Postdoctoral Research Fellowship within "Fakespeak"

Job description

A Postdoctoral Research Fellowship (SKO 1352) for 2,5 years is available at the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, University of Oslo.

The Postdoctoral Research Fellowship is funded by the Norwegian Research Council and is associated with the Fakespeak project (project number/ID 302573 https://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/english/research/projects/fakespeak/) The successful candidate is expected to present a research project closely connected to the main project. The project description should be finalized in collaboration with the project leaders within three months of the start date.

Expected start date: 1 January 2021.

More about the position

Fake news, defined as news items that are meant to be deceptive and which the author knows to be false, is not a new phenomenon. However, the rapid development of social media now allows news from sources of varying reputation to be spread unfiltered at lightning speed and to be read by millions of people in a very short time. Western liberal democracies are vulnerable, and fake news and other types of disinformation may seriously harm them.

The main objectives of the Fakespeak project, which consists of a core team of linguists and computer scientists, are i) to identify the language and style of fake news in English, Norwegian and Russian, and  ii) to improve existing fake news detection systems by automating the defining linguistic features of fake news. Participants in this project are Faktisk.no, Norway’s first and, so far, only fact-checking service; the NRK, Norway’s largest media organization and broadcaster of news from all over the world; and the NTB, the Norwegian News Agency. The goal of the project is to help them and other stakeholders detect potentially harmful fake news items more efficiently and accurately and in a more timely manner than what is currently possible.

The postdoctoral research fellow to be hired at the Department will contribute to the project’s achieving objective i). S/he will harvest datasets mainly in English from the Internet, and analyse them statistically and visualize the results applying corpus linguistics methods.

The position is available for a period of two and a half years (30 months). The successful candidate will have the possibility to apply to the Research Council of Norway for an extension of up to 6 months. There is a 10 % component of the position that is devoted to compulsory work (teaching, administrative duties, etc.) that will be assigned by the department in agreement with the project manager, depending on the candidate’s qualifications.

The successful candidate is expected to become part of the research environment/network of the department and contribute to its development. The main purpose of postdoctoral research fellowships is to qualify researchers for work in higher academic positions within their disciplines.

Qualification requirements

- PhD or equivalent academic qualifications with a specialization in one or more of the areas relevant to the project (English language and linguistics, linguistics, corpus linguistics, computational linguistics)
- Fluency in oral and written English
- Solid knowledge of corpus linguistics methods, including experience in conducting corpus analyses of potentially fairly large amounts of data and performing statistical analyses and visualization
- Personal suitability and motivation for the position
- Experience in automatic data harvesting online is an advantage
- Programming skills in Python or R, or both, are an advantage
- Familiarity with Russian language is an advantage
- The candidate's research project must be closely connected to the Fakespeak project

The ideal candidate is a quantitative corpus linguist specializing in English language and linguistics, but researchers from across linguistics, as well as computational linguistics, will also be considered.

The doctoral dissertation must have been submitted for evaluation before the application deadline.

Further qualifications

In the evaluation of the applications, emphasis will be placed on:

- the project’s scientific merit, research-related relevance and innovation
- the applicant’s estimated academic and personal ability to carry out the project within the allotted time frame and contribute to (the overall goals of) the Fakespeak project
- good co-operative skills, and the ability to successfully join in academic collaboration within and across disciplines
- the applicant’s ability to communicate with non-academic and industrial collaboration partners, including communicating with existing and developing new contacts among potential users of project results
We offer

- salary NOK 523 200 - 605 500 per annum depending on qualifications in position as Postdoctoral Research Fellow (position code 1352)
- a professionally stimulating working environment
- attractive welfare benefits and a generous pension agreement, in addition to Oslo’s family-friendly environment with its rich opportunities for culture and outdoor activities

How to apply

Applicants must submit the following attachments with the electronic application form, preferably in pdf-format:

- Application letter describing the applicant’s qualifications and motivation for the position
- Curriculum Vitae with grades listed (with a list of education, positions, teaching experience, administrative experience and other qualifying activities)
- List of publications
- Project description (approximately 3-5 pages). The project description must present a feasible progress plan. It is expected that the applicant will be able to complete the project during the period of appointment
- 1 academic work (e.g., article or dissertation chapter) that the candidate wishes to be considered

Diplomas, certificates, doctoral thesis and other academic works may be requested later.

Please note that all documents must be in English or a Scandinavian language. Foreign applicants are advised to attach an explanation of their university’s grading system.

Please do not attach any Letters of Recommendation.

Formal regulations

The short-listed candidates will be invited to an interview at the University of Oslo or we will arrange for an interview on Skype.

See also Regulations concerning Postdoctoral Research Fellowships.

Following the Freedom of Information Act (Offentleglova) § 25, Chapter 2, information about the applicant may be used in the public list of applicants even if the applicant opts out from the entry in the public application list.

The University of Oslo has an Acquisition of Rights Agreement for the purpose of securing rights to intellectual property created by its employees, including research results.

The University of Oslo aims to achieve a balanced gender composition in the workforce and to recruit people with ethnic minority backgrounds.

Contact information

Project leader/Postdoctoral Fellow Silje Susanne Alvestad (e-mail)
Administrative Head of Department Karina Kleiva (e-mail)

About the University of Oslo

The University of Oslo is Norway’s oldest and highest ranked educational and research institution, with 28 000 students and 7000 employees. With its broad range of academic disciplines and internationally recognised research communities, UiO is an important contributor to society.

The Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages is involved in extensive research, teaching and outreach in the fields of literature, area studies and linguistics within European languages apart from the Nordic ones. The Department has an active research environment with a wide range of international collaboration. Many of our researchers play a part in giving the general public insight into the results of this research. The Department has about 130 members of staff: approximately 80 in academic posts, approximately 30 Ph.D. fellows and postdoctoral fellows, and 18 in administrative posts. The Department has approximately 300 master students and 1000 bachelor students.

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