Private & Confidential

# PRE-EMPLOYMENT REFERENCE FORM

## Name of applicant: Oliver Bruff

Position applied for: Research Assistant, Ada Lovelace Institute

#### Name of referee: Dr Chao-Yo Cheng, Birkbeck, University of London

We would be grateful for your views on the following:

Dear Selection Panel,

I have had the privilege of meeting Oliver at Birkbeck, University of London, where he is currently completing the MSc course in Social Research. I serve as the Program Director for this course and as Oliver’s personal tutor. Additionally, I have taught him in the Advanced Topics in Quantitative Social Research module. Oliver began his studies in October 2023 and is on track to complete the program next summer.

Oliver is one of the best students I have ever had, and I fully support his application for the role of Research Assistant at the Ada Lovelace Institute. He has consistently excelled in all quantitative social research modules, including *Experiments in Social Science*, during his first year, earning distinctions across the board. In my module, Oliver undertook an independent data analysis project, where he replicated a published study by a prominent economist on the colonial legacies influencing governance quality in Sub-Saharan Africa. He demonstrated exceptional analytical skills, handling large-scale cross-national survey data with ease, while also generating original insights into how historical legacies impact present-day interpersonal trust and state-society relations.

Beyond his performance in this project, Oliver has shown himself to be an extremely knowledgeable and thoughtful student in all interactions. I am confident that he will be able to apply his data analytical skills to address critical policy and theoretical debates both within the United Kingdom and internationally. More importantly, I have been impressed by his calm demeanour and willingness to seek guidance when facing challenges. He is also known for his kindness and collegiality. I would be delighted to have him as a PhD student and to see him grow into a valued colleague in the future.

If I have one hope, it is that Oliver will gain more opportunities to experience how the research skills he has acquired can be applied to policy research and generate impact —an area that can sometimes be difficult to fully explore within the university setting.

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Name: Chao-Yo Cheng

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Date: 24 September 2024

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this request.