Staff Scientist/Senior Staff Scientist (Drug Discovery Biology), Target Evaluation & Molecular Therapeutics

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November 2026

The Institute of Cancer Research

About our organisation

We are one of the world's most influential cancer research institutes with an outstanding record of achievement dating back more than 100 years. We are world leaders in identifying cancer genes, discovering cancer drugs and developing precision radiotherapy. Together with our hospital partner The Royal Marsden, we are rated in the top four centres for cancer research and treatment worldwide.

As well as being a world-class institute, we are a college of the University of London. We are consistently in the top performing universities in the league table of university research quality compiled from the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014 & 2021).

We have charitable status and rely on support from partner organisations, charities, donors and the general public.

We have more than 1000 staff and postgraduate students across three sites – in Chelsea and Sutton

About the Staff Scientist position

We have an opportunity for a talented, experienced drug discovery biologist to join the Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery (CCDD). The role will be focussed on leading the "biology" of ongoing and new drug discovery programs, as well as supporting the centre's efforts in target identification. Working with the Group Leader Prof Sebastian Nijman, the successful candidate will have the opportunity to contribute scientific excellence, biology expertise, and strategic thinking to drug discovery projects. Depending on experience, the postholder will have the opportunity to lead the biology of one or more drug discovery projects, propose new targets, and initiate target finding and identification projects. They will contribute to the scientific, operational, and strategic goals of the

Staff Scientist/Senior Staff Scientist (Drug Discovery Biology), Target Evaluation & Molecular Therapeutics

Candidate Information

lab and the CCDD and work closely with colleagues from the Centre for Target Validation and the Centre for Protein Degradation.

Commitment to making a difference to patients through translational and drug discovery research is fundamental to this position. The role requires application of molecular pharmacology and cancer biology approaches to support hypothesis-driven target validation decisions, implement functional and mechanistic assays to support progression of potential small molecule therapeutics, and develop and test hypotheses regarding patient selection strategies. Enthusiasm for working in a collaborative interdisciplinary environment is essential as the post holder will work within larger project teams towards the goal of developing a better understanding of the causes, molecular mechanisms, and treatment of cancer. A good research track record with proven ability to publish papers is essential, as well as more than 4 years of drug discovery experience in a commerical environment.

About the Division of Cancer Therapeutics, housing the Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery

The Division of Cancer Therapeutics has an unrivalled track record at discovering novel cancer treatments for the personalised treatment of cancer. Within the Division, the Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery (CCDD) is a multidisciplinary 'bench to bedside' centre, comprising 160 staff dedicated to the discovery and development of novel therapeutics for the treatment of cancer. We are one of the largest academic cancer drug discovery groups in the world and, together with our collaborators, have discovered 21 preclinical development candidates, 13 of which have been progressed to clinical evaluation, many with our partners in the ICR/Royal Marsden Drug Development Unit. Our drug abiraterone (Zytiga) has been approved in the US, Canada and Europe for late-stage prostate cancer.

The CCDD’s mission is to develop personalised medicines by translating information from the cancer genome and cancer biology into drugs for patient benefit. We implement innovative drug discovery technologies, discover novel mechanism-based drugs, and develop these as rapidly as possible from the laboratory through to hypothesis-testing early clinical trials. We publish our work extensively and have a large network of collaborations with academia, biotechnology companies, and the pharmaceutical industry. Our teams are dedicated to the discovery of small molecule drug candidates, and to the development of high quality chemical probes to enable new cancer biology research. The Division of Cancer Therapeutics is based in state-of-the art laboratories in the new £75m Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery building, opened in 2020 on the ICR Sutton campus.

Staff Scientist/Senior Staff Scientist (Drug Discovery Biology), Target Evaluation & Molecular Therapeutics

Candidate Information

Job description

Department / division:	Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery, Division of Cancer Therapeutics
Pay grade / staff group:	Staff Scientist / Academic
Hours / duration:	Full time (35 hours per week), Monday to Friday. Non-Time Limited contract.
Reports to:	Professor Sebastian Nijman, Group Leader
Main purpose of the job:	To contribute biology expertise and strategic direction to oncology drug discovery projects, working within multidisciplinary teams

Duties and responsibilities:

Oncology drug discovery

Lead the conception and implementation of biology experiments relevant to drug discovery, target validation, and / or target identification
Support the scientific and strategic goals of the lab by contributing technical expertise, scientific thought and supervision of lab members. Contribute to the intellectual excellence of the lab through participation in lab meetings, journal clubs, mentoring of students and postdocs.
Lead the biology of at least one drug discovery project
Contribute to the scientific excellence and strategic goals of the CCDD by providing biology input to multiple portfolio projects, sharing expertise as appropriate
Conduct individual research as appropriate to contribute to the lab's / Centre's projects.
Build relationships with other teams and departments across the ICR to facilitate collaborative target drug discovery
Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of innovations in oncology drug discovery and propose new approaches and techniques where appropriate
Collaborate with assay scientists, medicinal & computational chemists, bioinformatics colleagues, and biologists in the Team/Centre to progress drug discovery and achieve project goals
Manage external commercial and academic partnerships.
Prepare high quality publications on research results. Prepare research data for patent applications. Present research results to varied audiences.

Staff Scientist/Senior Staff Scientist (Drug Discovery Biology), Target Evaluation & Molecular Therapeutics

Candidate Information

Co-supervise and mentor PhD students consistent with ICR guidelines on PhD student supervision
Manage consumables budgets in conjunction with the Group Leader

General

All staff must ensure that they familiarise themselves with and adhere to any ICR policies that are relevant to their work and that all personal and sensitive personal data is treated with the utmost confidentiality and in line with the General Data Protection Regulations.
Any other duties that are consistent with the nature and grade of the post that may be required.
To work in accordance with the ICR's Values.
To promote a safe, healthy and fair environment for people to work, where bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.
This job description is a reflection of the present position and is subject to review and alteration in detail and emphasis in the light of future changes or development.

Staff Scientist/Senior Staff Scientist (Drug Discovery Biology), Target Evaluation & Molecular Therapeutics

Candidate Information

Person specification

Education and Knowledge

PhD in cell biology, cancer biology or a related field	Essential
Wide-ranging knowledge and experience in modern cell and molecular biology research techniques	Essential
Knowledge of cancer biology	Essential
Understanding and experience of drug discovery in oncology	Essential

Skills

Extensive molecular and cell biology skills in techniques used for target validation, drug discovery, oncology biology (e.g. RNAi, CRISPR, biomarker detection, viral transduction).	Essential
Expertise in the design, execution, and analysis of biology experiments to support hypothesis testing and drug discovery	Essential
Ability to use computational methods to analyse large datasets (both experimental and publically available)	Desired
Ability to supervise and mentor junior colleagues.	Essential
Strong interpersonal skills; proven ability to collaborate with scientists from other disciplines	Essential
Familiarity with project databases and biology electronic lab books	Essential
Demonstrates a proactive approach with excellent time management skills	Essential
Strong written and oral communication skills	Essential
Demonstrates high motivation and a strong desire to achieve scientific excellence	Essential

Experience

At least six years post-doctoral experience working in multidisciplinary teams	Essential
Proven track record of significant contributions to cancer cell biology and chemical biology / drug discovery	Essential
Evidence of effective contributions to collaborative science	Essential
Track record of publications and/or patents in relevant fields	Essential
Experience of supervising or mentoring others	Essential
Experience managing budgets	Desired

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Candidate Information

Benefits

We offer a fantastic working environment, great opportunities for career development and the chance to make a real difference to defeat cancer. We aim to recruit and develop the best – the most outstanding scientists and clinicians, and the most talented professional and administrative staff.

The annual leave entitlement for full time employees is 28 days per annum on joining. This will increase by a further day after 2 years' and 5 years' service.

Staff membership to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is available. The USS is a defined benefit scheme and provides a highly competitive pension scheme with robust benefits. The rate of contributions is determined by USS and details of the costs and benefits of this scheme can be found on their website. If staff are transferring from the NHS, they can opt to remain members of the NHS Pension Scheme.

We offer a range of family friendly benefits such as flexible working, a parents' group, and a maternity mentoring scheme. Other great benefits include interest free loans for discounted season tickets for travel and bicycle purchases, access to the NHS discounts website, a free and confidential Employee Assistance Programme which offers a range of well-being, financial and legal advice services, two staff restaurants, and access to a gym and sporting facilities at our Sutton site.

Further information

You may contact Prof Sebastian Nijman for further information by emailing Sebastian.nijman@icr.ac.uk.This job description is a reflection of the current position and is subject to review and alteration in detail and emphasis in the light of future changes or development.