Position Specification

The Francis Crick Institute

Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Our Client
Created as a partnership between Cancer Research UK, the MRC, the Wellcome Trust, UCL, Imperial College and King’s College London, the Francis Crick Institute (the Crick) opened in 2016 in its new, world-class, purpose-built research centre in St Pancras with some 1500 scientists and staff. It will be a world-leading centre for multidisciplinary biomedical discovery research, situated among a cluster of scientific excellence in Central London. Dedicated to research excellence, the institute has the scale, vision and expertise to tackle the most challenging scientific questions underpinning health and disease and promotes connections between researchers in different disciplines and between academic institutions, healthcare organisations and businesses.

The Crick conducts cutting-edge biomedical research to improve our understanding of the biology underpinning human health and disease; its vision and mission is set out in its strategy document, Discovery Without Boundaries: https://www.crick.ac.uk/media/131115/tfc_full_document_for_web_single_pages.pdf

At the heart of the Crick’s philosophy is a commitment to the highest quality science in the world, with the belief that the necessary quality can only be delivered through a focus on the best and most imaginative scientists, which in turn requires a broad and flexible approach to scientific programmes. The span and diversity of the Crick’s research, plus the interactions that will develop with researchers from its founding organisations and other collaborations, will promote cross-fertilisation between studies of different diseases and novel approaches to scientific enquiry.

The Crick’s research programme is defined by seven high level science questions reflecting both major issues of interest in biomedical research and the current research strategies of its six founders. To address these strategic questions, research groups at the Crick span a wide range of Research Topics across multiple Research Sites.

The diagram on the left summarises key science questions and experimental approaches at the Crick.
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The Role
The Chief Operating Officer (COO) works closely with the CEO, Sir Paul Nurse. The transfer of undertakings and physical move of the Crick to the new state-of-the-art facility at St Pancras has been largely completed. The COO will be responsible for ensuring the operational effectiveness of the new institute, including but not limited to building optimisation, systems and people. Reporting to the CEO, the COO will be a member of the institute’s top level executive team, along with senior Operational and Scientific Directors.

The COO will chair the institute’s Operations Management Committee (OMC), which sits alongside a Science Operations Committee, both of which report to the Executive Committee. The COO will attend Crick Board meetings and will play a significant role in support of the CEO in maintaining good relationships with the institute’s Founders and other stakeholders.

COO Main Responsibilities:
The COO is presently responsible* for all or most of the following operational support services, which are led by highly effective functional Directors who are specialists in their field:

- Legal and Company Secretarial, including board agenda and papers
- Finance including Procurement and Grants income.
- Human Resources, Development and PhD Student services.
- Information Technology
- Facilities and Building management, including engineering, maintenance, catering, cleaning, environment
- Lab facilities management
- Science Operations (laboratory infrastructure and scientific support platforms)
- Science Administration, including grant applications, regulatory affairs, and lab operating policies
- Health and Safety
- Security
- Communications (external and internal) and media (working closely with the CEO)
- Public Engagement with science, including conferences and exhibitions
- Community Engagement, including the Living Centre and the Education programme
- Projects (e.g. buildings, refurbishments, systems)

*responsible could vary in future

The COO is expected to take a major role in furthering the institute’s strategic objectives. This involves working closely with the CEO and other members of the Executive to develop and implement the institute’s business and operational strategy, including taking a leading part in developing good working partnerships with Crick partners and stakeholders. S/he will also play a high profile role in local community relations, working with local business and Camden Council, as well as play a role in the Knowledge Quarter development around Bloomsbury and Kings Cross.

The COO has a general external relations role for the Crick, including with Government and Industry, to which the COO will contribute alongside the CEO and the Research Directors.
In exercising these responsibilities, the COO will be sensitive to the institute’s culture as a community of high quality research groups, led by senior faculty. The aims of the institute are to generate world-class scientific research ensuring high quality research experience and training of researchers and to ensure that when appropriate scientific advances are translated into societal benefit through improvements in health care and commercial developments.

All operational support functions will play a key role in ensuring The Crick delivers its objectives. In this context, that means running operational activities efficiently - balancing this with the need to ensure sufficient quantity of the highest quality people, systems and processes within the operational teams to enable the Crick to lead on the world stage.

The COO is generally the CEO’s ‘second-in-command’, in terms of the day-to-day running of the institute, and responsible for it in his absence.

**Candidate Profile**

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

- The successful candidate may come from a range of backgrounds.
- Some experience in a biomedical research would be useful but is not essential. Experience of working with creative, free thinking, highly intelligent and passionate individuals would also be useful.
- The successful candidate could come from the commercial, not for profit, or academic sectors.
- More important than sector background however is emotional intelligence, political awareness and the ability to quickly adapt to - and embrace - the culture of a discovery research institute.
- Strong stakeholder-management experience will be essential.

**Experience**

- The successful candidate will be highly accomplished and is likely to be already operating at a senior level within a successful organisation. S/he will have experience of operating with Executives and Boards and senior external stakeholders. S/he will have a solid working knowledge of a range of operational disciplines, since the role represents institute operations at Board level.
- S/he may already be operating in a ‘C-Suite’ role for a significant facility and want to change sector. S/he may also have outgrown a current Operations Director or General Manager role within a highly complex organisation and may be ready for the next step.
- Most important is demonstrable, successful experience of managing and working with a range highly effective professionals and functional leads, leading others using a coaching, supportive, and visionary style.
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Personal attributes
As well as the proven ability and confidence to operate and deliver in a highly visible, senior and pressurised role, the successful candidate will probably have the following abilities and attributes.

- High emotional intelligence
- Self-confident but approachable and grounded.
- Politically astute and able to navigate organisations effectively.
- Ambitious for the Crick and the benefits the institute will bring to society.
- Able to influence both subtly and obviously – and the wisdom to adapt as necessary.
- Ability to operate in complex, matrix organisations; exerting influence and authority without necessarily having reporting lines.
- Ability to assemble and motivate highly performing and motivated, self-managing individuals and professional teams.
- Ability to quickly understand the vision of the Executive and Board and translate into practical work streams and outcomes.

Location
Kings Cross St Pancras, London, UK