

The Alan Turing Institute

Research Associate - Online Safety

THE ALAN TURING INSTITUTE

There has never been a more significant time to work in data science and AI. There is recognition of the importance of these technologies to our economic and social future: the so-called fourth industrial revolution. The technical challenge of keeping our data secure and private has grown in its urgency and importance. At the same time, voices from academia, industry, and government are coming together to debate how these technologies should be governed and managed.

The Alan Turing Institute, as the UK's national institute for data science and artificial intelligence, plays an important part in driving forward advances in these technologies in order to change the world for the better.

The Institute is named in honour of Alan Turing, whose pioneering work in theoretical and applied mathematics, engineering and computing is considered to have laid the foundations for modern-day data science and artificial intelligence. The Institute's goals are to undertake world-class research, apply its research to real-world problems, driving economic impact and societal good, lead the training of a new generation of scientists, and shape the public conversation around data and algorithms.

After launching in 2015 with government funding from EPSRC and five founding universities, the Institute has grown an extensive network of university partners from across the UK and launched a number of major partnerships with industry, public and third sector. Today it is home to more than 500 researchers, a rapidly growing team of in house research software engineers and data scientists and a business team.

BACKGROUND

The Alan Turing Institute's Online Safety Team, which is part of the Public Policy Programme, is a research grouping specialised in understanding and mitigating online harms, with a particular focus on hate speech, abuse and misinformation. Our work supports the core Turing Institute goals of both advancing foundational research in artificial intelligence and translating this research directly into practical impact by working closely with government and civil society.

As we expand our work, we are currently seeking to appoint a research associate or research assistant focussed on the area of AI for Online Safety. The successful candidate will help support our stream of work in this area which is focussed on advancing technology for detecting and countering online harms. This is a broad area of research, and we are open to looking at a variety of different specialisations: for example, people specialising in natural language processing, image recognition, or working with voice or video material are all encouraged to apply. However, an interest in using these technologies for detecting and understanding online harms is essential, with preference given to candidates who already have background and expertise in this area.

ROLE PURPOSE

The successful candidate will work with a team of people specialising in the development of AI technology for the public good, with a particular focus on online safety. The main purpose of the role will be to support with some leadership responsibilities within this team, and help push forward our work in using the latest artificial intelligence and data science techniques to detect, understand and respond to online harms. They will report to Jonathan Bright who is Head of Online Safety at the Public Policy Programme.

The appointed candidate will benefit from access to the Turing's research computing infrastructure (based on Microsoft Azure) as well as funds for labelling data, training models and supporting research. In addition to advancing cutting edge AI research, the candidate will also have direct interaction with policymakers and civil society organisations.

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DUTIES AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

The successful candidate will:

- Conduct original research in the area of artificial intelligence for online safety. The precise area of research is open: examples would include automatic detection of hate speech in text data, detection of visual misinformation, or detection of violence in video material (we are open to other specialisations within the broad area of artificial intelligence.)
- Support the Head of Online Safety in writing grant applications and submitting funding proposals.
- Contribute to the national and international landscape of research and applications in online safety / AI and public policy.
- Carry out collaborative projects with colleagues in partner institutions, and research groups.
- Support the work of policymakers, regulators and others by providing advice, attending workshops and giving talks.
- Write Turing Public Policy Briefing Paper, blogs and insight reports.
- Support with building the AI and public policy community at The Turing.

OTHER DUTIES

Please note that job descriptions cannot be exhaustive, and the postholder may be required to undertake other duties, which are broadly in line with the above key responsibilities. This job description is written at a specific time and is subject to changes as the demands of the Institute and the role develop.

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

Skills and Requirements

Post holders will be expected to demonstrate the following:

Essential (E)
Desirable (D)

Tested at application (a)
Tested at interview (i)

Education/Qualification

Research Associate level: PhD-level degree in data science, mathematics, computer science, quantitative social science, or a related discipline, or equivalent level of professional experience.

E

A

Research Assistant level: A masters degree in data science, mathematics, computer science, quantitative social science, or a related discipline, or equivalent level of professional experience.

E

A

Knowledge and Experience

Solid background and competence in development of artificial intelligence.

E

A / I

Competence in a relevant programming language such as R or Python

E

A / I

Excellent track record of academic publications in the area of artificial intelligence

E

A

Ability to creatively solve problems, working both independently and with other team members

E

I

Ability to perform relevant literature reviews

E

I

Ability to critically evaluate experimental results and derive evidence-driven conclusions

E

I

Ability to create an innovative and creative environment for research

D

I

Demonstrable interest in online safety

D

A/I

Experience of working with funding and research budgets

D

A / I

Communication

Excellent communication skills (written and verbal) and proven ability to communicate complex, specialist or conceptual information/research findings clearly and persuasively to diverse audiences.

E

A

Initiative and Problem Solving

Able to analyse and resolve problems and take steps to prevent future recurrence.

E

I

Ability to make recommendations offering wider benefits, using evidence to support

E

A/I

Ability to lead one's own work, including planning and execution, and to prioritise work to meet deadlines

E

A/I

Project Management & Project Delivery

Experience of making recommendations to contribute to service improvement

E

A/I

Ability to work across the team to contribute and assist in diverse research activities

E

A/I

Ability to develop and lead collaborative research and innovation

D

A/I

Decision Making

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| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| Ability to contribute to discussions and make decisions as part of team. | E | A/I |
| Analysis and Research | | |
| Ability to organise working time, take the initiative, and carry out research independently | E | I |
| Ability to use own judgement to analyse and solve problems. | E | I |
| Reports findings to wider community and is able to withstand challenge by relying on evidence gathered and processes used for analysis. | E | A / I |
| Expert in data gathering and analysis, able to develop hypotheses to explain results and confidently present findings. | E | A / I |
| Other Requirements | | |
| Commitment to EDI principles and to the Organisation values | E | I |

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OUR VALUES

The Alan Turing Institute is committed to equality diversity and inclusion and to eliminating discrimination. All employees are expected to embrace, follow and promote our [EDI Principles](#) and Our Values.

Our values



Trust
We create an environment where we have trust and can be trusted



Inclusivity
We expect our Turing community to contribute to a culture that is inclusive and free of barriers



Respect
We all have different roles, priorities and challenges but our shared purpose is the same



Leadership
Leadership is everyone's business; Turing leaders set the right tone and lead by example



Transparency
Everyone should understand the how and the why of our decisions and actions



Integrity
We are all ambassadors for the Turing's mission of changing the world for the better

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

If you are interested in this opportunity, please click the apply button below. You will need to register on the applicant portal and complete the application form including your CV and covering letter. If you have questions about the role or would like to apply using a different format, please contact us on 020 3970 2148 or 0203 862 3516, or email recruitment@turing.ac.uk.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

This full-time post is offered on a fixed term basis for two years. The annual salary as a Research Associate is £42,893 - £48,510 (depending on experience). Research Assistants will be appointed at an annual salary of £40,148. Our offer will include the excellent benefits, including flexible working and family friendly policies, <https://www.turing.ac.uk/work-turing/why-work-turing/employee-benefits>

Candidates who have not yet been officially awarded their PhD will be appointed as Research Assistant at a salary of £40,148 per annum.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Alan Turing Institute is committed to creating an environment where diversity is valued and everyone is treated fairly. In accordance with the Equality Act, we welcome applications from anyone who meets the specific criteria of the post regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

We are committed to making sure our recruitment process is accessible and inclusive. This includes making reasonable adjustments for candidates who have a disability or long-term condition. Please contact us at adjustments@turing.ac.uk to find out how we can assist you.

Please note all offers of employment are subject to obtaining and retaining the right to work in the UK and satisfactory pre-employment security screening which includes a DBS Check.

Full details on the pre-employment screening process can be requested from HR@turing.ac.uk.