UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

Research Role Profile

Job Title:	"Digital Harms, Democratic Costs (DHDC)" Research Fellow

Responsible to:	Head of research group, or principal investigator

Responsible for:	Not applicable

Job Summary and Purpose:

To undertake research in accordance with the specified research project(s) under the supervision of the principal investigator.

Main Responsibilities/Activities

To undertake a range of research activities within a specified research area, assuming responsibility for specific areas of projects and making use of new research techniques and methods, in consultation with the research award holder or supervisor. This may include fieldwork, interviews, laboratory experimentation, critical evaluation and interpretation, computer-based data analysis and evaluation or library research.

Using initiative and creativity to identify areas for research develop new research methods and extend the research portfolio. Analysing and interpreting results of own research. Write up results and prepare papers for submission to appropriate journals and conferences, and other outputs as required and/or appropriate. Attend appropriate conferences for the purpose of disseminating research results of personal development. The post holder may also contribute to writing bids for research grants and will contribute to collaborative decision making with colleagues in areas of research.

Continually to update knowledge and develop skills, and translate knowledge of advances in the area into research activity.

To plan and manage own research activity in collaboration with others. To carry out administrative tasks associated with specified research funding, for example risk assessment of research activities, organisation of project meetings and documentation. Implementation of procedures required to ensure accurate and timely formal reporting and financial control.

To contribute to teaching in the Faculty by carrying out student supervision and/or demonstrating within the post holder's area of expertise and under the direct guidance of a member of departmental academic staff, as appropriate.

The post holder may occasionally be required to supervise more junior research staff.

Person Specification

The post holder must have:

A doctoral degree in a relevant discipline (although individuals who have almost completed a doctoral degree may be appointed). Consideration may also be given to individuals who do not hold a doctoral degree but have required skills based on a number of years experience in specified / relevant fields

The post holder will have authority over some aspects of project work and must be capable of providing academic judgement, offering original and creative thoughts and be able to interpret and analyse results.

Relationships and Contacts

Direct responsibility to the principal investigator or academic supervisor. The post holder may be asked to serve on a relevant Faculty committee. There may be additional reporting and liaison responsibilities to external funding bodies or sponsors. The post holder may work on original research tasks with colleagues in other institutions.

Special Requirements

To be available to participate in fieldwork as required by the specified research project

All staff are expected to:

- Positively support equality of opportunity and equity of treatment to colleagues and students in accordance with the University of Surrey Equal Opportunities policy.

- Help maintain a safe working environment by:

  - Attending training in Health and Safety requirements as necessary, both on appointment and as changes in duties and techniques demand

  - Following local codes of safe working practices and the University of Surrey Health and Safety Policy

- Undertake such other duties within the scope of the post as may be requested by your Manager.

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Addendum

This document provides additional information relating to both specific aspects of the post/faculty and any post specific person specification criteria. The information contained within this document should always be read in conjunction with the accompanying generic Job Purpose.

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Job Title:

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"Digital Harms, Democratic Costs (DHDC)" Research Fellow

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Background Information/Relationships

We are recruiting for a Research Fellow to deliver on the project "Digital Harms, Democratic Costs (DHDC)". DHDC envisions a more gender-equal and inclusive democratic future where online participation by women and girls is not constrained by fear, reputational harm, or synthetic manipulation by AI tools. DHDC realises this vision with a dual focus on how harmful-but-legal behaviours and AI-mediated distortions individually or in combination shape violence against women and girls in political life online, and prototyping practical, rights-preserving interventions that empower Women MPs, inform policing and justice responses, and strengthen democratic resilience. The selected candidate will help deliver this important project by engaging directly with Women MPs and their staff and through data analysis on public online discourse on UK political topics (e.g., on social media posts).

The Computer Science Research Centre is highly recognised in the UK, and was ranked 7th by output in REF 2021.

The Surrey Centre for Cyber Security (SCCS) is one of two research clusters in Computer Science and is only one of seven in the UK holding recognition as an Academic Centre of Excellence in both Cyber Security Research and Cyber Security Education by the UK government. SCCS has world-leading research expertise in applied cryptography, trusted computing, secure systems, privacy and authentication, secure communications, blockchain and distributed ledger technologies, and security verification.

The Networked Systems theme in SCCS is internationally recognised for its fundamental and applied research in several areas such as consensus protocols, distributed trust and coordination, fault-tolerance, edge and cloud computing, networks in space, web tracking and privacy, online harms such as hate speech and misinformation in social networks.

The post holder will be based in the SCCS Networked Systems theme, and work with Prof. Sastry and others in the theme and the wider CS research centre.

Direct responsibility to Principal Investigator Prof. Nishanth Sastry.

Person Specification

This section describes the sum total of knowledge, experience & competence required by the post holder that is necessary for standard acceptable performance in carrying out

this role. This is in addition to the criteria contained within the accompanying generic Job Purpose.

Qualifications and Professional Memberships	Essential/ Desirable
Hold a PhD in Computer Science or related topic	E
Have proficiency in analysing AI safety and online harms issues. This could include social media based harms and/or online harms such as hate speech	E
Have an interest in public online discourse, and helping shape a more civic dialogue online	E

Key Responsibilities

This document is not designed to be a list of all tasks undertaken but an outline record of any faculty/post specific responsibilities. This should be read in conjunction with those contained within the accompanying generic Job Purpose.

1. Work with project partners, Women MPs and other politicians, or their staff to understand the nature of online harms they face
2. Develop a Harms Map based on the discussions with MPs
3. Do data analysis on public social media data of MPs and other politicians to confirm harms
4. Develop mitigations, such as browser plugins, to overcome or manage the effects of these harms.
5. Meet on a weekly basis on campus with project staff and wider research groups (Networked Systems theme and SCCS).
6. Attend project meetings and present results at other sites as required
7. Give oral and written reports on project progress and outcomes. Be able to report at both a technical low-level and conceptual high-level to a range of audiences including the public and industry
8. Continually update knowledge and develop skills
9. Carry out routine administrative tasks associated with a specified research project, for example risk assessment of research tasks, organisation of project meetings and documentation. This will entail planning own day-to-day research activity within the framework of the agreed programme, dealing with problems that may affect the achievement of research objectives and deadlines and implementing procedures required to ensure accurate and timely delivery.

N.B. The above list is not exhaustive.