excellence in both education and research (integrated academic practice). 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A commitment to respect individual learners and diverse learning communities and to promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for all learners via student-centred practice. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A commitment to using evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development in their academic practice. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An acknowledgement of the wider context in which higher education operate. 	X	
ELIGIBILITY	Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The ability to meet UK 'right to work' requirements (1). 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Can fulfil the staff vetting procedure for Government contracts (see general information for more details). 	X	

¹ The University has a responsibility under the Asylum, Immigration and Nationality Act 2006 to ensure that all employees are eligible to work in the UK. Prior to commencing employment, the successful candidate will be asked to provide documentary evidence to this effect. Please note that the University may not be able to issue a Tier 2 Certificate of Sponsorship for this post. For further information about UK immigration requirements please follow this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Department

You can find more information about the department at the following link:

<https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/>

People Supporting Strategy

Please find a link to the People Supporting Strategy.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/directories/human-resources/people-supporting-strategy.pdf>

General information

Informal enquiries may be made to Annette Jäckle (e-mail: aejack@essex.ac.uk). However, all applications must be made online.

At the University of Essex we use consistent language and terminology that articulates more clearly the responsibilities for education, research and leadership/citizenship associated with each academic role. This will help new colleagues to understand the University values from the moment they engage either as an applicant or new colleague, and help them to understand the future career pathways available to them as they become more established in their role.

We advertise our salaries on a range to indicate the trajectory of progression that can be made. Appointments are usually made at the start of the salary range. The university salary structure includes automatic pay progression within the published grades, subject to service and performance. In addition to this, there are performance related annual pay review schemes in place.

The Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER)

ISER, founded over 25 years ago, is a research department in the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Essex. It has a worldwide reputation as a multidisciplinary centre of quantitative social science research and as a producer of household panel data of the highest quality (*'Understanding Society'* the UK Household Longitudinal Study and its predecessor the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)). ISER is also home to the long-running ESRC Research Centre on Micro-Social Change (MiSoC) and EUROMOD, the tax-benefit micro-simulation model for the European Union. ISER's research excellence is demonstrated by its outstanding publication record and substantial research funding. ISER employs scholars of international prominence publishing in the top journals in their fields.

An excellent record of high-quality research

ISER's research currently addresses topics including: income distribution and poverty; employment and self-employment dynamics; the family and intergenerational transmission processes; health and ageing across the lifecourse; social behaviour, beliefs and values; education, labour markets, and skill formation; social policy; social stratification and disadvantage; risky behaviour; ethnicity and migration; neighbourhood influences on individual outcomes; cross-national comparative research; the measurement and use of data on individuals' expectations; analysis methods; and survey methodology.

ISER has a strong publication record, with regular contributions to top-five journals in Economics and to leading journals in Sociology such as *European Sociological Review* and *American Journal of Sociology*. We have strong links with the University's departments of Economics and Sociology, both of which are recognised as being among the strongest in the country. ISER contributes to these two

Units of Assessment in the REF, and in future is likely to support two more. ISER has its own seminar series and also runs joint seminars with Economics and Sociology and for health researchers across the University. It operates an active Working Paper Series providing an outlet for papers prior to publication: <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/publications>.

Substantial research funding

ISER is currently one of the largest single recipients of research and resource funding from the ESRC, with quinquennial core funding currently supporting our two primary activities: the Research Centre on Micro-Social Change (MiSoC) for substantive research, and the UK Household Longitudinal Study. With its unique combination of research and resource functions, and a core focus on the use of advanced quantitative techniques applied to micro-data usually on individuals, families or households, ISER offers quantitative social scientists an ideal research environment.

The MiSoC research centre (<https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/misoc/>) has enjoyed continuous ESRC funding from its inception in 1989. The 2014-2019 research programme, "Understanding individual and family behaviours in a new era of uncertainty and change", is organised in three main strands:

- Vulnerability, social insurance, and the dynamics of family finances, employment and health;
- New members of society: the formation of capabilities in children and young adults, and social mobility and integration amongst immigrants;
- Values, preferences and expectations.

A cross-cutting strand will focus on advancing statistical methods to improve our ability to obtain robust empirical evidence from data analyses with statistical and econometric methods. It is directed by Professor Mike Brewer, with co-Directors of Professors Sonia Bhalotra, Paul Clarke, Emilia Del Bono, Adeline Delavande, Steve Pudney and David Voas.

'*Understanding Society*' <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/> is a flagship ESRC initiative, which started with a sample of 40,000 households across the four countries of the UK and includes the former BHPS sample. The BHPS is one of the most heavily used social science data sets in the UK, and recognized as one of the world's highest quality longitudinal surveys. Unique features of *Understanding Society* are the *Innovation Panel* which is reserved for experimentation, immigrant and ethnic minority boost samples and the collection of objective health measures including biomarkers, direct physical measures and genetic data. The Study is underpinned by survey methodological research which is world leading. There is an extensive programme of data linkage to a wide range of administrative records. The Study also has its own Policy Unit which works directly with government departments to undertake research and share findings.

The EUROMOD micro-simulation project (<https://www.euromod.ac.uk/>), funded by the European Union, provides a major resource for European comparative tax-benefit policy research. As well as calculating the effects of actual policies it is also used to evaluate the effects of tax-benefit policy reforms and other changes on poverty, inequality, incentives and government budgets. EUROMOD is a unique resource for cross-national research, designed to produce results that are comparable across countries and meaningful when aggregated to the EU level.

In addition to our substantial funding from the ESRC, ISER has a strong track record of success in securing funding from other sources including the European Union, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Leverhulme Trust, the Nuffield Foundation, government departments such as the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Education, and the Home Office, and organisations such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Low Pay Commission, the Financial Services Authority, and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Research with impact

ISER has a very good record at communicating and disseminating its research, and our key audiences include policy-makers, government departments, opinion formers, data providers, the third

and private sectors, national and international organisations, the media and funding bodies. Its research also has impact at the highest level (research from ISER underpinned 7 Impact Case studies submitted to the 2014 REF, for example). This is all achieved through a professional communications and web team, the Understanding Society Policy Unit, and activities that are part of the MiSoC and EUROMOD research programmes, working alongside University and Faculty staff.

A top research environment in a leading university

ISER is a flagship social science department within the University of Essex, internationally recognised as a centre of excellence and expertise in the analysis of longitudinal data and providing a stimulating and innovative research environment. The University of Essex is one of the leading universities in Europe for social science research: the results of the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) put it in the top 5 in the UK for social science, and the University is ranked 7th in the UK for economics. ISER makes a major contribution to the University's success. The University also appeared in the top 100 of The Times's World Social Science University Rankings ([World University Rankings in the Social Sciences](#)).

ISER contributes to three Master's degrees run jointly with the departments of Economics and Sociology. Each has ESRC '1+3' recognition status.

ISER occupies a modern purpose-built building on the University campus. The building provides spacious office accommodation for all ISER staff and PhD students, meeting and seminar rooms, a common room, and a specialist research library. There are excellent IT facilities in ISER and throughout the university. The University's Albert Sloman Library is widely acknowledged to have excellent holdings in the social sciences. ISER's two weekly multidisciplinary seminar series are regularly attended by some 30-40 researchers from ISER and other departments, and researchers from ISER also regularly engage in departmental seminars in other departments in the Faculty.

ISER has about 90 staff in total, including researchers from several disciplines (mainly economics, sociology, health sciences and survey methods), survey specialists, and computing and support staff. There are over 30 part- and full-time PhD students and ISER hosts a large number of visitors from around the world. Forty external Research Associates are actively engaged in collaborative research with ISER staff.

The ISER senior management team consists of the ISER Director (Emily Grundy), the ISER Deputy Director and Director of MiSoC (Mike Brewer), the Research Director (Emilia Del Bono), the Director of EUROMOD (Holly Sutherland) and the Director of Understanding Society (Michaela Benzeval).

Strategic planning and management are organised by senior staff. There are six Research Groups with a strategic role of promoting collaboration in our main areas of research interest: Work; Family and education; Policy, incomes and welfare; Ethnicity and migration; Health; and Methods. These groups also have a strategic role in planning research funding initiatives.

Further information about ISER, its staff, and its activities, is available from our website: <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk>. Information about the University of Essex is available from <http://www.essex.ac.uk>.

Removal and Relocation

ISER aims to make a contribution towards the relocation costs of new staff members. (Automatic contribution by the University is not always standard.) We are willing to offer a contribution of up to £1,000 (maximum), subject to production of appropriate receipts. Subject to negotiation, an additional £500 (maximum) may be available for staff relocating from outside the UK.