

# Collections Assistant (fixed term)

Department of History and Philosophy of Science

Closing date: 8 January 2025  
Job Reference: JN44178



## Collections Assistant (fixed term)

**Salary:**

£30,505-£34,866

**Contract:**

Fixed term (5 years)

**Location:**

Central Cambridge

**Department:**History and Philosophy of  
Science**Responsible to:**

Collections Manager

**Working Pattern:**Full Time  
(On-site working only)**Role Overview**

The Whipple Museum of the History of Science is seeking a Collections Assistant with a passion for collections documentation and care, and experience working with a range of objects. The Collections Assistant will join the Museum's small and dedicated team at an exciting time of growth, as we seek to improve our visitor offer and support for the research community. This role offers an opportunity for an early-career professional to develop their skills with a diverse collection and gain experience in the operation of a small museum.

The Whipple Museum of the History of Science is one of the eight University of Cambridge Museums. The Museum's mission is to use its collections to share, challenge, and explore stories from the history of science. It aims to give people a richer understanding of knowledge as a product of diverse cultures throughout history, inspiring a life-long engagement with science.

The Whipple Museum's collection is among the most intensively researched history of science collections in the world. It is internationally recognised as a centre for object-based research and teaching, and the Museum's entire holdings have been Designated as internationally significant by Arts Council England. They comprise over 8,000 scientific instruments, models, globes, prints, photographs, and other materials.

The Collections Assistant will work with the Collections Manager to manage the Museum's collections according to Spectrum and Accreditation standards, and best practice in collections care. The role holder will also support teaching, research, exhibitions, and loans, providing wider access to the collections, and contribute to large collections management projects. The Museum is currently undertaking a full collections audit and review, which aims to ascertain the strengths and gaps of the collection, its underused objects, duplicates, and irrelevant material, and to better understand its storage and care needs.

The Collections Assistant will join the Museum's core team of Director, Curator, Learning Coordinator, Operations Manager, Visitor Services Assistant, Collections Manager, and temporary Archivist.



## Key responsibilities

### Documentation

- Accession new objects, including writing initial condition reports and marking objects, entering information into the FileMaker Pro database in accordance with the Museum's policies and Spectrum standards
- Catalogue and improve database records, including updating locations and adding recent research
- Photograph collections
- Contribute to large collections management projects and/or collections moves, such as the ongoing collections audit and review, as needed
- Contribute to documentation planning and the development and maintenance of relevant policies and procedures

### Collections Care

- Manage the conservation housekeeping schedule, dusting stores and conservation cleaning objects, and adjusting the schedule as necessary
- Implement the Integrated Pest Management programme, checking pest traps, recording findings, and reporting concerns
- Identify remedial conservation needs and refer them to the Museum's shared Conservator
- Improve storage and repack collections according to best practice
- Monitor stock levels and liaise with the Operations Manager to purchase new conservation materials; manage the salvage kit
- Contribute to collections care planning and the development and maintenance of relevant policies and procedures
- Support the response to emergency situations, as directed by the Collections Manager and the Emergency Response Team

### Collections Access and Display

- Provide teaching and research support through preparing and delivering objects to the workroom, teaching rooms, and other spaces
- Provide collections management support needed for tours, outreach, and events
- Supervise visiting researchers in the workroom, providing assistance and ensuring safe handling and adherence to procedures
- Respond to enquiries about the Museum's collections and digitise items for overseas researchers
- Install objects for display, creating basic supports as required
- Contribute to the loans programme through condition reporting and packing objects to be loaned
- Act as a courier on UK and international loans, including virtual courier supervision

### Research

- Research objects and provenance using archival and library sources

### Communications and Teamwork

- Supervise and support summer interns
- Support the wider work of the Museum's small team as required and in keeping with the role (e.g. suggesting opportunities for social media, setting up for events, occasional duty management and gallery invigilation cover)
- Share knowledge about appropriate display, storage, and handling with other staff
- Support the Museum's commitment to sustainability, decolonisation, and equality, diversity, and inclusion

# Person Specification

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
<b>Experience</b>		
Experience of handling a range of collections and materials	✓	
Experience of working on collections management projects	✓	
<b>Skills</b>		
Manual dexterity for object handling	✓	
Knowledge of the principles of collections management and Spectrum procedures	✓	
Ability to accurately follow set procedures and guidelines	✓	
Excellent attention to detail	✓	
Computer literacy, including collections management systems (e.g. FileMaker Pro or Modes)	✓	
Good oral and written communications skills	✓	
Good interpersonal skills with the ability to work with colleagues and external contacts, and as part of a team	✓	
Ability to work independently on own initiative, prioritising own workload, and adapting to changing needs	✓	
Understanding of collections care issues	✓	
<b>Qualifications</b>		
A good general education to A-level standard/NVQ Level 3 or equivalent level of practical experience	✓	
<b>Additional Requirements</b>		
Ability to work occasional weekends and evenings, with time off in lieu or overtime pay	✓	
Interest in the history of science and the Whipple Museum's collections		✓

## The Department of History and Philosophy of Science



The Department is one of the oldest and largest centres of teaching and research in the field of history and philosophy of science in the world, with an outstanding international reputation. The Department is built around the Whipple Museum, a world-class collection of scientific instruments, built on the gift of R.S. Whipple to the University in 1944. Whipple also gifted his large collection of rare scientific books, creating the Whipple Library which now functions as the Departmental Library and provides a basis for research and teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

The Department is located in one building in the centre of Cambridge. It currently has 16 established University Teaching Officers. It has extensive links with other Departments and Faculties in the University, with a range of subjects in the physical and biological sciences, the social and psychological sciences, and the humanities.

Currently the core of the Department's undergraduate teaching is offered as part of the Natural Sciences Tripos in the second, third and fourth years; the third year is a full-time specialist course (also open to medical students); the fourth year leads to the degree of MSci. Since 2021 the Department has also offered a new major for third-year students in the Biological and Biomedical Sciences (BBS). Total undergraduate numbers are well over 150 in a typical year. The Department also participates in the teaching of two other triposes: the Psychological and Behavioural Sciences (PBS) Tripos, and the Human, Social, and Political Science (HSPS) Tripos.

The Department offers two 9-month Master's degree programmes, with approximately 50 students per year. The MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine is offered entirely within the Department, and the MPhil in Health, Medicine and Society is run jointly with the Departments of Sociology and Social Anthropology. At any one time the Department has approximately 60 PhD students. There are also a number of Research Fellows, Affiliated Scholars, and Visiting Scholars and Students attached to the Department, so that the total number of persons engaged in postgraduate and postdoctoral research at any given time is around 200. The weekly Departmental Seminar series and many other seminars, workshops and reading groups are an important part of our research activities. In short, the Department is a hotbed of intellectual activity throughout the academic year, as well as offering a friendly and supportive working environment for all Department staff.

The Department currently has several active research grants including:

- Making Climate History (Leverhulme Trust Award)
- From Collection to Cultivation: Historical Perspectives on Crop Diversity and Food Security (Wellcome Trust Investigator Award)
- The Many Births of the Test-Tube Baby (Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship)
- Histories of Artificial Intelligence: A Genealogy of Power (Mellon Sawyer Seminar)

## The Whipple Library and Whipple Museum



### The Whipple Library

The Whipple Library is the University's specialist library for History and Philosophy of Science. It exists primarily to support the teaching and research activities of the Department. The collections are broad and include material on a range of interdisciplinary topics.

<https://www.whipplelib.hps.cam.ac.uk/>

### The Whipple Museum

The Museum's holdings are particularly strong in material dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries, especially objects produced by English instrument makers, although the collection contains objects dating from the medieval period to the present day.

Instruments of astronomy, navigation, surveying, drawing and calculating are well represented, as are sundials, mathematical instruments and early electrical apparatus.

<https://www.whipplemuseum.cam.ac.uk/>



## The School of Humanities and Social Sciences



The School of Humanities and Social Sciences is, in terms of student numbers, the largest of the six Schools in the University and is currently comprised of:

Faculty of Economics

Faculty of Education

Faculty of History

Faculty of Human, Social and Political Science,

which is made up of:

Department of Archaeology including the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research

Department of Social Anthropology including the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and the Mongolian and Inner Asia Studies Unit

Department of Sociology

Department of Politics and International Studies, incorporating:

Centre of African Studies

Centre of Development Studies

Centre of Latin American Studies

Centre of South Asian Studies

Centre for Gender Studies

Faculty of Law, including the Institute of Criminology and the Lauterpacht Centre for International Law

Department of History and Philosophy of Science, including the Whipple Museum of the History of Science

Department of Land Economy

The School covers a wide range of disciplines with differing methodologies, from highly quantitative analysis of 'big data' to ethnography and the analysis of the material culture and thought of past societies. The geographical range is equally broad, with Centres of African, Latin American and South Asian Studies, and specialists within each Department or Faculty. Each institution has its own well-developed research profile. The School is participating in university-wide Strategic Research Initiatives such as public health, global food security, energy and conservation which bring the insights of social sciences to bear on some of the major issues facing the world today. Cambridge is one of the world's leading centres for science, technology and medicine, and the social sciences are now playing an increasingly important role in understanding the social, political and economic contexts.

<https://www.cshss.cam.ac.uk/>

# Terms of Appointment

## Tenure and Probation

The appointment will be made on a fixed term basis. Appointments will be subject to satisfactory completion of a six month probationary period.

## Working Pattern

The appointment is full-time.

## Pension

You will automatically be enrolled to become a member of CPS (Contributory Pension Scheme) – a defined benefit and defined contribution pension scheme. For further information please visit: [www.pensions.admin.cam.ac.uk/](http://www.pensions.admin.cam.ac.uk/)

## Annual Leave

Full time employees are entitled to annual paid leave of 36 days inclusive of public holidays. For part time employees, annual leave will be pro-rated based on days worked. The annual leave year runs from 1st October to 30th September.

## General Information

### Pre-Employment Checks:

#### Right to work in the UK

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 will be conditional upon you gaining it.

#### Health Declaration

Once an offer of employment has been made the successful candidate will be required to complete a work health declaration form.

#### References

Offers of appointment will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory references.

## Qualifications

The person specification for this position lists qualifications that are essential and/or desirable. Please note that if you are offered the post you will be asked to provide your relevant original certificates of these qualifications.

## Screening Checks

This role requires a security check. Any offer of employment we make to you will be conditional upon the satisfactory completion of this check; whether an outcome is satisfactory will be determined by the University.

## Equality and Diversity

We particularly encourage women and /or candidates from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background to apply for this vacancy as they are currently under-represented at this level within our University.

## Information if you have a disability

The University welcomes applications from individuals with disabilities.

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 the Department Administrator, who is responsible for recruitment to this position.



# The University

**The University of Cambridge is one of the world's oldest and most successful universities. We are a renowned centre for research, education, and scholarship that makes a significant contribution to society. The University is consistently ranked amongst the top universities in the world. Our affiliates have won more Nobel Prizes than any other University.**

Our sustained pursuit of academic excellence is built on a long history of world-leading teaching and research within a distinctive collegiate system. For eight centuries our ideas and innovations have shaped the world. Our principal goal is to remain one of the world's leading universities in an increasingly competitive global higher education sector. Today the University of Cambridge is at the centre of a cluster of over 4,300 businesses employing 58,000 people.

Our capital investment projects include academic and commercial growth at both the West Cambridge Innovation District, and the Biomedical Campus in the south of the city. Eddington, in North West Cambridge, is a mixed-use development including key worker housing for staff, a community centre and a new primary school, managed by the University. Through these projects, the University is deeply embedded in, and committed to serving, our local community. These are all conspicuous signs of a University that is not only adapting to new needs, but also anticipating the future.

Our mission is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence. Our core values are:

- freedom of thought and expression; and
- freedom from discrimination.



# About Us

**The University is one of the world's leading academic centres. It comprises 150 faculties and departments, together with a central administration and other institutions. Our institutions, museums and collections are a world-class resource for researchers, students and members of the public representing one of the country's highest concentrations of internationally important collections.**

The University has an annual income of £2 billion. Research income, won competitively from the UK Research Councils, the European Union (EU), major charities and industry, exceeds £500 million per annum and continues to grow.

The Colleges and the University remain committed to admitting the best students regardless of their background and to investing considerable resources both in widening access and financial support. The 31 Colleges are self-governing, separate legal entities which appoint their own staff. Many academic staff are invited to join a College as a Teaching Fellow, which provides a further social and intellectual dimension. The Colleges admit undergraduate students, provide student accommodation and pastoral support and deliver small group teaching for undergraduates.

The University awards degrees and its faculties and departments provide lectures and seminars for students and determine the syllabi for teaching.

Our instinct for seeking out excellence and setting up enduring and mutually beneficial collaborations has led us to establish strategic partnerships across the globe. Whether it is the successful Cambridge-Africa Programme involving universities in Ghana, Uganda and elsewhere on the African continent; or the close association with the government of India to pursue new research in crop science; or the creation, with Germany's Max Planck Institutes, of a Cambridge-based centre for the study of ethics, human economy and social change – international partnerships are now an inextricable part of the University's make-up.

“Cambridge graduates and researchers have made – and continue to make – a colossal contribution to human knowledge and the understanding of the world around us. Their work touches on the lives and livelihoods of everyone from patients diagnosed with life-threatening diseases, to residents of areas critically affected by climate change, to children growing up in conflict zones. It has a lasting impact on our society, our economy and our culture: the world is truly a better place thanks to their efforts.”

*Stephen Toope, Vice Chancellor 2019*



# Working at the University

**Working at Cambridge you will join a diverse, talented and innovative community, with more than 23,000 students and over 16,000 staff from all walks of life and corners of the world.**

The University continually explores strategies to attract and retain the best people. It is committed to supporting its staff to achieve their best. We are a fair, diverse and inclusive society and we believe our staff are our greatest asset. There is strong commitment to developing institutional leadership and supporting and encouraging staff development at all levels.

We offer a variety of roles including academic, research, professional, managerial and support roles. We also offer extensive benefits and excellent learning opportunities within a stimulating working environment.

The University's estate is undergoing the most significant transformation in its history. Cambridge has been able to create a science and technology campus to the west of the city centre, and is expanding further to the north west of Cambridge including investing in affordable homes for University key workers and community facilities. Even with our continued development, the University remains within walking or cycling distance across the campus. The University is a major partner on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus and we continue to redevelop our historic city centre sites demonstrating our determination to ensure that we can offer the best facilities and opportunities for our staff and students.



## Equality & diversity

The University has built its excellence on the diversity of its staff and student community. We aim to be a leader in fostering equality and inclusion, and in promoting respect and a sense of belonging for all. We encourage applications from all sections of society. All appointments are made on the basis of merit. We have an Equal Opportunities Policy, along with a range of diversity groups, including the Women's Staff Network, Race Equality Network and LGBT+ Staff Network. More details are available here:

<http://www.equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

The University has a bronze Race Equality Charter award, with a framework for improving the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education. Furthermore, the University's silver Athena swan award recognises and celebrates good practice in recruiting, retaining and promoting gender equality.

# Living in Cambridge

**Cambridge is rich in cultural diversity. From beautiful University and College buildings, museums and art galleries, quaint gardens and punts on the River Cam, to a vibrant restaurant and café scene, our employees are surrounded by the wonderful features of this unique city.**

You can find a wide-range of high street shops and 3 shopping centres, with independent alternatives at the historic market and nestled within the passageways in the city centre. You will find a cinema, bowling alley, a nightclub and various live performances at the Cambridge Leisure Park, with further entertainment options at the Corn Exchange, Arts Theatre and the ADC Theatre. Further information can be found on the Visit Cambridge website.

If you prefer the faster pace of life, London is a 45 minute train journey away. For those travelling from overseas, Stansted Airport is just 45 minutes away and Heathrow Airport under 2 hours away. The University is a short distance from a host of other attractions such as Ely Cathedral, Newmarket Races and various wildlife parks and stately homes. Cambridge is also within easy reach of the beautiful Broads and coastlines of Norfolk and Suffolk.

## Relocation Support

The University recognises the importance of helping individuals to move and settle into a new area. We provide support and guidance to those relocating internationally or domestically to take up a post at the University of Cambridge, liaising with other University offices and selected partners to ensure comprehensive relocation support is available. This includes: accommodation, childcare, schools, banking, immigration and transport. If you would like further information, please visit <https://www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk/RelocationService/>. The Shared Equity Scheme and the Reimbursement of Relocation Expenses Scheme provide financial assistance to qualifying new members of staff with the costs of relocating to Cambridge.

## Accommodation Service

The University Accommodation Service helps staff, students and visiting scholars who are affiliated to the University in their search for suitable accommodation in Cambridge. The dedicated accommodation team can provide access to a wide range of University-owned furnished and unfurnished properties, and has a database of private sector accommodation available for short and long-term lets. For further information and to register with this free service please visit <https://www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk/>



# What Cambridge can offer

**We offer a comprehensive reward package to attract, motivate and retain high performing staff at all levels and in all areas of work.**

The University offers a wide range of competitive benefits, from family leave entitlement, to shopping and travel discount schemes. Our generous annual leave package contributes to the positive wellbeing of our University employees. Sabbatical leave enables academics to focus on research and scholarship, whilst still maintaining their full salary. The University also has a [career break scheme](#) for academic and academic-related staff, with additional flexible working policies for all other staff.

## Pay and benefits

The University salary structure includes automatic service-related pay progression in many of its grades and an annual cost of living increase. In addition to this, employees are rewarded for outstanding contribution through a number of regular pay progression schemes. The University offers attractive pensions schemes for employees, with an additional benefit of a salary exchange arrangement providing tax and national insurance savings.



## CAMbens employee benefits

The University offers employees a wide range of competitive benefits, known as CAMbens. CAMbens offers something for everyone across a range of categories, including:

- Financial Benefits, including shopping discounts (both local and national) and a Payroll Giving scheme;
- Relocation and Accommodation Benefits, including relocation assistance and interest-free Rental Deposit Loans;
- Travel Benefits, including Cycle to Work, discounts on train season tickets and interest-free Travel to Work loans;
- Family Friendly and Lifestyle Benefits, including support with childcare and family friendly policies;
- Health and Wellbeing Benefits, including a University Staff Counselling Service, discounts at the University Sports Centre, and other local gyms, and healthcare schemes.



# What Cambridge can offer

## Family-friendly policies

The University recognises the importance of supporting its staff. We have a range of family-friendly policies to aid employees' work-life balance including a generous maternity, adoption and shared parental leave entitlement of 18 weeks full pay, and paid emergency leave for parents and carers.

Other family-friendly support includes:

Our highly regarded workplace nurseries, a childcare salary exchange scheme and a high quality holiday Playscheme may be available to help support University employees with caring responsibilities (subject to demand and qualifying criteria). Further childcare information can be found here:

<https://www.childcare.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

The Newcomers and Visiting Scholars Group is an organisation within the University run by volunteers whose aim is to help newly arrived wives, husbands, partners and families of Visiting Scholars and members of the University to settle in Cambridge and give them an opportunity to meet local people. The Postdoc Academy supports the postdoctoral community within Cambridge. Further details are available here: <https://www.postdocacademy.cam.ac.uk/>

## Your wellbeing

The University's Sport Centre, Counselling Services and Occupational Health are just some of the support services available to University employees to promote their physical and mental wellbeing. The University delivers The Festival of Wellbeing annually, which is a programme of stimulating talks and activities, which aim to promote wellbeing and good mental and physical health. The University also hosts the [Cambridge Festival](#), which is a great opportunity to get your first taste of public engagement, through volunteering, supporting hands-on activities or proposing a talk.

## Development opportunities

We support new employees to settle in through various activities as well as supporting their professional and career development on an ongoing basis. Our Personal and Professional Development (PPD) team provide development opportunities for all University employees, including face-to-face sessions, online learning modules and webinars. All employees also have unlimited access to LinkedIn Learning to support their development. Both new and existing employees can undertake funded Apprenticeships, which lead to a range of vocational and professional qualifications. We offer reduced staff fees for University of Cambridge graduate courses and the opportunity to attend lectures and seminars held by University departments and institutions. A range of University training providers also offer specialist learning and development in their own areas e.g. teaching and learning, digital literacy, finance, health and wellbeing, safety.



# How to apply

Applications should be submitted online via the University of Cambridge jobs page [www.jobs.cam.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.cam.ac.uk) by clicking “Apply online” in the job advert. You will need an email address to register for our online system.

Conversations about flexible working are encouraged at the University of Cambridge. Please feel free to discuss flexibility prior to applying (using the contact information below) or at interview if your application is successful.

Informal enquiries are welcomed and should be directed to:

**Morgan Bell, Collections Manager**

**Tel:** +44 (0)1223 331077

**Email:** [mjb310@cam.ac.uk](mailto:mjb310@cam.ac.uk)

If you have any queries regarding the application process, please contact [hr@hps.cam.ac.uk](mailto:hr@hps.cam.ac.uk)

The closing date for applications is: 8 January 2025

The interview date for the role is: w/c 27 January 2025



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE