



DEPARTMENT OF  
**COMPUTER  
SCIENCE**

University of Oxford Department of Computer Science

## Job description and selection criteria

<b>Job title</b>	Research Associate on the SCorCH Project (2 posts)
<b>Division</b>	Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division
<b>Department</b>	Department of Computer Science
<b>Location</b>	Wolfson Building, Parks Road, Oxford. With the opportunity to start remotely if pandemic restrictions require this.
<b>Grade and salary</b>	Two posts at Grade 7: Salary £32,817 – £34,804 p.a. (in the range of)
<b>Hours</b>	Full time
<b>Contract type</b>	<b>One post for 24 months and one post for 12 months.</b> Fixed term from 1 May 2021. Both with the possibility to start later
<b>Reporting to</b>	Professor Tom Melham
<b>Vacancy reference</b>	150116



## The SCorCH Project

These roles are for two research associates to conduct advanced research in **applied formal verification of hardware and systems** as part of the [SCorCH](#) project.

The *Secure Code for Capability Hardware* (SCorCH) project is making new advances in formal analysis tools to find security issues in code running on a new generation of security-aware hardware chips. It is funded by The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council of UKRI as part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, [Digital Security by Design](#) (DSbD) Challenge. DSbD is a substantial programme of advanced collaborative research and development, technology prototyping, and business-led demonstrators that aims to radically update the foundation of the UK's insecure digital computing infrastructure. SCorCH is one of nine projects funded by the challenge. The cornerstone of the challenge is a technology platform prototype, called "[Morello](#)", that is more resistant to cyber-threats than conventional architectures and is being developed in a research programme at Arm.

SCorCH is a collaboration by the universities of Oxford and Manchester and has two industrial partners, Arm and AWS. We will be working closely with Arm to ensure that the SCorCH solution aligns with ongoing developments on the Morello platform. And we will be working closely with Automated Reasoning Group at Amazon Web Services to explore real-world applications of the SCorCH solution. Researchers on the project at Oxford and Manchester will collaborate closely on all aspects of the project.

The aim of SCorCH is to leverage and extend existing formal analysis techniques to find (and fix) security issues in software running on 'capability hardware', such as Morello. Capability hardware can be used to circumvent many common memory safety issues and to implement advanced approaches to software compartmentalisation. But security is achieved only if these features are used correctly, and if the underlying hardware is correct.

The SCorCH approach will follow three main verticals of exploration: Bounded Model Checking, Runtime Verification, and Automated Reasoning. The appointed candidate for the 24-month position will make research contributions that complement or extend the other work being done in the project, according to their background and expertise. The appointed candidate for the 12-month position will work on new automated reasoning methods applied to novel capability hardware architectures.

## The Role

These positions offer a unique opportunity to do leading-edge formal analysis research aimed at real impact on cyber-security, to join a top-class team of collaborators, and to contribute to a major and prominent UK research initiative in computer science and engineering. Both roles also offer an excellent opportunity for career development that are equally well-suited to an academic or industrial research path, or to subsequent work as an applied verification engineer in industry.

The post holders will be members of the SCorCH team, working closely with Professor Melham at Oxford to research and apply novel formal analysis theories, techniques, methodologies. The successful candidates will also work in close collaboration with researchers at the university of Manchester.

The main responsibilities of the advertised posts are to contribute to the SCorCH project objectives, with an emphasis on novel, automated formal analysis methods applied to

software that leverages capability hardware (the 24-month post) and novel formal verification methods and algorithms applied to the underlying capability hardware architecture (the 12-month post). This will involve identifying the most promising and valuable targets for formal analysis, selecting appropriate tooling and algorithms – making innovative, theoretically well-grounded, extensions to these as needed – devising novel analysis methods, and carrying out at-scale case studies.

The post holders will join the internationally leading verification research group of Professor Tom Melham. Researchers in Melham’s group benefit from the scientific insights and connections that he has gained over decades of close, impact-focused collaborations with senior engineers at leading companies in the computing and semiconductor industries. Members of the group regularly present their work in leading conferences in verification, security, and testing.

The post holders will have responsibility for carrying out research as outlined above, collaborating with Professor Melham and other members of the SCoRCH team, and assisting with management of the project and project reporting, as required. The post holders will also have opportunities to engage in teaching and to co-supervise students associated with Melham’s group.

Oxford is also recruiting a senior research associate for the [Soteria](#) project, which is also funded as part of UKRI’s Digital Security by Design challenge. This is a cyber-security demonstrator that will extend DSbD technology for applications in the e-commerce industrial market. The Soteria project is led by THG Holdings plc and involves the universities of Oxford and Manchester. Research in Soteria and SCoRCH will run concurrently, so the appointed researchers on both projects will benefit from a critical mass of research in DSbD technology at Oxford, alongside membership of the wider Oxford verification research group

<b>Research topic</b>	Formal analysis of capability systems and architectures.
<b>Principal Investigator / supervisor</b>	Professor Tom Melham
<b>Funding partner</b>	EPSRC

For further information about the project or for informal discussions about suitability, please contact Tom Melham (Tom.Melham@cs.ox.ac.uk).

## Responsibilities

- Develop novel research questions and plan research in the context of the SCoRCH project’s aims. Conduct individual research: analysing analysis and verification challenges, generating original ideas and approached and co-ordinating multiple aspects of the work to meet deadlines.
- Initiate publication of research results in leading journals and conferences. Write research articles for peer-reviewed conferences, journals, book chapters, and reviews. Present papers at international and national conferences, and lead seminars to disseminate research findings.
- Assist with project reporting, as required.

- Help organise project meetings, workshops, and liaise with funding bodies to provide information to project stakeholders. Represent the Oxford components of the project and/or research group at project meetings and external meetings/seminars.
- Carry out collaborative projects with team/group members and other research groups.
- Act as a source of information and advice to other members of the group on scientific protocols and experimental techniques.
- The post holder may have the opportunity to teach. This may include lecturing, small-group teaching, and tutoring of undergraduates and graduate students.

## Selection Criteria

### Essential

- Hold a PhD/Dphil (or close to completion)\* in Computer Science or a related mathematical discipline.
- Have a strong publication record, according to the experience of the candidate, and have familiarity with the existing literature and research in the field, as witnessed by published peer-reviewed work the area of formal analysis or related areas.
- Ability to contribute to research on the specified topics.
- A willingness to collaborate with others and work effectively as a member of a team
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to write for publication, present research proposals and results, and represent the research group at meetings.

### Desirable

- Background and expertise that complements and/or extends the research being done by the rest of the project team at Oxford and Manchester.
- Experience of working in collaborative or interdisciplinary environments.
- Expertise in one or more of the following:
  - applied formal verification of hardware and/or software,
  - model checking, or other core formal verification technologies
  - FPGAs and/or system-on-chip and/or computer architecture and/or networks.

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\*Evidence required.

EITHER a copy of your PhD/ DPhil award certificate;

OR an academic reference confirming the qualification has been awarded;

OR an academic reference confirming that you have submitted your thesis, if you have not yet completed.

## Pre-employment screening

All offers of employment are made subject to standard pre-employment screening, as applicable to the post.

If you are offered the post, you will be asked to provide proof of your right-to-work and your identity. And we will contact the referees you have nominated. You will also be asked to complete a health declaration (so that you can tell us about any health conditions or

disabilities so that we can discuss appropriate adjustments with you), and a declaration of any unspent criminal convictions.

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/](http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/jobs/preemploymentscreening/).

# 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 2016/17 exceeded £564m 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](http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation)

## Department of Computer Science

The Department of Computer Science was established in 1957, making it one of the longest-established Computer Science departments in the country. It is one of the UK's leading Computer Science Departments (ranked first in a number of international rankings). The UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) in December 2014 resulted in 74 members of the Department having 53% of their research activity ranked in the top category of 4\* (world-leading). Overall, we received an average of 3.34 across the Department (3\* being internationally excellent). A significant majority of the Department are active in externally sponsored research, with both government and industrial funding. At present, there are 69 members of academic staff and almost 100 research staff.

The Department has close links with government, industry, and other departments within the University. Among the latter are Mathematics, Engineering, Physics, Statistics and a number of life sciences departments. The Department is housed across multiple sites within the University's South Parks Road Science Area, facilitating strong collaborative links with research groups and institutes in closely allied areas (including the Oxford Internet Institute and the Oxford e-Research Centre). This is an essentially inter-disciplinary activity which is at present attracting major funding from a number of sources. At present, the Department holds over £50m in external research contracts.

Research in the Department is currently managed in ten themes:

- *Algorithms & Complexity Theory* focusses on determining the inherent difficulty of computational problems, classifying problems according to this inherent difficulty, and designing and analysing algorithms that use computational resources as efficiently as possible;
- *Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning* focuses on theoretical foundations, multiagent systems, deep learning and computational linguistics;
- *Automated Verification* investigates theory and practice of formal verification and correct-by-construction synthesis for software and hardware systems;
- *Computational Biology & Health Informatics* is concerned with computational approaches for biomedical research and healthcare innovation;
- *Cyber-Physical Systems* is focusing on intelligent and autonomous sensor systems with applications in positioning, healthcare, environmental monitoring and smart cities;
- *Foundations, Structures and Quantum* embraces interdisciplinary research, and has a particular interest in structural foundations of quantum computation;
- *Human-Centred Computing* covers human-computer interaction, social computing and world-wide web;
- *Information Systems* covers databases, knowledge representation and reasoning;
- *Programming Languages* covers functional programming, program analysis, and programming language foundations;
- *Security* specialises in cybersecurity, protocol analysis, systems security, trusted computing, human-centred security, and networking.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.cs.ox.ac.uk/>.

## **The Mathematical, Physical, and Life Sciences Division (MPLS)**

The Mathematical, Physical, and Life Sciences (MPLS) Division is one of the four academic divisions of the University. Oxford is widely recognised as one of the world's leading science universities. The disciplines within the MPLS Division regularly appear at the highest levels in world rankings. In the results of the six-yearly UK-wide assessment of university research, REF2014, the MPLS division received the highest overall grade point average (GPA) and the highest GPA for outputs. We received the highest proportion of 4\* outputs, and the highest proportion of 4\* activity overall. More than 50 per cent of MPLS activity was assessed as world leading.

The MPLS Division's 10 departments and 3 interdisciplinary units span the full spectrum of the mathematical, computational, physical, engineering and life sciences, and undertake both fundamental research and cutting-edge applied work. Our research addresses major societal and technological challenges and is increasingly focused on key interdisciplinary issues. We collaborate closely with colleagues in Oxford across the medical sciences, social sciences and humanities, and with other universities, research organisations and industrial partners across the globe in pursuit of innovative research geared to address critical and fundamental scientific questions.

MPLS is proud to be the home of some of the most creative and innovative scientific thinkers and leaders working in academe. Our senior researchers have been awarded some of the most significant scientific honours (including Nobel prizes and prestigious titles such as FRS and FR.Eng) and we have a strong tradition of attracting and nurturing the very best early career researchers who regularly secure prestigious fellowships. The Division is also the proud holder of eight Athena Swan Awards (4 Silver and 4 Bronze) illustrating our commitment to ensure good practice and to encourage women in science at all levels in the division.

We have around 6,000 students and play a major role in training the next generation of leading scientists. Oxford's international reputation for excellence in teaching is reflected in its position at the top of the major league tables and subject assessments. MPLS academics educate students of high academic merit and potential from all over the world. Through a mixture of lectures, practical work and the distinctive college tutorial system, students develop their ability to solve major mathematical, scientific and engineering problems.

MPLS is dedicated to bringing the wonder and potential of science to the attention of audiences far beyond the world of academia. We have a strong commitment to supporting public engagement in science through initiatives including the Oxford Sparks portal (<http://www.oxfordsparks.net/>) and a large variety of outreach activities; these are crucial activities given so many societal and technological issues demand an understanding of the science that underpins them. We also endeavour to bring the potential of our scientific efforts forward for practical and beneficial application to the real world and our desire is to link our best scientific minds with industry and public policy makers.

For more information about the MPLS division, please visit: <http://www.mpls.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/](http://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 will also be asked to upload a CV and a supporting statement. 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 department(s).*

*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](mailto:recruitment.support@admin.ox.ac.uk). Further help and support is available from [www.ox.ac.uk/about\\_the\\_university/jobs/support/](http://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](http://www.recruit.ox.ac.uk).

Please note that you will receive an automated email from our e-recruitment system to confirm receipt of your application. **Please check your spam/junk mail** if you do not receive this email.

# Important information for candidates

## Data Privacy

Please note that any personal data submitted to the University as part of the job application process will be processed in accordance with the GDPR and related UK data protection legislation. For further information, please see the University's Privacy Notice for Job Applicants at: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/gdpr/privacynotices/job/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/gdpr/privacynotices/job/). The University's Policy on Data Protection is available at: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/gdpr/universitypolicyondataprotection/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/gdpr/universitypolicyondataprotection/).

## The University's policy on retirement

The University operates an Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) for all academic posts and some academic-related posts. The University has adopted an EJRA of 30 September before the 69<sup>th</sup> 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+/](http://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+/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/end/retirement/acrelretire8+/).

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

## Employee benefits

University employees enjoy 38 days' paid holiday, generous pension schemes, travel discounts, and a variety of professional development opportunities. Our range of other employee benefits and discounts also includes free entry to the Botanic Gardens and University colleges, and discounts at University museums. See [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/benefits](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/benefits).

## University Club and sports facilities

Membership of the University Club is free for all University staff. The University Club offers social, sporting, and hospitality facilities. 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](http://www.club.ox.ac.uk) and [www.sport.ox.ac.uk/oxford-university-sports-facilities](http://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/oxford-university-sports-facilities).

## Information for staff new to Oxford

If you are relocating to Oxfordshire from overseas or elsewhere in the UK, the University's Welcome Service website includes practical information about settling in the area, including advice on relocation, accommodation, and local schools. See [www.welcome.ox.ac.uk](http://www.welcome.ox.ac.uk). There is also a visa loan scheme to cover the costs of UK visa applications for staff and their dependents. See [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/permits/reimburse&loanscheme/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/permits/reimburse&loanscheme/).

## Family-friendly benefits

With one of the most generous family leave schemes in the Higher Education sector, and a range of flexible working options, Oxford aims to be a family-friendly employer. We also subscribe to My Family Care, a service that provides practical advice and support for employees who have caring responsibilities. The service offers a free telephone advice line, and the ability to book emergency back-up care for children, adult dependents and elderly relatives. See [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/benefits/family/mfc/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/benefits/family/mfc/).

## Childcare

The University has excellent childcare services, including 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/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/childcare/).

## Disabled staff

We are committed to supporting members of staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions. For further details, including information about how to make contact, in confidence, with the University's Staff Disability Advisor, see [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/staff](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/staff).

## 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/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/inpractice/networks/).

## 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 settle into Oxford, and provides them with an opportunity to meet people and make connections in the local area. See [www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk](http://www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk).

