



Group Leader - Biology Candidate Information

June 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 came second in the league table of university research quality compiled from the Research Excellence Framework (REF 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.

Cancer Drug Discovery

The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) is seeking a visionary cancer biology research leader to join its faculty at the Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery (CCDD). This is a rare chance to shape the future of small molecule therapeutics, driving innovation in cancer treatment while leading an independent research group at one of the world's premier cancer research institutes.

You will play a pivotal role in discovering and developing novel anticancer drugs, with a focus on novel therapeutic concepts in immunology, innate immunity the tumour microenvironment or another highly innovative area with direct relevance to cancer therapeutics. Your work will directly contribute to the CCDD's mission: translating science into breakthroughs cancer therapeutics.

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What you'll do

Lead a dynamic research group, shaping its scientific direction and fostering collaboration across disciplines.

- Together with the CCDD's drug hunters, lead the biology of drug discovery program(s) in the CCDD's program portfolio
- Drive hypothesis-driven target identification and validation, ensuring your work aligns with translational goals.
- Design and implement cutting-edge assays to advance small molecule therapeutics from discovery to pre-clinical proof of concept.
- Develop patient selection strategies and biomarkers, bridging the gap between bench and bedside.
- Collaborate with clinicians, industry partners, and fellow scientists to accelerate drug discovery.
- Secure funding by championing your research vision and attracting both academic grants and commercial investment.

What you'll have

A strong track record in cancer biology and drug discovery, whether in academia or industry—or ideally a blend of both.

- Deep expertise in immuno-oncology, innate immunity, the tumour microenvironment or another field with potential for “first in class” therapeutics.
- A proven passion for translational research and the drive to see discoveries move toward clinical impact.
- The ability to inspire and lead a multidisciplinary team, fostering an environment of innovation and collaboration.
- A strategic mindset to secure funding and promote entrepreneurial thinking within the ICR.

A Culture of Excellence and Inclusion

The ICR values diversity and inclusion, actively encouraging applications from underrepresented groups. This is a faculty position with a chance to build a legacy in cancer research while contributing to a collaborative, world-class scientific community.

Our mission
is to make the
discoveries that
defeat cancer.

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Our values

The ICR has a highly skilled and committed workforce, with a wide variety of roles, each requiring different skills. But whether you work as a researcher, or work as part of our corporate team, your work and behaviour is underpinned by these six values. They are what bring us together as one team - as 'One ICR'.



Pursuing excellence

We aspire to excellence in everything we do, and aim to be leaders in our field.



Acting with Integrity

We promote an open and honest environment that gives credit and acknowledges mistakes, so that our actions stand up to scrutiny.



Valuing all our people

We value the contribution of all our people, help them reach their full potential, and treat everyone with kindness and respect.



Working together

We collaborate with colleagues and partners to bring together different skills, resources and perspectives.



Leading innovation

We do things differently in ways that no one else has done before, and share the expertise and learning we gain.



Making a difference

We all play our part, doing a little bit more, a little bit better, to help improve the lives of people with cancer.



Our values set out how each of us at the ICR, works together to meet our mission – to make the discoveries that defeat cancer. They summarise our desired behaviours, attitudes and culture – how we value one another and how we take pride in the work we do, to deliver impact for people with cancer and their loved ones.”

Professor Kristian Helin
Chief Executive

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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: Professor Sebastian Nijman, Head of Biology, Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery

Main purpose of the job: Lead an independent group that contributes to the vision and strategic objectives of the Division/CCDD with a focus on the discovery and development of innovative small molecule anticancer therapies suitable for progression to proof-of-concept clinical trials

Duties and responsibilities:

Lead an independent group that contributes to the vision and strategic objectives of the Division/CCDD with a focus on the discovery and development of innovative small molecule anticancer therapies suitable for progression to proof-of-concept clinical trials

Serve as Biology Lead on at least one drug discovery project within the CCDD portfolio, working in partnership with the medicinal chemistry leader to develop project strategy and to deliver on project goals

Fully participate in project team decision-making and CCDD project portfolio management decisions, including target selection and assessment of potential new drug discovery projects for entry into the portfolio

Collaborate with the Director and senior leadership to secure sustained long-term funding for CCDD science. Proactively pursue additional funding through grant applications, PhD studentships, or engagement with external commercial partners.

Provide leadership, mentorship and training to Team members, including postdoctoral scientists, scientific officers, and postgraduate research students

Lead on an area of biology and/or technology that enhances the existing expertise and capabilities of CCDD

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Share/disseminate research findings through publication in learned journals and presentations at national and international conferences, while ensuring suitable protection of the ICR's intellectual property

Undertake such academic, administrative, and managerial responsibilities expected of a Group Leader within the Division

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.

Workforce Agreement

The ICR has a workforce agreement stating that Postdoctoral Training Fellows can only be employed for up to 7 years as PDTF at the ICR, providing total postdoctoral experience (including previous employment at this level elsewhere).

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Person specification

Education and Knowledge

PhD in biology, pharmacology, biochemistry, or similar	Essential
In-depth knowledge and recent experience in an area of cancer biology relevant to oncology drug discovery	Essential
Deep knowledge of cancer cell biology, biochemistry, and pharmacology that enables a holistic view of opportunities in cancer drug discovery	Essential

Skills

Proven ability to contribute to drug discovery activities	Essential
Proven scientific productivity and leadership by means of high-profile publication and/or patents	Essential
Skills in co-ordinating, planning and executing novel (target) biology studies to a standard of international excellence	Essential
Demonstrated expertise in building and running biological assays for use in drug discovery test cascades	Essential
Ability to rapidly assimilate relevant information, identify new research opportunities, and clearly communicate recommendations	Essential
Evidence of a strategic and inclusive approach to decision making and performance management	Essential
Excellent track record of cross-disciplinary collaboration	Essential
Effective stakeholder engagement through strong relationship building and communication skills	Essential
Evidence of the ability to lead and manage research staff, with a focus on performance and development	Essential

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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 Helen Beale for further information by emailing helen.beale@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.

More about the department can be found below and on our website -

Division of Cancer Therapeutics

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 whereas the pan-AKT inhibitor capiversitib is on the market for breast cancer since 2023.

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The CCDD's mission is to develop "first in class" personalised medicines 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.