



Head of Research job description

This job description gives an overview of the kind of work and level of responsibility expected for this role. It's not a complete list of all tasks, and duties may change occasionally. But the overall nature of the job and the level of responsibility will stay the same.

Section 1 - Job details

Job title	Head of Research
Directorate	Research and External Affairs
Department or team (if applicable)	Research
Reports to	Director of Research
Direct reports	Senior Research Manager, Senior Research Communications Manager, Research Programme Manager, Research Involvement and Inclusion Manager
Job location	London office with flexibility to work remotely
Contracted hours are agreed locally with line managers	

Section 2 - Job purpose

To provide leadership, strategic direction and day to day management of the MS Society's research programme and research team, to enable successful delivery of the organisation's Research strategy.

Section 3 - Key responsibilities and accountabilities

	One line description of responsibility or accountability
1	Regularly review the international MS landscape and identify gaps and opportunities within our Research strategy. Work with the Director of Research and key stakeholders including the Research Strategy Committee to support continued development of the Research Strategy to ensure it remains relevant, impactful and world-leading.
2	Provide strategic leadership and oversight to our Research Awards programme, initiating new partnerships and research commissions to support delivery of the research strategy and supporting the Senior Research Manager to ensure our grant processes follow AMRC best practice and
3	Take lead responsibility for the MS Society's major infrastructure and programme grants, supporting the Research Programme Manager to ensure the governance and operations are appropriate and effective.
4	Support the MS Society's major appeal for research and other fundraising activities, working with the Research Partnerships Manager and colleagues in the Engagement and Income Generation directorate to contribute to a compelling case for support for potential donors. Proactively identify opportunities for income generation for our research programme and support effective donors relations by attending meetings and giving research talks.
5	Maintain oversight of the work of the Research Communications team to communicate developments in MS science to internal and external stakeholders and people affected by MS in a timely and responsible manner. Act as an organisational spokesperson internally, nationally and internationally on matters relating to research.
6	Represent the MS Society with the Progressive MS Alliance and maintain excellent relationships with the national and international MS scientific community, other MS funders and partners. Proactively develop collaborations to raise the profile of MS Society and leverage additional funds to support the Society's research strategy.
7	Responsible for efficient day to day management of the research budget including complex research grant expenditure. Carry out budget planning, monitoring, reforecasting and reporting.
8	Responsible for the leadership, recruitment, development, retention and appraisal of research team staff members in accordance with HR policies and procedures. And for establishing and maintaining a positive team culture.
9	Accountable for the analysis and evaluation of performance information, monitoring and reporting against objectives, outcomes and KPIs, and ensuring swift corrective action is taken in the event of poor performance.
10	Work cross-functionally with other department heads to provide strategic leadership on matters relating to research and contribute to organisational projects and programmes.

Section 4 – Dimension of the role

Resources	Responsible for the governance and management of MS Society's research portfolio
Staff or volunteers	5 staff (4.5 FTE) dispersed across the UK
Budget	circa £7 million
Key relationships	Director of Research, Executive Director of Research and External Affairs, Research team staff, MS researchers and academic clinicians, staff at other MS Societies and funding partners
Information security and data governance	Responsibility for undertaking relevant actions and responsibilities according to the role assigned by the MS Society

Section 5 – Key deliverables

	Measures of success
1	Research funding – new high quality, strategically relevant research funded each year designed to deliver impact for people with MS
2	Community involvement – an increasing number of people with MS and MS researchers are engaging positively with and shaping our research programme, including the development of strategic partnerships where appropriate.
3	EDI – the diversity of our funded researchers, our Research Network and people taking part in our funded clinical studies is increasing to be more reflective of the MS community
4	Research team culture – staff meet their performance objectives and report feeling motivated to work in the research team, with healthy levels of staff turnover

Section 6 – Competencies

Competency	Level required (see below)	B	E	A	T
Fosters co-production	4		X		X
Open to change and innovation	4	X		X	
Sound decisions	4		X	X	
Collaborative working	5				X
Effective communication	5			X	X
Outcome focussed	5	X			X
Inclusivity	5				X
Accountability	4	X	X	X	X
Tech savvy	3	X		X	

Level	Description
5	<p>Strategic Has a broad and advanced understanding of the organisation’s policies, procedures, and how things work across the MS Society, or has deep expert knowledge in a specific area. Shares expert advice on topics related to MS and represents the MS Society in public or external settings. Clearly explains the organisation’s vision and strategy in a way that others can understand and act on. Makes important decisions that have a big impact and ensures the right resources are in place to support them.</p>
4	<p>Expert or recognised authority Shows expert knowledge and strong leadership, influencing others in a positive way. Colleagues regularly perform tasks at a high level, instinctively understanding what needs to be done, how it affects other areas, and how it can be improved for the MS Society's benefit. They have deep expertise and focus on developing their skills. They’re the go-to person for advice and are known for their knowledge, using their experience to tackle new challenges. They are responsible for managing significant resources, like people and budgets, related to their work.</p>
3	<p>Complex These roles may or may not involve managing others, but they require using experience or professional knowledge to handle complex information or raw data. The work often involves solving unusual problems by using your own judgment, without needing instructions. You’ll also need to work with others to overcome challenges and achieve results across different teams or departments.</p>
2	<p>Enhanced These roles may or may not involve managing people, but they are responsible for handling cases and providing face-to-face services. Or managing internal or external processes and people (including volunteers). People in these roles understand how their team or function works, help build good relationships inside and outside the organisation, and work together to achieve results. They use their knowledge to organise and manage tasks and processes, solve everyday problems, and help improve the way things are done..</p>
1	<p>Foundation People in these roles contribute to the MS Society without any responsibility for managing processes or people. People in these roles understand what’s needed for their job and how it fits with other roles and tasks. They know what needs to be done and have the skills and ability to complete those tasks.</p>

Section 7 - Qualifications and training

Qualification or equivalent	Qualified to doctorate (PhD) level in relevant discipline or equivalent experience.
Internal training	
Other professional training or qualifications	

Section 8 - Person specification (knowledge, experience, skills and attributes needed for the job)

Essential requirements will be tested at application stage (A) and used as shortlisting criteria for deciding who will be invited to interview.

Requirement	Essential	Desirable	Tested*
A successful track record in the funding, management and evaluation of complex, multi-disciplinary research programmes	X		AIP
A good understanding of research methodologies and the health research environment	X		AIT
Demonstrable experience of building successful relationships with medical research organisations	X		AI
A proven track record of success in leading and managing a team of comparable size and complexity, to achieve high quality results to deadlines	X		AIP
Experience of working in a senior team to develop and implement business plans and able to demonstrate sound financial and budgetary management	X		AIP
Evidence of strategic thinking and being about to develop and implement innovative solutions to complex problems	X		ITP
Exceptional interpersonal and communications skills, able to communicate effectively and influence/persuade a wide range of stakeholders	X		ITP

*Tested – A (application), I (interview), T (test or Assessment), P (through performance reviews including probation, 1:1s and PDR)

Section 9 – Other information and requirements

Confidentiality	Make sure sensitive or personal information is kept private and only shared with the right people. All information must be handled according to GDPR and other relevant laws and rules.
Equality, diversity and inclusion	Make sure all your work supports our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. As a charity focused on helping disabled people, we expect everyone to be open-minded and creative in finding and removing any barriers that might affect disabled people, including colleagues, who work with us.
Health and safety	Help create a safe working environment by following all health and safety rules and completing any required training.
Safeguarding	We're committed to safe and responsible recruitment. We aim to protect the wellbeing of children, young people, and vulnerable adults, and we expect all staff and volunteers to support this. Background checks and a Disclosure and Barring Service scheme check will not be required for this role.
Digital, data and Technology	Use technology confidently to do your job, including internet voice and video calls, Microsoft Office, the MS Society intranet, HR and finance systems, case management software, and other MS Society tools and apps.
Unusual specific physical or mental demands associated with the role	None
Travel requirements	Travel to London office or external meetings around once or twice a week. Occasional international travel for meetings and conferences (1-2 times a year)
Unsocial hours	Occasional evening events or overnight stays required (around 3-4 times a year)

Last updated December 2024