



## RESEARCH ASSISTANT (4 POSTS)

(Payclass 06; Full-time)

**Neurodevelopmental Research Group**  
**Department of Paediatrics and Child Health**  
**Faculty of Health Sciences**

If you meet the requirements below; we invite you to apply for one of these four **full-time** (37.5 hours per week; part-time offer negotiable), **2-year** (Appointment for further years; dependent on available funding) T1 fixed-term contract position as a **Research Assistant** in the Department of **Paediatrics** and Child Health at University of Cape Town. The main purpose of this position is to assist in the collection of data collection related to one of the two studies listed below. The role involves working closely with the research team, healthcare professionals, and study participants to ensure accurate and timely data collection while adhering to ethical guidelines and protocols. This appointment will be held in the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health in the Faculty of Health Science at the University of Cape Town, under the leadership of the principal investigator (PI) of the research studies Prof. Kirsty Donald, and will report to the studies Project Administrator and research groups Program Manager.

**Start Date:** Immediate or by 1st February 2024 (start date; negotiable).

**Study 1: *The Genetic Characterization of ADHD in Kenyan and South African Populations:*** This project is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Using a collaborative, case-control, multi-site approach, this study will recruit and deeply phenotype a cohort of 6,000 children ages 6-17 years living in Nairobi, Kenya, and Cape Town, South Africa, across a four year period starting 2024. Two-thirds (4,000) of the children will meet diagnostic criteria for Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The 2,000 control children will be age- and ancestry- matched to cases. All participants (cases and controls) will be behaviorally and cognitively characterized using gold standard tools. DNA will be collected through saliva samples. This project will perform a detailed genetic characterization of all 6,000 children enrolled in the study, by analysing exome sequencing and array-based genotyping data to discover genes associated with ADHD. Additionally, will also investigate the heterogeneity in the genetic architecture of ADHD by examining how the rare and common variant architectures of ADHD changes in relation to case differences in several cognitive, behavioral, and medical outcomes.

**Study 2: *SPACE EXPLORE: Socioemotional Prediction in Adverse Contexts with EEG. EEG Predicting Language Outcomes over Regions & Environments.*** This project is funded by the Bill Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The specific aim of this project is the identification and validation of a scalable EEG hardware and software that can be used to derive predictive EEG markers of neurodevelopment. We will use these novel markers to predict later child language and cognition as well as identify suitable potential intervention targets across multiple Low- or Middle- Income Country (LMIC) geographies. Participants will be recruited from sites in South Africa, Ghana and United States. The study will recruit up to 1150 mother-child dyads (750 in Ghana, 350 in South Africa, and 50 in the USA). The design is longitudinal; mothers will be recruited in late pregnancy (28-36 weeks gestation), in 2024, with their infants being followed up until 2 years of age. Visits will occur at birth, 3, 6, 12, 18 and 24 months of age.

### Requirements for the job:

- Undergraduate qualification in a relevant field (e.g., Social sciences, Psychology, Public Health, or related discipline)
- Experience in and/or demonstrated interest in working with children and their caregivers.
- Previous experience in collecting data for clinical research
- Familiarity and/or experience with psychometric or qualitative assessment tools specific to pediatric research, such as developmental screening tools, standardized behavioural, cognitive or psychosocial assessments.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills (both written and oral)
- Fluent in English and one of the following languages: isiXhosa or Afrikaans
- Demonstrated understanding of clinical research regulations, GCP (Good Clinical Practice or equivalent), and ethical guidelines.
- Strong attention to detail and ability to work both independently and collaboratively within a team.
- Demonstrated understanding of being mindful of cultural differences and adapting communication and administration methods to respect diverse participants.
- Demonstrated understanding of empathy, patience, and sensitivity to the needs and emotions of both children and caregivers.
- Ability to follow standardized protocols and procedures for questionnaire administration to maintain consistency and validity in data collection.

- Ability to address unexpected situations or challenges that may arise during the administration of questionnaires. Flexibility to adapt methods if necessary without compromising the integrity of the study, and flexibility in scheduling assessments to accommodate families' needs.

**The following will be advantageous:**

- Postgraduate training or qualification in Psychology, Public Health, Neuropsychology or related discipline.
- Proficiency in using data collection tools or software (i.e. REDCap).

**Responsibilities:**

*Administrative Support*

- Managing participant schedules, ensuring timely administration of questionnaires, and keeping track of completed surveys.
- Collaborate with the research team to support various aspects of the study, such as preparing materials, scheduling appointments, and coordinating with clinical staff.

*Data Collection and Participant Recruitment:*

- Conduct data collection procedures according to the study protocols, which includes standardized behavioural, cognitive or psychosocial questionnaires. *\*you will be trained on the job in the tools which will be used in this study.*
- Precision in administering the questionnaire to avoid errors or missing data. Ensuring all questions are answered properly and data is accurately recorded.
- Creating a comfortable environment for participants to encourage open and honest responses. Being empathetic and sensitive to participants' needs or concerns is crucial.
- Accurately recording responses and managing data in a systematic way to ensure its integrity.
- Clearly explain the purpose of the study and the questionnaire to participants. Clear communication helps in obtaining informed consent and ensuring participants understand the questions.
- Assist in the recruitment and screening of eligible participants for the study, ensuring adherence to inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Accurately enter and maintain collected data in databases or electronic systems. Organize and manage data in compliance with confidentiality and regulatory requirements.
- Perform quality checks on collected data to ensure accuracy and completeness. Identify and report any discrepancies or issues to the research team.
- Ensure adherence to ethical guidelines, regulatory requirements, and institutional policies throughout the research process. Maintain documentation of all procedures and obtained consents.
- Communicate effectively with study participants, healthcare professionals, and other team members. Assist in the preparation of reports, presentations, and documentation as needed.

*Training and Development:*

- Stay updated on relevant research methodologies, protocols, and procedures. Participate in training sessions and contribute to the improvement of data collection processes.

The annual cost of employment, is between R160 527 and R295 547. (COE negotiable based on years of relevant experience).

**To apply**, please e-mail the below documents in a **single pdf file** to [emma.eastman@uct.ac.za](mailto:emma.eastman@uct.ac.za)

- UCT Application Form (download at <http://forms.uct.ac.za/hr201.doc>)
- Cover letter,
- 2 referee reports, and
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Please ensure the title and reference number are indicated in the subject line.

An application which does not comply with the above requirements will be regarded as incomplete. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted and may be required to undergo an assessment.

**Website:** [neuroscience.uct.ac.za](http://neuroscience.uct.ac.za)

**Reference number:** E24109

**Closing date:** 25 January 2024

*UCT is a designated employer and is committed to the pursuit of excellence, diversity, and redress in achieving its equity targets in accordance with the Employment Equity Plan of the University and its Employment Equity goals and targets. Preference will be given to candidates from the under-represented designated groups including candidates with disabilities. Our Employment Equity Policy is available at [www.hr.uct.ac.za/hr/policies/employ\\_equity](http://www.hr.uct.ac.za/hr/policies/employ_equity)*

UCT reserves the right not to appoint.