

PHD VACANCY ON NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING: CONVERSATIONAL AGENTS

The LT3 language and translation technology team at Ghent University has a full-time vacancy for a PhD researcher in the area of Computational Linguistics (Natural Language Processing) for research on building Conversational Agents, funded by the Flemish Ministry of Economics, Science and Innovation in the framework of the Flemish AI research program (<https://www.flandersairesearch.be/nl>).

Research group

The LT3 Language and Translation Technology Team is a dynamic research group at Ghent University's Department of Translation, Interpreting and Communication (<https://lt3.ugent.be>). The group conducts fundamental and applied research in the domain of language and translation technology and has extensive expertise in the use of machine learning for a wide range of language technology problems, int.al. anaphora resolution, irony detection, event detection, word sense disambiguation, sentiment and emotion detection, etc. The group has available a state of the art computing and experimentation infrastructure.

Project

As part of an ongoing initiative of the regional government to boost Artificial Intelligence in Flanders, an ambitious research program has been initiated (<https://www.flandersairesearch.be/nl>). In the work package on Natural Language Processing, the focus is on the development of Conversational Agents (chatbots, dialogue systems) that perceive their physical environment, are capable of adapting to their users (personalization), and capable of reasoning about different domains. The LT3 team is part of a larger research team, headed by the Antwerp NLP research group CLiPS. We look for a highly motivated PhD student who will be working in the LT3 team on empathic conversational agents.

Job description

- You will be responsible for developing and evaluating new algorithms for conversational agents (knowledge of Python required);
- You will present work at regular project meetings and will publish and present research results in international peer reviewed journals and conferences;
- You will work together with PhD researchers in the LT3 team and in the cross-university Flanders AI team;

Profile and requirements

- You hold (or will obtain during the application period) a master's degree in Artificial Intelligence, Engineering, Computational Linguistics or another relevant area.
- You are passionate about Computational Linguistics (Natural Language Processing) and Machine Learning.
- You have excellent programming skills (at least Python and statistical packages such as R).
- You have achieved outstanding academic results, and are passionate about research
- You have excellent English language skills in academic writing and presentation. Knowledge of Dutch is an advantage.
- You are comfortable with working in a team on a complex project involving multidisciplinary colleagues in different research groups.
- Previous experience with Conversational Agents (chatbots, dialogue systems), deep learning, and personalization is an advantage.

We offer full-time scholarship positions in a vibrant research environment with state-of-the-art infrastructure, and in cooperation with strong research groups and industrial partners.

The PhD researchers will receive a tax free monthly grant of around 2200 euro per month (exact amount depends on number of children and years of experience). In addition there is a holiday bonus and an end of year bonus.

The start of the appointment is on January 1, 2022 at the earliest, and, with positive evaluation after 1 year, is extended until the end of a normal 4-year PhD period. The successful candidate will be expected to relocate to (the environment of) Ghent.

Application Instructions

Please send an extended CV and motivation letter to Veronique.Hoste@ugent.be, before the closing date of December 15, 2021, but preferably as soon as possible.

For questions about the profile and the description of the profile, you can mail to Veronique.Hoste@ugent.be.