
Postdoc position at the institutes IALS and IDSIA, Faculty of Communication Culture and Society and Faculty of Informatics at USI Università della Svizzera italiana

Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) is a young and lively university, a hub of opportunity open to the world where students are offered a quality interdisciplinary education in which they can be fully engaged and take center stage, and where our researchers can count on having the space to freely pursue their initiative.

Established in 1996, USI is in constant evolution, always taking on new challenges while remaining true to its three guiding principles: quality, openness and responsibility.

The Institute of Argumentation, Linguistics and Semiotics (IALS) provides a lively research environment for PhD students that specialize in natural language processing (NLP). Interaction with several researchers working in NLP, Linguistics and Computer Science as well as interdisciplinary interactions with colleagues across and outside the faculties of Informatics (INF) and Communication, Culture and Society (COM) is an asset for its postdocs.

The Dalle Molle Institute for Artificial Intelligence (IDSIA) conducts research activities in a spectrum of disciplines related to the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), from deep neural networks to explainable causal networks, from machine vision to autonomous robotics, intersecting control engineering and operations research with AI/ML methods.

The Institutes invite applications for a fully funded postdoc position in NLP, for two years, renewable for another 2 years.

The project

SATURNA (<https://www.saturna.ch/>) is a large-scale four-year project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. It is an inter-disciplinary collaboration between the University of Bern, EPFL, Idiap Research Institute and the National University of Singapore, with specialists in NLP, graph deep learning, knowledge-enhanced AI, computational biology and translational science.

The role of the team of Prof. Lonneke van der Plas is to draw parallels between text sequences and RNA sequences, thereby leveraging advances made in the NLP field to learn informative representations of RNA sequences. Vice versa, handling the intricacies of RNA, such as extremely long-distance dependencies, context-dependency, structure, function etc. sheds new light on assumptions made in NLP models, that will be tested for their applicability on language.

The Postdoc Position

The postdoc will work under the scientific supervision of Prof. Lonneke van der Plas (<https://usi.to/bkks>). The successful candidate will be offered the possibility to work in a fast-growing, cross-institutional, dynamic research team and have the opportunity to collaborate with members of Van der Plas' NLP lab (<https://usi-nlp.github.io/>) that are based at USI and the EPFL, as well as the large international network the group features.

The postdoc is expected to collaborate with the PhD students in the USI NLP lab that are working on a wide variety of topics in NLP, as well as with the researchers in the SATURNA project, that includes work on interpretability and foundations of transformer-based language models, and benchmarking these.

Tasks encompass both research and teaching responsibilities. The successful candidate will have shared responsibilities in the design and conduction of research projects in the field of NLP, present papers at scientific conferences and produce publications in high-ranking journals and top-tier conferences. On the teaching side, he/she will work as teaching assistant in courses at master level, helping in the preparation of teaching materials and help with supervising PhD students.

Candidates' profile

Ideal candidates should satisfy the following requirements:

- A PhD in natural language processing, computer science, or related disciplines.
- Experience with and/or strong interest in interdisciplinary work, and collaborative projects.
- Strong programming skills
- Excellent research track record and publications.
- Good communication skills, scientific curiosity, good organizational skills, rigor in experimental work and high level of motivation.
- Excellent command of English, both written and spoken.
- Good oral and written skills in one (or more) national Swiss languages (German, French, Italian, Romansh) is a plus.
- Interest in teaching and supervising students and availability to collaborate with colleagues (engage in scientific dialogue, listen and think critically) are required.

General terms

Workplace is USI Università della Svizzera italiana, located in Lugano, Switzerland. Availability to travel to other parts of Switzerland and abroad (for purposes of collaboration and research) is required.

Starting date is 1 September 2026 (at the earliest). However, the position will be kept open until a suitable candidate has been found.

The Application

Applications should contain: (1) a complete CV, (2) a research statement (max 600 words), (3) copies of relevant diplomas, certificates as well as the full transcript of records, (4) a complete list of publications with details on the candidate's contributions, (5) minimum 2 and up to 4 references (names and email addresses) that are willing to write a recommendation letter.

Before proceeding with the ONLINE submission, please read the "Information on personal data processing of job candidates" available at the following **LINK**. In the online form, you will be asked to declare that you have read and understood our privacy policy.

Applications must be submitted ONLINE by filling out the form accessible through the following link: **APPLY**. You will also need to upload the documents listed above.

Requests for further information can be sent to Lonneke van der Plas (Lonneke.vanderplas@usi.ch) with 'SATURNA-POSTDOC' in the title.

Applications received before July 13th 2026, will be given priority. However, applications will be received until the position is filled.

USI strives to be an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples. We guarantee that the selection process will give equal opportunities to female and male researchers.

As an institution that values diversity, USI particularly encourages applications from women and from all individuals from underrepresented groups.

Lugano, 30.06.2026