

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

INSTITUTE OF COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE

PhD Studentship (approx. £18,000 per annum)

Deadline extended to 21st Jan 2014

A 4-year PhD studentship is available in the Social Neuroscience group (led by Dr Antonia Hamilton) at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London. The PhD student will study **Mimicry in autism – a virtual reality investigation**. This will involve creating virtual reality avatars which can copy a participant or be copied by a participant, and testing how people with autism respond to different social cues from the avatars. This work is funded by the European Research Council.

The student will also have a role as the **Autism Research Coordinator** for the ICN. This will involve recruiting participants, conducting standardised tests, managing the participant database and coordinating access to the database by other researchers.

Over the course of the project, the student will spend 4 days per week on research and 1 day per week on the autism coordinator job, with flexibility as required.

The Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience is one of the world's leading institutions for the study of human cognitive function, and has a vibrant and international research community. The student will also profit from the dynamic research environment at UCL, including the Wellcome Trust centre for Neuroimaging and the UCL-Interaction Centre.

Person specification:

Applicants should have a recent BA/BSc (or equivalent) in psychology or cognitive neuroscience. Applicants with a completed MSc degree are preferred. Essential requirements include:

- Experience of working with people with autism spectrum condition
- Excellent organisational and time-management skills
- Strong computer skills and mathematical skills

Please read the detailed instructions for applicants carefully before sending in your application. The successful applicant is expected to enrol in the PhD program at UCL.

Eligibility (as required by funders)

- Candidates must be EU residents for the purposes of assessing university fees.

Start data / Length of contract

The starting date is 1/10/2014. The contract is for 4 years.

Fellowship

This is a fully funded PhD studentship with a stipend of just over £18,000 per year (final figure to be confirmed).

Applications

Application deadline is **21st January 2014**. Applicants **must** read the job description, person specification and detailed instructions carefully before submitting their application as directed. Informal inquiries regarding the position can be addressed to Dr. Antonia Hamilton (a.hamilton@ucl.ac.uk). Information about the lab is on www.antoniahamilton.com

JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

Post: ERC PhD Studentship
Department: Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London (UCL)
Grade: PhD student stipend of just over £18,000 per year (inc London Allowance).

PhD role

The post holder will be funded by an ERC studentship to study **Mimicry in autism – a virtual reality investigation.**

The post holder will join the Social Neuroscience group at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London (UCL), led by Dr Antonia Hamilton. This group uses behavioural, virtual reality and brain imaging methods to investigate the fundamentals of human non-verbal social interaction.

The PhD project will use virtual reality social interactions to test how people with autism copy actions and detect when others copy them. The post holder will be involved in designing experiments, developing tasks, participant recruitment, data collection, analysis, preparation of manuscripts, and conference presentations. He/she is expected to simultaneously enrol in the PhD program at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience. This PhD position lasts 4 years and the thesis must be submitted within the 4 year period.

Autism Research Coordinator role.

The student will also have a role as the **Autism Research Coordinator** for the ICN. This will involve recruiting participants, conducting standardised tests, managing the participant database and coordinating access to the database by other researchers. The student will work as part of the autism@icn group, and will be involved in organising group meetings and keeping track of ongoing projects.

Over the course of the studentship, the student will spend 4 days per week on his/her own research and 1 day per week on the autism coordinator job, with flexibility as required. Training and support with relevant skills will be available, including training in using virtual reality and in cognitive assessments (e.g. ADOS).

Work Relationships

The post holder will collaborate with Dr. Antonia Hamilton, who will be his or her line manager. He or she is expected to work as part of the autism@icn group, and also with the social neuroscience research group at UCL.

PhD Duties and Responsibilities

- To help design, program, and implement behavioural experiments investigating mimicry and social interaction in a virtual reality environment
- To coordinate experimental sessions, recruit participants with and without autism and collect data.
- To analyse the data, including using appropriate statistics.
- To assist with or lead the write up of research results as scientific papers and conference presentations.
- Attend and contribute to regular lab meetings.

Autism Research Coordinator duties & responsibilities

- Interact with participants and community groups via phone, letter, email and attendance at events.
- Carry out standardised testing of participants (e.g. WAIS, ADOS).
- Manage the autism participant database and oversee communications to participants (e.g newsletters / recruitment materials / website)
- Promote and explain the work of autism@icn to the public through the lab website and other appropriate forums.
- Oversee recruitment and testing of participants for a variety of projects

Both positions

- Carry out any other duties that are within the scope, spirit and purpose of the job, the title of the post and its grading as requested by the line manager.
- The post holder is expected to undertake all work in line with UCL policies, procedures and regulations, including awareness and observation of Fire and Health & Safety Regulations, Equal Opportunities, and Race Equality policies.
- The post holder is expected to attend staff meetings and training as required.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Post: PhD studentship
Department: Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London (UCL)
Grade: PhD student stipend of just over £18,000 per year (inc London Allowance).

The job requirements below are *all essential* unless otherwise specified

Qualifications	Further info
A first-class (or very high 2.1) degree in Psychology or Cognitive Neuroscience	Please detail courses taken and marks
MSc degree in a relevant topic or further research experience	Please detail courses taken and marks, or equivalent level of research experience
Skills	
Interest in & knowledge of the cognitive study of human social interaction	
Excellent academic track record	
Able to work as part of a team	
Outstanding written and verbal communication skills in English	
Excellent time keeping and organisational skills	
Ability to work with a wide range of people including those with autism spectrum condition	
Excellent mathematical skills	e.g. maths / physics qualifications beyond GCSE or excellent marks in Stats modules.
Computer programming abilities (desirable)	Skills in any programming language including stats packages like R
Strong computer graphics / virtual reality skills (desirable)	
Commitment to high-quality research and adherence to UCL's procedures and policies	
Experience	
Experience conducting research into human behaviour	
Experience working with children or adults with autism spectrum condition	
Experience of research work with children or atypical populations (desirable)	
Experience of using virtual reality (desirable)	
Experience of formal cognitive assessments (desirable)	e.g. ADOS / WAIS or other standardised tests

Detailed instructions for applicants

Please prepare your CV and a one page statement of support, and save them in a single pdf file named with your full name (e.g. *JoanSmith.pdf*). Your CV should demonstrate all the skills you have which can contribute to this post with details as needed. The statement of support should make it clear what your research interests are and why you are well suited to this position. This should include showing how you meet the requirements listed above.

When you have prepared your application, please email it to Rosalyn Lawrence rosalyn.lawrence@ucl.ac.uk with the email subject line: Autism Coordinator PhD – Fullname (e.g. *Autism Coordinator PhD – Joan Smith*).

Applications which do not meet these requirements will not be considered.