

Research Group Leader

1. The Sainsbury Laboratory, Cambridge University

The study of plant development is being transformed by the new scientific and technical resources, including high-throughput DNA sequencing, new imaging methods, increasingly sophisticated genetic tools and refined chemical interventions. Together these provide the opportunity to obtain an integrated understanding of plant development. They set the stage for a new synthesis that will draw on molecular, cellular, whole plant, and population biology to elucidate how organisms are constructed. To capitalise on these opportunities, the Gatsby Charitable Foundation funds the Sainsbury Laboratory, a Research Institute within the University of Cambridge, providing a focus for leading researchers to work together to create an exceptionally powerful centre of excellence in plant development.

The Laboratory opened in 2011 and is magnificently situated in the University Botanic Garden, within walking distance of central Cambridge, and close to departments within the School of the Biological Sciences, and the departments of Chemistry and Engineering. In addition there is easy access to the departments in the Faculty of Mathematics, the Department of Physics and nearby centres closely associated with the University, such as the European Bioinformatics Institute, the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute and the MRC Laboratory for Molecular Biology.

The Sainsbury Laboratory currently accommodates about 150 scientists in research groups of up to 12 people headed by Research Group Leaders who represent a balance between senior established academic staff and more junior and mid-career researchers. Currently there are 8 Group Leaders and 4 Career Development Fellows in post, including the Director, Professor Ottoline Leyser CBE FRS.

There are superb plant growth facilities, including glasshouses, 37 controlled environment plant growth rooms and multiple reach-in chambers. The microscopy facilities includes state-of-the-art laser scanning confocal and structured illumination microscopes, fluorescence microscopes, an environmental scanning electron microscope and an atomic force microscope. The Laboratory has a substantial core equipment budget, both for initial provision and recurrent spend, and future priorities will depend on the needs of the appointee.

2. Research Group Leaders

Research Group Leaders hold 5-year positions funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation. In addition to their salary they receive £250k p.a. unrestricted research support. This funding provides the opportunity to undertake high risk research that would be harder to fund through conventional routes. Group Leaders are also eligible to apply for funding from other sources, such as the UK Research Councils and the European Research Council. Gatsby funding for the position and its associated support grant will be reviewed every five years.

Research Group Leaders are members of the Faculty of Biology. If they wish they may also be members of a Department within the Faculty by mutual agreement with the head of an appropriate Department. Group Leaders who choose to form Departmental affiliations will normally be offered permanent positions in their chosen departments when their Gatsby funding is renewed. In the event that the Gatsby funding of such tenured Group Leaders is not renewed at any subsequent 5 year review, they will be entitled to relocate to their chosen Department, taking up the normal responsibilities of departmental academic research staff.

3. Duties

The primary duty of all academics based in the Sainsbury Laboratory is to conduct research. However, an important aim of the laboratory is to raise the profile of plant science in Cambridge and nationally, and to attract the very best science undergraduates into the subject. Research Group Leaders are therefore encouraged to engage with undergraduates, for example by giving seminars or lectures, by offering undergraduate research projects, or by offering undergraduate college supervisions. For Group Leaders who wish to form closer Departmental affiliations including the award of permanent positions, some departmental teaching commitment is expected.

4. The School of the Biological Sciences

The Sainsbury Laboratory is an independent Institute within the School of Biological Sciences (<http://www.bio.cam.ac.uk/>). The School acts as the interface with the University's central bodies, negotiates policy decisions taken at School level, and oversees the allocation of central resources to Departments. The School incorporates eight Departments - Biochemistry, Genetics, Pathology, Pharmacology, Physiology, Development & Neuroscience (PDN), Plant Sciences, Psychology and Zoology - in the centre of Cambridge and the Veterinary School on the West Cambridge site. There are great strengths in population-based, evolutionary, developmental, cellular and molecular approaches to biology, in integrative and comparative physiology, in systems biology, and in neuroscience, encompassing psychology, behaviour and cognition.

Also within the School of the Biological Sciences are two other Institutes with strengths in key areas of biomedical research: the Wellcome CR-UK Gurdon Institute (directed by Professor Daniel St. Johnston FRS) is noted for its major strengths in developmental biology, whilst the Wellcome MRC Institute for Stem Cell Biology (directed by Professor Austin Smith FRS) pursues research in basic stem cell biology, and is closely linked with translational stem cell medicine research on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

5. The Colleges

The University, the Departments, and the Colleges are linked in a historical relationship that is mutually beneficial but not simple. Students (both graduate and undergraduate) are admitted by one of the 31 colleges, although in the case of graduate students the Departments determine admissions before the Colleges are involved. Almost all undergraduates, and many graduate students, live in a College. The teaching of undergraduate students is shared between the Colleges and the Departments, with the Colleges arranging small group teaching ("supervision") and the Departments providing lecturing, laboratory classes, and advanced supervisions. Most academic staff will also be invited to join a College as a fellow, and most fellows do some small group teaching, for which they are paid. Appointment to a College is a separate matter from a University appointment. Membership of a College adds an important social and intellectual dimension for many of the academic staff.

6. Procedure for Appointment

Applicants should submit a full CV, a research proposal for the initial five year period as Group Leader, and the names of at least three referees. Further guidance and details about the laboratory are available at <http://www.slcu.cam.ac.uk/>
Additional questions and completed applications should be submitted electronically in pdf format to enquiries@slcu.cam.ac.uk

The closing date is 30th June 2016.