



Head of Biology, Cancer Therapeutics

Candidate Information

[June-2025]

About the position

The ICR is seeking an established research leader in cancer drug discovery biology with a track record in discovering innovative drugs to be the Head of Biology in the Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery (CCDD). The appointee will provide scientific leadership for the CCDD biology discipline, champion scientific excellence and work closely with senior team leaders in the CCDD to provide a strategic vision for the research and drug discovery portfolio.

They will lead and participate in multidisciplinary projects to discover small molecule clinical candidates. They will lead a cancer biology research team and conduct their own academic research, aligned to the goals and strategy of the CCDD. They will have access to the ICR funded PhD student fellowship scheme.

The successful candidate will be an effective communicator who inspires others and is keen to train the next generation of cancer biologists. They will lead and support on academic grant applications and promote an entrepreneurial mindset to attract commercial funding into ICR's drug discovery research. They will forge and maintain collaborations with academic, commercial and clinical partners within the ICR and the wider community.

The role requires excellence in cancer biology, coupled with significant experience across the target identification to candidate selection stages of drug discovery. We envisage that applicants will have either significant commercial experience of successful drug discovery or have a strong academic track record in cancer biology and small molecule drug discovery; or will have a combination of both backgrounds.

This is a senior faculty position. Conferment of an academic title of the University of London (e.g. *Professor, Reader*) will be considered for appropriately qualified candidates. We welcome applications from all qualified candidates; researchers from groups underrepresented at the scientific leadership level are especially encouraged to apply.

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Job description

Department / division:	Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery / Division of Cancer Therapeutics
Pay grade / staff group:	Career Faculty
Hours / duration:	Full time (35 hours per week), Monday to Friday. Non-Time Limited contract.
Reports to:	Dr Olivia Rossanese; Head, Division of Cancer Therapeutics and Director, Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery
Main purpose of the job:	Provide scientific and strategic leadership of oncology biology, ensuring a robust drug discovery pipeline, and contributing to the delivery of clinical candidates with clear therapeutic hypotheses.

Duties and responsibilities:

Champion scientific excellence in biology research and contribute to the vision and strategic direction of the CCDD
Work closely with the CCDD Director and senior leadership team to manage portfolio, resource, and funding decisions
Lead an independent research group contributing to the discovery of innovative small molecule anticancer therapies and their progression to proof-of-concept clinical trials as part of the overall strategy and goals of CCDD
Act as Project or Biology Leader for one or more drug discovery programmes, exploring target biology and molecular mechanism of action, and developing therapeutic hypotheses, patient selection criteria, and combination strategies
Ensure the necessary infrastructure and cutting-edge technologies are in place and used effectively to advance innovative drug discovery
Lead and contribute to the preparation of high-quality academic grant applications to secure external funding and foster an entrepreneurial approach to attract substantial commercial investment into CCDD drug discovery science
Together with CCDD biology Group Leaders, maintain a broad and in-depth knowledge of cancer biology and stay abreast of the latest innovations in preclinical and clinical drug discovery and translational research
Develop and sustain strong collaborations with researchers and clinicians at the ICR, the Royal Marsden, and wider scientific community, expanding CCDD's collaborative network across commercial and academic cancer research
Disseminate research findings through presentations and publications in peer-reviewed journals and at national and international conferences, consistent with the expectations of an academic position

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Person specification

Education and Knowledge

PhD in cancer biology, pharmacology, biochemistry or other relevant discipline	Essential
In-depth knowledge and recent experience in an area of cancer biology relevant to oncology drug discovery	Essential
Knowledge of cancer cell biology, biochemistry, and pharmacology that enables a holistic view of opportunities in cancer drug discovery and an ability to constructively critique multidisciplinary research	Essential

Experience

Proven leadership in drug discovery within, or in collaboration with, the pharmaceutical or biotechnology industry demonstrated by high-impact publications and/or successful commercial projects	Essential
Significant experience in designing and implementing assay cascades that reflect target biology and are suitable for driving compound progression and discovery programme decision-making	Essential
Significant experience delivering preclinical candidates, lead small molecules, and target validation decisions; experience in identifying and exploiting new therapeutic opportunities	Essential
Track record of leadership in portfolio management with active decision-making responsibilities across the entire drug discovery pipeline	Essential
Demonstrated expertise in project management, including strategic resource allocation, risk management, and effective progress tracking	Essential
Strong critical thinking and analytical skills to evaluate target validity, challenge assumptions, and integrate diverse perspectives in decision-making	Essential
Success in securing substantial academic grants and/or attracting commercial investment to support research programmes	Essential
Experience of training and mentoring staff and/or students at different career stages	Essential

Skills

Active participation in a broad network of expertise in cancer biology and translational medicine, ensuring engagement with current challenges and opportunities in cancer therapy	Essential
Proven ability to co-ordinate, design and execute novel biology and target validation studies to a standard of international excellence	Essential
Evidence of a strategic and inclusive approach to decision making	Essential

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Strong track record of interdisciplinary collaboration with the ability to engage effectively across scientific disciplines and to facilitate exchange of ideas	Essential
Skilled in stakeholder engagement, with a proven ability to build strong relationships, communicate effectively and influence diverse audiences	Essential
Evidence in successfully managing staff performance and development	Essential
Robust track record of publications and/or patents in relevant scientific fields	Essential
Proven expertise in scientific project management, including timelines, deliverables and risk assessment	Essential

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About Us

Division of Cancer Therapeutics, housing the Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery and the Centre for Target Validation

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 Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery building, opened in 2020 on the ICR Sutton campus.

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).

Further information

Informal enquiries or requests for further information should be directed to abby.cook@icr.ac.uk in the Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery.