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UNIVERSITY OF  
**ABERDEEN**

# RESEARCH ASSISTANT/ RESEARCH FELLOW

## SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL SCIENCES AND NUTRITION

*(Health Economics Research Unit)*

Closing date: 31 May 2021

Interview date: TBC

Reference number: HER024R



## INTRODUCTION

*The Health Economics Research Unit (HERU) is one of Europe's leading centres for health economics and is located within the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition at the University of Aberdeen.*

We are a leading health economics research centre, with a reputation for delivering applied and methodological work of the highest quality across a broad range of policy-relevant fields including technology assessment, workforce, person-centred care and public health.

In 2017 the University of Aberdeen were awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize in recognition of world-leading research into health economics and health services undertaken at HERU and the Health Services Research Unit (HSRU) over the last 40 years. The Queen's Anniversary Prize is awarded every two years to recognise world-class excellence and achievement. It is the most prestigious form of national recognition open to a UK academic institution. The focus of the award is on innovation and practical benefit to people and society. HERU and HSRU were recognised for 'Health service research leading to improvements in academic and clinical practice and delivery of health care.'



THE QUEEN'S  
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES  
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION  
2017

## JOB DESCRIPTION

### MAIN PURPOSE OF THE ROLE:

The successful candidate will join a multidisciplinary team and contribute to an exciting programme of research within the Assessment of Technologies and Methods of Benefit Valuation research themes. This post offers an exciting opportunity to inform decision making in ophthalmology services for the UK, as well as being relevant to other national healthcare systems around the world.

### KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Day-to-day project management; conducting a costing exercise; designing a discrete choice experiment survey; preparing protocols for ethical approval; and economic evaluation modelling.

### AT A GLANCE

#### SALARY:

Research Assistant, Grade 5  
(28,332 - £31,865 per annum)  
Research Fellow, Grade 6  
(£33,797 – £40,323 per annum)

#### HOURS OF WORK:

37.5

#### CONTRACT TYPE:

Project limited, 24 months

#### LOCATION:

Aberdeen

## CANDIDATE BACKGROUND

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*We seek an individual who relish the opportunity to be involved with research within a vibrant research-led academic unit.*

We are seeking to appoint a Research Assistant / Fellow in Health Economics for a period of 24 months initially. Individuals with an MSc in economics/ health economics, or closely related quantitative discipline are encouraged to apply. Appointees at Research Fellow level will also be expected to have a PhD in health economics or a related discipline with a substantial component of training in quantitative methods, or an MSc plus several years of relevant research experience.

## TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

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For appointments at Research Fellow level, salary will be at the appropriate point on the Grade 6 salary scale, (£33,797 - £40,323 per annum) and negotiable with placement according to qualifications and experience. For appointments at Research Assistant level, salary will be at the appropriate point on the Grade 5 salary scale, (£28,332 - £31,865 per annum)

As this post is externally funded it is available for 24 months in the first instance.

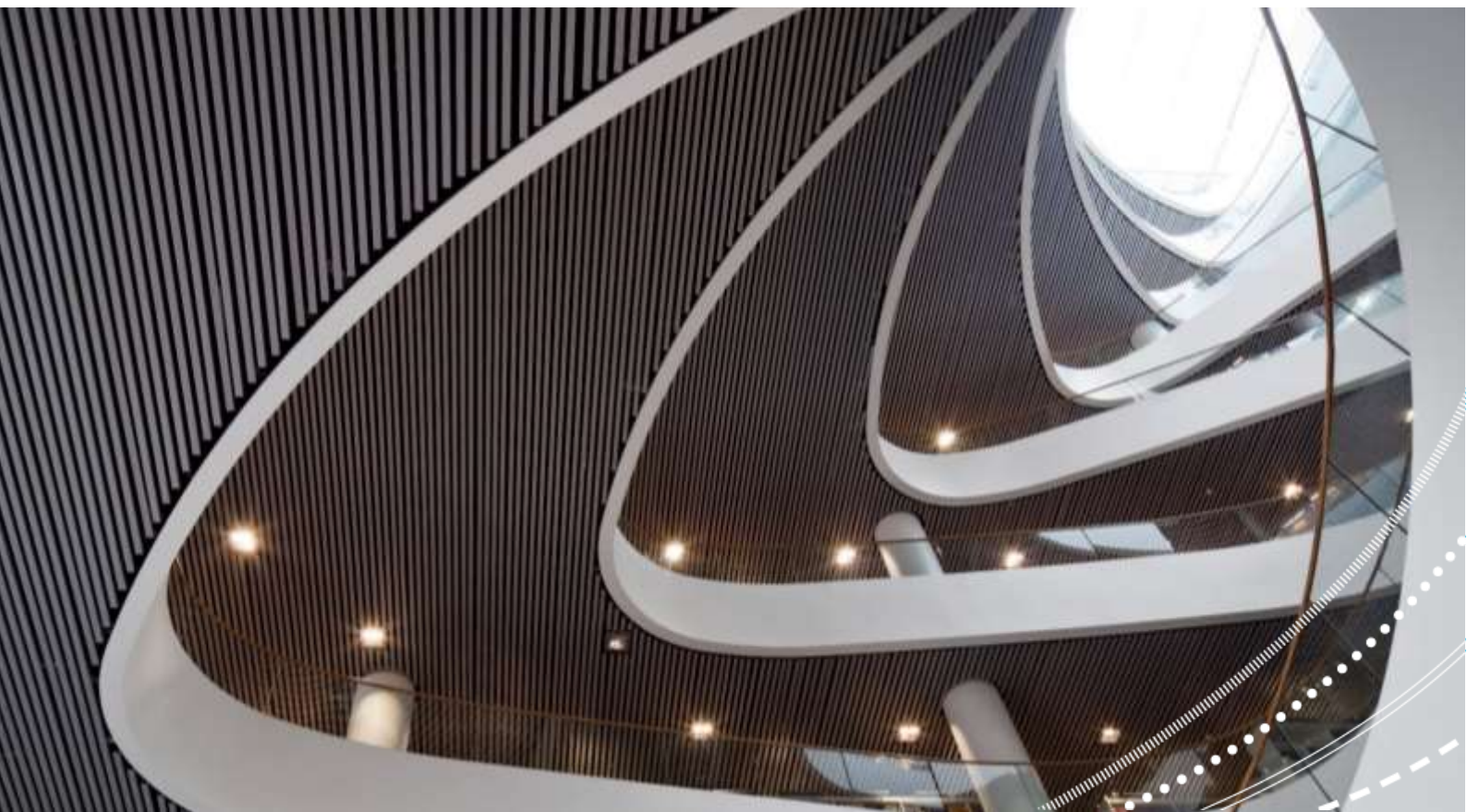
**Currently the team are working from home in line with Scottish Government guidance. When possible to return to the office, you will be expected to work from the office.**

Any appointment will be made subject to satisfactory references and a 12-month probation period.

For further information on various staff benefits and policies please visit [www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here)

Should you require a visa to undertake employment in the UK you will be required to fulfil the minimum points criteria to be granted a Certificate of Sponsorship under the requirements of the Skilled Worker visa. At the time an offer of appointment is made, you will be asked to demonstrate that you fulfil the criteria in respect of qualification and competency in English. For research and academic posts, we will consider eligibility under the Global Talent visa. Please do not hesitate to contact Natalie Reid, HR Adviser (e-mail: [n.reid@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:n.reid@abdn.ac.uk)) for further information

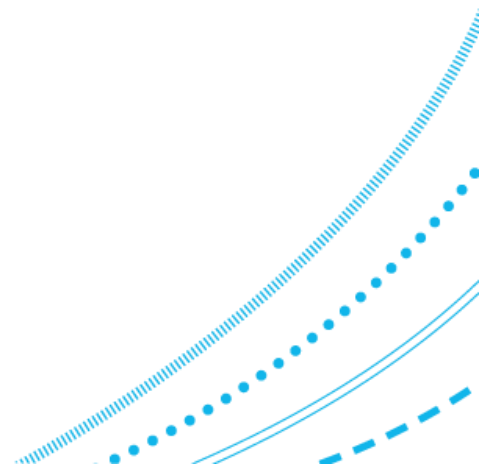
This role is based in the UK and as such the successful candidate will be required to live and work in the UK.





## PERSON SPECIFICATION – RESEARCH ASSISTANT

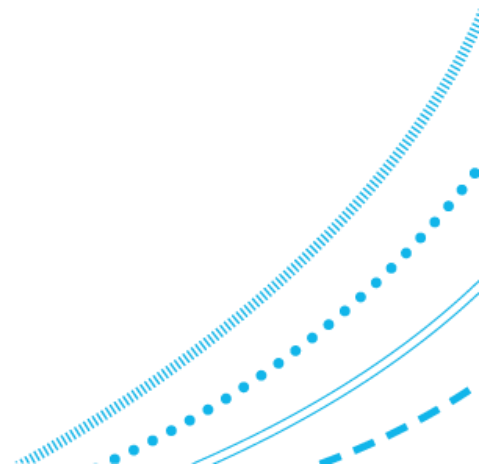
	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
<b>Education/Qualifications</b> Academic, technical and professional education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSc in economics/health economics or closely related quantitative discipline</li> </ul>	
<b>Work and Other relevant experience (including training)</b> e.g. Specialist knowledge, levels of experience, supervisory experience, research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Familiarity with advanced analytical, IT and data management skills, across a wide variety of software packages (e.g. R, STATA, Ngene, MATLAB, Excel, TreeAge)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience of:  Design and analysis of discrete choice experiment surveys and Decision analytic modelling for economic evaluation</li> </ul>
<b>Personal qualities and abilities</b> e.g. initiative, leadership, ability to work on own or with others, communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excellent written and verbal communication skills</li> <li>Ability to work as a member of a multi-disciplinary scientific team</li> <li>Ability to prioritise workload with minimal supervision</li> <li>Ability to complete work to agreed deadlines</li> <li>Ability to work independently</li> <li>Ability to communicate with non-specialists</li> <li>Willingness to share an office</li> </ul>	
<b>Other</b> e.g. special circumstances (if any) appropriate to the role such as unsocial hours, travelling, Gaelic language requirements etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Willingness to travel</li> </ul>	





## PERSON SPECIFICATION – RESEARCH FELLOW

	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
<b>Education/Qualifications</b> Academic, technical and professional education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PhD in economics/health economics or MSc in economics/health economics plus post qualification experience that demonstrates the skills and capabilities to operate at this level.</li> </ul>	
<b>Work and Other relevant experience (including training)</b> e.g. Specialist knowledge, levels of experience, supervisory experience, research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Familiarity with advanced analytical, IT and data management skills, across a wide variety of software packages (e.g. R, STATA, Ngene, MATLAB, Excel, TreeAge)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience of:</li> <li>Design and analysis of discrete choice experiment surveys and Decision analytic modelling for economic evaluation</li> </ul>
<b>Personal qualities and abilities</b> e.g. initiative, leadership, ability to work on own or with others, communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excellent written and verbal communication skills</li> <li>Ability to work as a member of a multi-disciplinary scientific team</li> <li>Ability to prioritise workload with minimal supervision</li> <li>Ability to complete work to agreed deadlines</li> <li>Ability to work independently</li> <li>Ability to communicate with non-specialists</li> <li>Willingness to share an office</li> </ul>	
<b>Other</b> e.g. special circumstances (if any) appropriate to the role such as unsocial hours, travelling, Gaelic language requirements etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Willingness to travel</li> </ul>	



## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

*open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others*

The University of Aberdeen is a broad based, research intensive University, and we put students at the centre of everything we do. Outstanding in a wide range of discipline areas, Aberdeen is credited for its international reach and commercialisation of research ideas into spin out companies. The University has over 16,000 matriculated students and 3,600 staff representing 130 nationalities. We encourage bold thinking, creativity and innovation, and we nurture ambition with many opportunities for professional and personal development in an inclusive learning environment which challenges and inspires.



### CURRENT CONTEXT

The University continues to build on the achievements above. Underpinning our high performance and significant growth is a £100m investment in Aberdeen's estate which will include the completion of a new Science Teaching Hub, the regeneration of the historic King's Quarter and a new Business School building. The University has also invested in 50 new academic posts and in 2020 launched five interdisciplinary, cross-institution Research Centres that will catalyse world-leading research in our areas of strength. Our five Interdisciplinary Challenges are: Energy Transition; Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity; Environment and Biodiversity; Data and Artificial Intelligence; and Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing.

In 2017 we received the Queen's Anniversary Prize, awarded to recognise the world-class excellence in innovation and practical benefit to people and society. The University was given this award for health service research leading to improvements in academic and clinical practice and delivery of health care.

### INTERNATIONAL

Aberdeen is increasing its international presence, positioning the University as a global organisation and building on established global partnerships in e.g. Qatar, China, North America, Europe. We feature in the top 50 institutions worldwide for international students<sup>1</sup> and have been named 32<sup>nd</sup> in the world for International Outlook<sup>2</sup>. The University of Aberdeen is proud to be the first UK University to operate on a dedicated campus in Qatar. Phase 1 of this partnership with AFG College has successfully recruited over 600 students. Phase 2 will see the creation of a substantially larger campus, with capacity for at least 5,000 students and research activity. For further information on our Qatar campus visit [www.abdn.ac.uk/qatar](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/qatar).

<sup>1</sup> Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021

<sup>2</sup> QS World University Rankings 2021



## ABERDEEN 2040

On our 525th anniversary as a University we launched [Aberdeen 2040](#), our strategic vision for the next 20 years. Four strategic themes will shape our learning and discovery, underlined by 20 commitments we have made against each theme:

### Inclusive

We welcome students, staff and partners from all backgrounds, organisations and communities. We value diversity.

### Interdisciplinary

We innovate in education and research by generating, sharing and applying new kinds of knowledge. We learn together.

### International

We connect with others and extend our networks and partnerships around the world. We think across borders.

### Sustainable

We understand and nurture our environment, and take care of our resources, including our people and our finance. We work responsibly.

## OUR EDUCATION

Recognised as the Scottish University of the Year in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019, we remain true to our roots as an ancient Scottish university, combining breadth and depth in our degree programmes and drawing strength from the quality of our research. Our flexible curriculum encourages students to grow as independent learners and therefore to thrive as graduates in the diverse workplaces of the future. Our education is open to all and we are setting ambitious targets to further widen access.

## OUR RESEARCH

Researchers at the University of Aberdeen have been at the forefront of innovation and excellence throughout the centuries, generating insights in medicine, science, engineering, law, social sciences, arts and humanities. This research has contributed to five Nobel prizes as well as other awards such as the Queen's Anniversary prize. Our research is intellectually rigorous working within our established areas of excellence as well as new methods of enquiry. We will continue to generate new knowledge addressing economic and societal issues with ambition and imagination, ensuring that it is globally excellent and locally relevant.





## SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL SCIENCES AND NUTRITION

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The School (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/smmsn/index.php>) encompasses all of the disciplines that underpin today's medicine, including biomedical sciences, health sciences, nutrition and medical, medical science and dental education and these are organised into five Institutes. The largest school in the University, the SMMSN has

five Institutes: the Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS), the Institute of Applied Health Sciences (IAHS), the Rowett Institute, the Institute of Education in Medical and Dental Sciences (IEMDS) and the Institute of Dentistry, comprising all of our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and our own graduate entry Dental School.

Staff are line managed and research opportunities are supported through our institutes which work together in an integrated and coordinated way to deliver research and teaching across the School, details of which can be found on their websites as below.

- The Institute of Applied Health Sciences (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/iahs/>)
- The Institute of Medical Sciences (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ims/>)
- The Rowett Institute (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/rowett/>)
- The Institute of Education for Medical and Dental Sciences (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/iemds/>)
- The Institute of Dentistry (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/dental/>)

Within the IMS, our scientists are working towards the creation of effective therapies for patients with a range of debilitating and life-threatening conditions. Current research areas include arthritis and musculoskeletal medicine; cell developmental and cancer biology; immunity, infection, and inflammation; metabolic and cardiovascular health; microbiology and translational neuroscience.

Within the IAHS, research is focused on improving health and health care delivery. It is home to a multidisciplinary grouping of around 100 university academic staff who conduct population and clinically-orientated health research and hosts the Health Services Research Unit ([HSRU](#)) and Health Economics Research Unit ([HERU](#)), both funded by the Chief Scientist's Office (CSO) of the Scottish Government.

As well as being the organisational home to the teaching scholarship staff and responsible for oversight of the UG and PGT programmes offered by the School, the IEMDS promotes and supports excellence in medical education through research and



development, with a focus on conceptually and theoretically robust research and development which has strong potential for reaching international recognition.

The Dental Institute runs an undergraduate BDS programme and a growing suite of masters programmes for professional development.

We have a number of specialist Centres representing areas of particular research strength and capacity within the School all of which are willing to support colleagues on projects in their areas. More information is available at the following websites.

- The Centre for Healthcare Education Research and Innovation (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/cheri/index.php>)
- The Centre for Health Data Science (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/achds/>)
- The Aberdeen Cardiovascular & Diabetes Centre (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/acdc/>) and
- The Aberdeen Centre for Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Health (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/acamh/>)

The School is home to over 800 staff and 2000fte students. It is located on the Foresterhill site, shared with our main clinical partner, NHS Grampian, with whom we work in close collaboration at primary and secondary care levels. This is one of the largest integrated healthcare delivery, training and research sites in Europe and has rich assets including state-of-the-art academic (research and teaching) and clinical buildings. Excellent infrastructure is also provided through core facilities for biomedical science including flow cytometry, proteomics, microscopy and genome sequencing, support for data health science projects and clinical trials.

The last major academic capital development was the opening of the Rowett Institute, occupied in March 2016, whose staff undertakes nutrition research to help improve people's lives through the prevention of ill-health and disease. Their new £40M building has provided the University of Aberdeen with a facility with unique capabilities for human nutrition and metabolic research. Currently, the NHSG is carrying out an exciting £164 million building development creating The Baird Family Hospital and The Aberdeen and North Centre for Haematology, Oncology and Radiotherapy (ANCHOR) Centre Project, scheduled for completion in 2021.

## THE HEALTH ECONOMICS RESEARCH UNIT

The [Health Economics Research Unit \(HERU\)](#) was established 01 April 1977 and is part of the [Institute of Applied Health Sciences](#), within [The School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition](#) at the University of Aberdeen.

Core funding is received from the Chief Scientist Office of the Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates and the University of Aberdeen. Substantial additional funding is also secured from competitive research grants.

The Unit Director is Professor Mandy Ryan, who is a Professor of Health Economics. HERU currently employs 21 research staff and we have 8 PhD students registered. Staff and students are supported by a business manager, administrator, part-time secretary and information officer.

The Unit is located in offices within the University Medical School at Foresterhill, the main hospital site in Aberdeen. It is supported by excellent computing and IT facilities and has access to all the major UK datasets used by health economists.

HERU has four individual Themes of research:

- [Workforce and Organisation of Care;](#)
- [Health Behaviour;](#)
- [Assessment of Technologies; and](#)
- [Methods of Benefit Valuation.](#)

The Unit has an outstanding record of publications in the leading health economist journals and an extensive programme of dissemination through the organisation of and participation in conferences. We offer an [Online Postgraduate Programme in](#)

[Health Economics](#) for Health Professionals (HE4HP). The programme is for health professionals who would like to improve their understanding of health economics and research methods. We also contribute to a number of post-graduate courses, and present expert workshops and training courses.

Further details of the Unit's activities can be found at [www.abdn.ac.uk/heru](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru) and interested candidates are encouraged to access the Unit's Annual Report available at: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/publications/annual/>

**HERU's Research Themes are detailed below:**

### **Workforce and Organisation of Care**

**Theme leader: *Dr Diane Skåtun***

Improving the performance of the NHS is a continuing objective of healthcare system reforms. This theme examines how financial and non-financial incentives and constraints influence the behaviour and performance of individuals and the organisation of care within the healthcare sector. The main challenges are in the measurement and monitoring of performance and in understanding the drivers of behaviour and how these can be used to best to influence performance improvement.

The specific objectives of this theme are to:

- Examine the role of financial and non-financial incentives and constraints on the behaviour of individuals and organisations within the health care sector,
- Contribute to the measurement and monitoring of performance within the healthcare sector, and
- Contribute to the evidence-base that informs policies designed to improve the delivery of care.

The main drivers of the theme's work are major government policies that are being implemented in order to change the behaviour of health care providers and organisations within the NHS. Research topics in this theme include the influence of local labour market conditions on the NHS workforce, the effect of new regulatory arrangements on the NHS workforce, assessing the impact of extrinsic motivation on intrinsic motivation, the role of performance related pay within general practice, workforce configurations and skill-mix, and the impact of workforce organisation on patient care.

### **Health Behaviour**

**Theme leader: *Professor Paul McNamee***

The overall purpose of this theme is to build a deeper understanding of the role of health behavior in the generation and maintenance of health and well-being. Underpinning this research is recognition that health and well-being outcomes are a result of co-production involving individuals interacting with systems and environments.

The health behaviour of individuals – smoking, alcohol, poor diet, and physical activity – are major contributors to development of health problems. Also, amongst individuals with existing health problems, behaviour in terms of self-management is an important determinant of long-term health and well-being. In both areas, behaviour is likely to be influenced by economic variables and individual preferences, as well as other factors, such as educational attainment. In particular, there is often an association between behaviour, the efficiency of co-production and socio-economic position.

The specific objectives of this theme are:

- To enhance understanding of health behaviour from an economic perspective.
- To strengthen the evidence base relating to the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of Policy interventions that aim to influence health behaviour
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In terms of behaviors, the focus is on dietary choice, physical activity, alcohol consumption, smoking and self-management of chronic conditions. In terms of economic concepts, current expertise lies within the areas of time and risk preference, identification of the causal determinants of health and assessment of the cost-effectiveness of health behaviour interventions.



#### Theme leader: Dr Graham Scotland

This theme aims to conduct research to address questions of immediate policy or practical relevance for NHS decision-makers, and to pursue methodological research in order to strengthen the application of economic evaluation methods.

The specific objectives of this theme are:

- Inform and support health care decision making at a national level, by producing high quality economic evaluations that address national priorities.
- Develop and refine methods of economic evaluation.
- Make available to the NHS a body of expertise through nurturing and developing research skills in economic evaluation methods.

The Assessment of Technologies (AT) theme is involved in a number of externally funded projects to carry out applied economic evaluations of new and existing interventions and co-hosts a NIHR contract to conduct Technology Assessment Reviews for the NHS.

#### Methods of Benefit Valuation

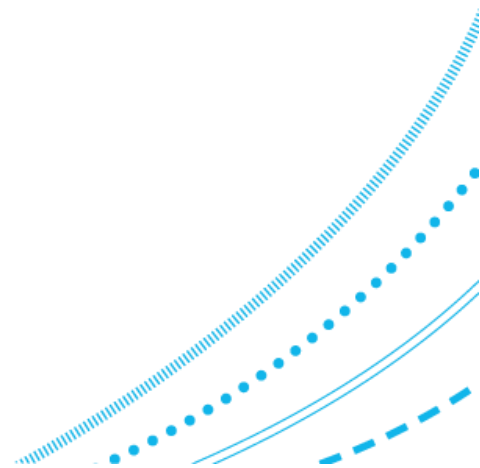
##### Theme leader: Dr Verity Watson

The aims of the research group are to develop and apply *economic* methods of valuing health and health care. Our work explores individuals', patients' and society's values of the benefits of health and care. Research in this theme combines methodological research on stated preference methods with applications to challenging settings.

Our methodological research combines several approaches including surveys, field experiments, laboratory experiments and qualitative research methods to better understand how individuals complete stated preference tasks. The methodological research focuses on three research areas.

1. [External validity](#)
2. [Health information processing](#)
3. [Valuation task and context](#)

Stated preference methods are applied to a range of research questions across HERU's research themes. '[Stated preference in HERU](#)' (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/research/methods-of-benefit/sp-in-heru/#d>) gives further details of projects using stated preference methods. Within the Methods of Benefit Valuation theme our applied research focuses on [Person-centred care](#).





## ABERDEEN AND ABERDEENSHIRE

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Scotland's third largest city, Aberdeen sits on the coast between the mountains of Aberdeenshire and the stunning North Sea coastline. The Aberdeen City region, is a can-do place that is actively investing, at scale, in its future.

Renowned as a Global Energy Hub, Aberdeen is a vibrant, entrepreneurial region, home to a unique mix of business opportunities and specialist skills across various sectors including energy, technology, life sciences and food & drink. More than 20% of Scotland's top business are located in this region which is taking great strides to ensure that it continues to compete on a world stage. Investments of more than £10 billion of public and private infrastructure is due to be delivered before 2030, marking an exciting time to be part of a genuine world-class location.

Built from sparkling local granite Aberdeen has earned the name of the Silver City. As the energy capital of Europe, Aberdeen nevertheless retains its old-fashioned charm and character making it an attractive place in which to live, work and study. Due to its global business and international energy industry credentials, Aberdeen is well served by local and national transport infrastructure with excellent rail networks that run both North and South of Scotland and the rest of the UK. It also acts as an international travel hub. Flying time to London is just over one hour with regular daily flights and serves international travel to European centres such as Amsterdam (Schiphol) and Paris (Charles de-Gaulle) as well as flights to other European destinations.

The City and the surrounding countryside provide a variety of urban, seaside and country attractions. Aberdeen has first class amenities including [His Majesty's Theatre](#), [Music Hall](#), [Art Gallery](#), [the P&J Arena](#), [Museums](#), and [Beach Leisure Centre](#). The City is framed by its accessible beach front which is within a short walk of the city centre and there are an array of activities available across the region such as hill walking; mountaineering; sailing; surfing; salmon, trout and sea fishing; golf; sailing; surfing and windsurfing. The surrounding countryside, known as Aberdeenshire, is also one of Scotland's most appealing regions. Royal Deeside and the Cairngorms National Park are within easy access of the city, and there are a variety of towns and villages scattered along the coastline.

The city and the surrounding area have ranked consistently highly in nationally recognised quality of life surveys, coming out top 10 as one of the best places to live in Scotland in 2020 in the annual Bank of Scotland survey.

To find out more visit [www.visitabdn.com](http://www.visitabdn.com)



## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

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The University values a diverse working environment and recognises the benefits this can bring. The University is keen to receive applications from individuals from across all of the equality protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).

The University supports opportunities for flexible working for a range of reasons and has policies in place to facilitate this. The policies can be found at [www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/flexible-working--5607](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/flexible-working--5607)

The University's commitment to gender equality has been recognised through the achievement of an Athena SWAN Bronze award at an institutional level and across all its subject areas. The University is also a Stonewall Diversity Champion to further LGBT+ equality.

The University is signed up to Advance HE's Race Equality Charter, affirming the University's commitment to the charter's aim of improving the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education.

Candidates who are British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us directly by using [contact SCOTLAND-BSL](#).

The University is delighted to be accredited as a [Disability Confident](#) employer and strives to ensure that disabled staff and students have the opportunity to work and study in an inclusive, accessible and supportive environment.

[www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/equality-and-diversity-277](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/equality-and-diversity-277)

## HOW TO APPLY

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Online application forms are available at [www.abdn.ac.uk/jobs](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/jobs)

The closing date for receipt of applications is **31 May 2021**

Should you wish to make an informal enquiry please contact:

Dr Rodolfo Hernández, Email: [r.a.hernandez@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:r.a.hernandez@abdn.ac.uk) or Dr Verity Watson, Email: [v.watson@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:v.watson@abdn.ac.uk)

Please do not send application forms or CVs to Dr Hernández or Dr Watson.

**Please quote reference number HER024R on all correspondence**

