Job Description

Job title:	Food Living Lab Research Assistant
School/Department	Unit of Dietetics, Trinity School of Medicine & Trinity Sustainability, Trinity College Dublin
Job Category, Level	Research Assistant, 6 months on Research Assistant point 6

Purpose of the Role

The Food Living Lab Research Assistant will complete a study that takes baseline data in Trinity and St. James's Hospital capturing the status quo of both food services, and makes recommendations for a potential Living Lab across both. For six months, the person will work two days a week in Trinity's Catering Service, two days a week in St. James's Catering service and one day a week in Trinity Sustainability's Healthy Trinity office completing desk-based tasks. The successful candidate will answer pre-defined research questions relating to sustainable and healthy food and produce a quality research output e.g. poster, conference presentation or paper that documents a rigorous, repeatable method of assessing both systems. For queries/comments contact Martina Mullin in Trinity Sustainability on health.promotion@tcd.ie.

Context

Trinity College Dublin and St. James's Hospital (Trinity and SJH) run very busy, publicly funded catering services that feed people with different needs. Currently, an analysis of how the two food systems are designed does not exist.

Trinity's Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan sets the following Food 2030 targets:

1. 50%↓ in food related emissions;
2. 50%↑ plant-based menus;
3. Sustainable & healthy food culture

Responding to these targets, Trinity has written a Sustainable and Healthy Food Plan which commits to "work with other public and civic actors to produce research and policy innovation in food systems transformation."

The Catering services of Trinity and SJH have established a partnership to explore if a Living Lab in both services is feasible and examine if the Food 2030 targets can be achieved in Trinity/SJH Catering using the following mechanisms:

a. Community supported agriculture (**CSA**) i.e. if Trinity/SJH guarantees to buy Xkg per annum of food from certain suppliers
b. Short-food supply chains (**SFSC**) i.e. if Trinity/SJH procures food from the island of Ireland
c. **Agroecological**/organic food suppliers i.e. if Trinity SJH procures food grown using agroecological/organic farming methods

d. **Waste** management i.e. if Trinity/SJH measures and reduces food waste

A Living Lab is a real-life environment in which to test new ideas. Trinity has been a Living Lab for Tobacco Free Campus since 2016 and Trinity Catering has run multiple Living Lab projects e.g. a student-led plant-based milk pilot, a Catering/Business School led restaurant pop-up.

Main Responsibilities

The research assistant delivering this feasibility study will:

- address the research questions in table 1 by developing a rigorous, repeatable method of assessing both systems
- produce a quality research output e.g. poster, conference presentation, paper
- assess what's similar/different between the two systems
- make recommendations for Living Lab actions

Context	Research Questions (RQs)	Source of answer
1. 50%↓ in food related emissions;	1.1 How are the systems currently designed and run 1.2 How is food currently sourced in Trinity/SJH? - what proportion is CSA, SFSC, Agroecological 1.3 What GHG emissions are associated with current food procurement	Direct observation in each service Purchasing records Purchasing records
2. 50%↑ plant-based menus;	2.1 What proportion of food served contains? - plants, eggs, dairy, fish, chicken, ruminant meats.	Menus and recipes
3. Food waste	3.1 What GHG emissions are associated with current food waste	Waste data from waste management system in Trinity and in system currently being procured in SJH
4. Sustainable & healthy food culture	4.1 Do frontline staff consider the Healthy Trinity 2030 targets acceptable, feasible?	Survey of frontline staff in both services
5. Similarities/ differences and Living Lab actions	5.1 What's similar/different between the two services 5.2 Make recommendations for Living Lab actions	Answers to questions 1-4 above

Table 1: Research questions to be answered and source of information

The proposed programme for delivery is shown in table 2.

Month	Output
1	A flow chart for the hospital and university systems with a clear description of what tasks are completed in each system and by whom. (RQ 1.1)
2	Purchasing records and menus obtained Ethical approval applied for Academic framework for presenting data identified
3	Baseline data from purchasing records (RQ 1.2, 1.3)
4	Baseline data from menus and recipes and food waste data (RQ 2.1, 3.1)

5	Survey results (RQ 4.1)
6	Report/paper with results and recommendations (RQ 5.1, 5.2)

Table 2: A timeline of anticipated outputs

The person will work two days in Trinity Catering service, two days in St. James's Catering service and one day in Trinity Sustainability in the Healthy Trinity office completing desk-based tasks. This post is funded by Trinity via the HEA Healthy Campus initiative and all comments/queries about this role should be directed to Trinity only.

The successful candidate will report to an Assistant Professor in the unit of dietetics in the School of Medicine and to the Healthy Campus Manager in Trinity Sustainability who will work in academic, professional partnership to supervise the project. Once a month, the successful candidate will meet a Living Lab working group with membership from Head of Catering in Trinity, Head of Catering in St. James's, Assist. Prof Dietetics Trinity/SJH, Healthy Campus Manager Trinity, Trinity and Strategic Programme Director, Trinity. This is a full-time role with working hours spanning 7am-4pm and work outside normal hours required on occasion.

Person Requirements

The role-holder will require the following knowledge, skills, and attributes for successful performance in the role.

Qualifications & knowledge

- A catering background or experience in food service delivery.
- Be actively interested and involved in some aspect of food, farming, agroecology.
- Evidence of good writing skills
- Data analysis skills would be an advantage

Experience

- A minimum of 2 years demonstrable, experience in Catering services.
- Track record of building and maintaining relationships with a diversity of stakeholders
- Evidence of ability to innovate and devise novel approaches.
- Evidence of delivery of engaging communications

Skills

- Excellent communication skills, including oral and written;
- Ability to work with diverse partners
- Willingness to learn research and evaluation methodologies.
- Good IT and computer skills
- Ability to work without supervision on own initiative

If successful

Before commencing, the successful candidate will be required to supply identification and two references, to complete a medical and garda vetting and to attend SJH induction.

How to apply

Please send a CV and a 1-2 page personal statement detailing your interest in the project FAO Martina Mullin on health.promotion@tcd.ie. Your CV should include the name and contact details of two references. In your personal statement, please explain both why you are specifically interested in this role and why you are a strong candidate to undertake it.

Closing date: 25th November 2026. All enquiries to Martina Mullin on health.promotion@tcd.ie