



Ph.D. student position in Older adults' Interaction with Robots

Department of Communication Studies
The Center for Multidisciplinary Research in Aging
Agricultural, Biological, Cognitive Robotics Initiative
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Research topic: Older adults' interaction with robots

Ben-Gurion University is seeking outstanding candidates for a PhD student position in *Older adults interaction with robots*, at The Department of Communication Studies and The Center for Multidisciplinary Research in Aging. BGU is an internationally recognized research university that attracts outstanding faculty and researchers from around the world with over 19,000 students. The Dept. of Communication Studies includes a multidisciplinary faculty with expertise in new media, audience research, cultural diversity and disadvantaged populations. Advanced innovative multidisciplinary robotics research at BGU is conducted under the auspices of the ABC Robotics Initiative.

SOCRATES

The recruitment is done as part of SOCRATES (SOcial Cognitive Robotic Agents in The European Society), a new Marie Skłodowska-Curie European Training Network (ETN) comprising 7 universities/research institutes: Umeå University and Örebro University in Sweden, Universität Hamburg and Fraunhofer IPA, Stuttgart in Germany, CSIC Barcelona in Spain, University West of England, and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. Additional non-academic partners are: Pal Robotics, Adele Robots, Alfred Nobel Science Park, Urquhart-Dykes & Lord LLP, Center for Digital Innovation, UMINOVA, Asea Brown Boveri, S.A, and Fundació ACE.

In total 15 Early Stage Researchers (ESRs) will be recruited as PhD students for research on various aspects of social robotics aiming at eldercare. The wide range of projects covers a spectrum from technical design of hardware and interaction methodology, to personalization, user studies, and robot ethics. The researchers will receive training in both academic and entrepreneurial spirit and expertise, well suited for a career in both academy and industry. The training includes a research project, courses, seminars, and workshops. An overview of all available positions can be found at www.socrates-project.eu.

Research project

Interaction and collaboration with robots will soon become a significant means for promoting wellbeing in later life. Consequently, there is a growing demand for experts on older adults' interaction with robots. Applying a mixed methods approach, we will develop procedures for exploring processes of assimilation of new robotics technologies into elderly homes. The procedure will relate to three topics: 1) Behavior - How do older adults interact with robots? 2) Benefits - What are the effects of the interaction on users' daily living and subjective well-being? 3) Constraints - What social and psychological factors constrain older adults' beneficial interaction with robots?

The student will spend secondments at Örebro University, Sweden to investigate the special effects of varying Interaction Quality in the form of levels of automation, and at Fraunhofer IPA, Germany for studies of connections between robot design and the examined effects on users.

About the position

The successful applicant will receive a competitive salary for a period of three years full time research, provided that expected study and research results are achieved. No teaching is expected. The salary will be based on the standard Marie Skłodowska-Curie Early-Stage Researcher living and mobility allowances. **Expected starting date is 1st of April 2017.**

Admission requirements

We are looking for candidates with social sciences background and excellent qualitative research skills. The applicants must have completed a M.A. thesis. Candidates should have interest in understanding aging and communication (although should not necessarily have background in such topics), be able to work independently as well as in collaboration with others, and be passionate about learning and developing knowledge in a novel and exciting area. The applicant must be skilled in both oral and written communication in English. Fluent Hebrew is a significant advantage but not mandatory.

Once approved by BGU's SOCRATES graduate committee the student must be accepted to BGU's graduate school (http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/kreitman_school/Pages/admission.aspx) and obtain a visa and working permit according to the Ministry of Interior requirements. The candidate must submit a research proposal and go through a Qualification Exam within one year of studies on his/her research proposal.

To promote mobility, the following rule applies: At the time of recruitment, the applicants must not have resided or carried out their main activity in Israel for more than 12 months during the last 3 years. Compulsory national service, work in international organizations, and short stays such as holidays are not taken into account. The applicants must not, at the time of recruitment, have spent more than 4 years doing research, and must not have been awarded a doctoral degree.

Application

A complete application should contain the following documents:

- A cover letter including a description of your research interests, your reasons to apply for the position, and your contact information
- A curriculum vitae
- Copies of degree certificates, including documentation of completed academic courses and obtained grades.
- Copy of completed M.A. thesis and other original research publications
- Contact information for three persons willing to act as references (including your MA thesis advisor)

Applications must be submitted electronically to the following email by November 30, 2016.

socrates@post.bgu.ac.il

Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

For additional information about the position, please contact: Prof. Galit Nimrod - gnimrod@bgu.ac.il
For general information about the SOCRATES project, please contact Prof. Thomas Hellström - thomash@cs.umu.se

www.socrates-project.eu
www.bgu.ac.il
www.bgu.ac.il/abc-robotics