

Toxic Algae Project Monitoring Officer

Job Description

1. Job Details

Job Title:	Toxic Algae Project Monitoring Officer	Department:	Technical Pool
Line Manager:	Toxic Algae Monitoring Delivery Manager	Grade and salary range:	Grade 4 £26,444 - £29,605 per annum
Full Time/Part Time:	Full Time – 37 hrs per week Monday to Friday	Duration of Appointment:	Open-ended

2. Job Purpose

Main programme duties:

- The role will support the operational delivery of a SAMS Enterprise contract, for the monitoring of biotoxin producing phytoplankton in Scottish Waters.
- Activities will include processing and analysis of seawater samples, consumable stock management and supply of sampling kits to external contractors, and dissemination of results.
- Work closely with the Programme Manager, carrying out duties to support the running of the programme as well as deputise when the Manager is engaged with other activities.
- The toxic algae monitoring programme is seasonal, with sample processing mainly occurring during the months of March to October, with leave planned around this period. The quieter periods involve more administrative tasks, in addition to supporting other areas of SAMS' work as required.
- These tasks may include a contribution to training, cryopreservation, analytical work; coastal/seagoing fieldwork; and contributing to HAB/phytoplankton research. The exact time spent on projects will vary, depending on SAMS' requirement.

3. Main Responsibilities

Description	Approx. % of time
Enterprise	
Support activities associated with toxic algae monitoring programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing of seawater samples (receipt, settlement, retention, and disposal) in preparation for analysis and storage. 	60

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample analysis using light microscopy (taxonomic identification and enumeration of phytoplankton in preserved seawater samples). • Continuous development in taxonomic identification skills. • Manage stock control and purchase of consumables. Preparation of kits and fixatives, to provide sampling officers with the means to collect and preserve seawater samples. • Project administration, including dissemination of toxic phytoplankton test results to the customer within a set time frame on a daily and weekly basis; compilation of monthly summary. • Provide support to and deputise for the Toxic Algae Monitoring Manager, ensuring the programme continues to be supervised when manager is otherwise engaged. • Liaison with sampling contractor. • Conduct quality control procedures. • Responsible for maintenance and calibration of equipment. • Maintain and update all records to ensure all quality control practices comply with the requirements of UKAS accreditation to ISO 17025. • Plan, prioritise and assign tasks to the SAMS support team to make effective use of laboratory resources, ensuring timely analysis of samples and reporting of results. 	
Provide competence and proficiency training for the support team in Standard Operating Procedures; mentor and train junior support scientists and temporary support staff.	10
Contribute to other SAMS Enterprise contracts as required.	10
Research	
Contribute to SAMS Research projects as required, particularly in the field of phytoplankton and harmful algal blooms.	15
Lab management (deputy) for Microscope Room and Scanning Electron Microscope.	5
Other	
Be pro-active in the application of SAMS Health and Safety Procedures.	Ongoing

4. Planning and Organising

- Plan and prioritise own workload for processing and analysis of samples on a daily basis, ensuring results are reported within the contractual time frame.
- Prepare and calibrate equipment for processing samples.
- Prepare sampling kits and fixative for supplying to (external) sample collectors.
- Maintain efficient stock of consumables.
- Contribute to planning and hosting training, outreach events, occasional education activities.
- Carry out proficiency testing for other members of the toxic algae monitoring team.
- Assist programme manager activities and manage facility in role of deputy laboratory manager.

5. Problem-Solving

- Communicate and liaise with fellow workers and technical services.
- Resolve issues relating to erroneous information supplied with samples.
- React and deal with any problems arising from equipment failure, consulting with others or troubleshooting to find a solution.
- Delegated responsibility to solve day-to-day problems as they arise during regular monitoring programme activities, such as staff availability, sample receipt, sample analysis and reporting.

6. Decision-Making

- Able to follow procedures including application of any Standard Operating Procedures.
- Able to make decisions independently and efficiently, based on experience and understanding of best practice.
- Prioritise and allocate work to the support team to make best use of the facilities available, especially when Toxic Algae Monitoring Manager is absent.
- Mentor and train junior support scientists and temporary support staff.
- Collaborate with the Toxic Algae Monitoring Manager to carry out quality control on processed toxic algae samples.

7. Key Contacts/Relationships

- Most interactions will be with other Technical Team members.
- Regular discussions with line manager regarding workload and any foreseeable problems.
- Supportive and approachable to staff and students alike, particularly in role of deputy laboratory management.
- Regular liaison with (external) sampling contractor to ensure sample collectors have adequate kit, and supply of sample collection information is accurate.
- Represent SAMS to external visitors, and in outreach activities.

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience needed for the Job

- Master's degree, or bachelor's degree/HND level with laboratory experience in a relevant biological discipline.
- It is desirable to have good taxonomic knowledge of phytoplankton, sufficient to train other staff in harmful phytoplankton identification, and capability to undertake full community analysis of seawater samples for research and commercial contracts.
- Knowledge of equipment such as inverted and fluorescent microscopes and scanning electron microscope desirable, with ability to instruct others.
- Able to successfully follow strict protocols and apply to the Enterprise contract.
- Able to build good working relationships as well as able to work independently and make decisions within own area of work.
- Good oral and written communication.
- Good personal time management.
- Ability to work accurately to tight deadlines and attention to detail.

- Computer literacy.
- Preparation of accurate and timely documentation, records, reports and data sets, for contracts and projects.
- Ability and temperament to conduct sustained periods of routine work at the microscope.
- Ability to attend on a regular basis and cope with the demands of the job.

9. Dimensions – Scope of role

- Generally working on one main project, with occasional additional commercial, research and education/outreach/event contributions.
- Dealing with a large number of phytoplankton samples.
- Working within a set time frame on a daily basis.
- Working in a UKAS ISO17025 accredited laboratory; full training on Standard Operating Procedures and associated activities will be provided.
- Identify improvements, preventions and non-conformance associated with associated activities
- Completing proficiency and competence training records for other members of the toxic algae monitoring team.
- Ability to conduct laboratory inductions for students and new members of staff.
- Work closely and support the main programme manager.
- Health & Safety – awareness of, and adherence to, the contents of all risk assessments and Safe Systems of Work.

10. Any other relevant information

The toxic algae monitoring programme is seasonal and mainly operates during the months of March to October. The post-holder will need to be available during this period. The quieter periods involve more administrative tasks, in addition to supporting other areas of SAMS' work as required.

What can SAMS offer you?

Please right click and select 'open in new tab'

Our Values and culture

We strive to be a world-class marine science enterprise that underpins regional, national, and international policy, and societal action to secure healthy and sustainable oceans. As a workforce, we have a strong family and team culture, helping each other to achieve our goals.

Remuneration

We offer a competitive salary and pension as well as employee benefits package. We also have a number of supportive policies to assist absence, family, and other leave types.

Career Goals

SAMS provides a supportive learning and career growth environment for those looking for that next step in their career or upskill in the workplace. This may be through opportunities to develop techniques, learn more about the science objectives for the group, gain some tutorial opportunities, as well as attend meetings and CPD events.

We'll provide you with a good start as you join SAMS

SAMS provides an excellent induction which is a great introduction to the organisation, the facilities, your department and team, and provides that support that you need over the early months joining a new organisation. We will also provide you with office space, computing equipment and ensure this is ready for you on your first day of work.

Employee Benefits

In addition to a general remuneration package which includes a generous salary, pension, and sickness absence policy, we offer a number of employee benefits to our staff, some of which are listed below:

- Flexible & Hybrid working arrangements (up to 2 days working from home) – will depend on role dynamic.
- Purchase of additional annual leave – up to 20 days per annum
- Access to shopping discounts as well as local shop and leisure discounted memberships
- Cycle to work scheme
- Purchase of technology
- Payroll Giving
- Salary Sacrifice – pensions
- Access to wellbeing portals which provide support for mental health, nutrition and fitness and GP referral scheme
- Occupational health support
- Welfare support on site
- Sabbatical scheme
- A number of training and development courses to assist you with your career development – leadership, coaching and mentoring.
- Free car parking
- Electric car charge points on-site

As an Academic Partner of the University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI), SAMS is designated as an educational establishment and subject to the provisions of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act. Certain roles may be subject to a satisfactory check by Disclosure (Scotland) as a condition of their appointment.

Applications must include CV and Cover Letter and should be sent electronically to recruitment@sams.ac.uk quoting Job Ref. 'D23/25.KM' in the subject line.

The closing date for applications is 15th February 2026.

Interviews to be held shortly thereafter.

Please note, we prefer to contact referees prior to interview.

Guidance for Applicants

This position unfortunately does not meet the minimum requirements for sponsorship to work in the UK. You must therefore have the rights in place to work in the UK already.

Your application – what are we looking for?

We are looking for a full CV – please remember to document all your relevant work experience, listed with the most recent first. You should also include your educational achievements with your most recent qualification first. You should include skills and competencies gained from previous employment or education. This should be specific to the job description. Also, please include details of two referees, one referee at least from your current role, who we may contact if invited for interview.

We enjoy reading cover letters and these are an important part of the application. In the letter, connect your past accomplishments with the requirements listed in the job description. Focus on your most relevant experience, qualifications, and skills. Where possible, quantify your accomplishments with facts and data.

Useful links

- [How to write a flawless cover letter](#) (please right click and select open in new tab)
- [How to write a CV](#) (please right click and select open in new tab)

