

Research assistant (fixed-term contract) – Colonial Legacies of Universities: Materialities and New Collaborations

The EU Horizon Pillar 2 research project *Colonial Legacies of Universities: Materialities and New Collaborations* (COLUMN) situated in the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies of the School of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, is looking to recruit a full-time (37 hours/week) research assistant for the period 1 January 2026 – 31 December 2026.

Place of employment: AU Moesgaard campus, Moesgaard Alle 20, Højbjerg, Aarhus.

The university is keen for its staff to reflect the diversity of society and thus welcomes applications from all qualified applicants, regardless of their personal background.

Members of the academic staff at the School of Culture and Society are expected to contribute to a vibrant, enjoyable and friendly work environment. We emphasise the importance of active participation in the daily life of the department.

The position

The successful applicant is expected to work closely with project PI Nick Shepherd in support of the work package deliverables and to liaise with project partner Det Grønlandske Hus (Aarhus) and with the other COLUMN collaborating institutions. The project seeks to understand the deep imprint of coloniality in three universities, chosen as case studies: Aarhus University, The University of Pretoria, and the University of Liverpool. A broad understanding of, and fluency in, decolonial debates and ideas is a key requirement for this position, as is the ability to work independently and flexibly with an evolving research design. Specific tasks include:

- Conducting interviews with a range of stakeholders across the three case-study institutions;
- Doing archival research and working with collections;
- Conducting participant observation to better understand university processes;
- Systematically documenting and archiving all material collected as a part of the project, with an eye to publication;
- Assisting in organizing three campus residencies scheduled for 2027;
- Assisting with the administration and reporting of the project;
- Drafting material for a 'decolonial handbook'.

Qualifications

Applicants are expected to have the following qualifications and abilities:

- A Masters' degree in Sustainable Heritage Management, or an equivalent degree.
- Fluency in writing and speaking Danish and English. The ability to speak and write Greenlandic/ Kalaallisut will be an advantage.
- A deep understanding of decolonial debates and methodologies.
- The ability to work in multicultural settings.
- A deep understanding of research ethics and experience of working across global north/ south borders.
- A methodological and structured approach to work and good organisational skills.
- Good time-management skills and the ability to meet deadlines.
- Good interpersonal and collaborative skills.

Applicants who can document experience gained in similar roles will have an advantage, but this is not a requirement.

The application must be uploaded in English.

Further information

For more information about the position, please contact Associate Professor Nick

Application Deadline:
25 September 2025

Faculty:
Faculty of Arts

Institute/Faculty:
School of Culture and Society

Academic contact person:
Nick Shepherd
Lektor
ns@cas.au.dk
+4587151402

Vacant positions:
1

Hours per week:
37

Number of months:
12

Expected date of accession:
01/01/2026

Shepherd (ns@cas.au.dk).

For more information about applications, please contact HR support on e-mail iks-hr-sag@au.dk.

About the project

Work packages 8 and 9 of Project COLUMN focus on the university campus as a generative space through which to understand deeply embedded legacies of colonialism, racial slavery and apartheid. The idea of 'the campus' is interpreted broadly to include the architecture and built environment of the university and its memorial landscape – but also details of gardening and landscaping, public artworks, evidences of institutional cultures, university museums and archives, university collections, and the total 'ensemble' of the university as institution.

This conceptualization of 'the campus' as research space draws substantially on the important interventions of the student-led social movement #RhodesMustFall at the University of Cape Town and Oxford University (2015), and on many other student-led initiatives at campuses globally. Amongst other things, these initiatives were concerned to make the connection between institutional habitus and history, and the kinds of knowledge projects that unfold within the university as institution – in other words, to connect details of architecture, landscape and culture to questions curriculum and knowledge.

The specificities of institutional histories will involve grappling with a range of topics including Afrikaner nationalism, apartheid forced removals, Denmark's colonial past and present, 'polar colonialisms' and the status of Greenland, 'tropical colonialisms' and British imperialism, and many others. The outcome of this broad-ranging enquiry will be a 'handbook' – part DIY manual, part artist's workbook – called 'How to Decolonize Your University'.

Deadline: 25 September 2025.

Formalities

Faculty of Arts refers to the Ministerial Order on the Appointment of Academic Staff at Danish Universities ([the Appointment Order](#)).

- Appointment shall be in accordance with the [collective labour agreement between the Danish Ministry of Taxation and the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations](#).
- Further information on qualification requirements and job content may be found in the [Memorandum on Job Structure for Academic Staff at Danish Universities](#).
- Further information on the application and supplementary materials may be found in [Application Guidelines](#).

Shortlists may be prepared with the candidates that have been selected for a detailed academic assessment. A committee set up by the head of school is responsible for selecting the most qualified candidates. See this link for further information about shortlisting at the Faculty of Arts: [shortlisting](#)

Aarhus University's ambition is to be an attractive and inspiring workplace for all and to foster a culture in which each individual has opportunities to thrive, achieve and develop. We view equality and diversity as assets, and we welcome all applicants.

Faculty of Arts

The Faculty of Arts is one of five main academic areas at Aarhus University.

The faculty contributes to Aarhus University's research, talent development, knowledge exchange and degree programmes.

With its 700 academic staff members, 200 PhD students, 9,000 BA and MA students, and 1,500 students following continuing/further education programmes, the faculty constitutes a strong and diverse research and teaching environment.

The Faculty of Arts consists of the School of Communication and Culture, the School of Culture and Society and the Danish School of Education. Each of these units has strong academic environments and forms the basis for interdisciplinary research and education.

The faculty's academic environments and degree programmes engage in international

collaboration and share the common goal of contributing to the development of knowledge, welfare and culture in interaction with society.

Read more at arts.au.dk/en

The application must be submitted via Aarhus University's recruitment system, which can be accessed under the job advertisement on Aarhus University's website.

Aarhus University

Aarhus University is an academically diverse and research-intensive university with a strong commitment to high-quality research and education and the development of society nationally and globally. The university offers an inspiring research and teaching environment to its 38,000 students (FTEs) and 8,300 employees, and has an annual revenues of EUR 935 million. Learn more at www.international.au.dk/