Robot-assisted Therapy for Children with Autism
University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom

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Interactive robots are increasingly being used in projects that aim to support children’s learning and development. The research team at University of Hertfordshire led by Prof. Dautenhahn has been investigating for more than 15 years the use of robots for therapy and education of children with autism, see KASPAR (http://www.kaspar.herts.ac.uk/) and Babyrobot projects (http://www.babyrobot.eu/) for more details. A key research issue relevant to both projects concerns the design of interactive and engaging games that children with autism can play with a robot.

The PhD project will be associated to the KASPAR and the European Babyrobot projects, investigating the use of the Kaspar robot for the therapy and education of children with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and other children with specific difficulties in communicating and interacting with other people. The general aim is for the PhD student to investigate the development of interactive, engaging and personalized games that can be tailored towards specific educational and/or therapeutic objectives.

The PhD project will use existing state of the art robot hardware, and focus on software development and evaluation with children. The design, preparation, implementation and analysis of human-robot interaction experiments will form an important part in this project.

The PhD student will be part of a larger research team consisting of researchers working on human-robot interaction. The PhD student will have the opportunity to work with the Kaspar robot which was developed by our research group.

Applicants are required to have a strong first degree or Master’s degree in Computer Science, Robotics or a related area relevant to the project. An additional background in human-computer interaction, cognitive science or psychology is highly desirable. Excellent programming skills are essential (including Ros, C++), the ability to interface robot sensors and develop software on robots is a necessary requirement of this studentship, as well as a general interest in interdisciplinary research and willingness to collaborate with researchers from other disciplines. The ideal candidate will be self-motivated with excellent communication skills and proven ability to produce scientific documents. The PhD will be supervised by Prof. Kerstin Dautenhahn (K.Dautenhahn@herts.ac.uk), whom interested candidates are invited to contact via email in the first instance.

Shortlisting will begin as soon as possible. For more information about the bursary and the application process go to:
http://www.herts.ac.uk/apply/schools-of-study/computer-science/our-research/the-phd-programme-in-computer-science