

Heriot Watt University, School of Life Sciences, Department of Psychology

James Watt PhD Studentship in Human Animal Interactions and Animal Assisted Interventions

Title: An exploration of the benefits of human-animal interactions

Supervisors:

Dr Nicola McGuigan

Dr Dasha Grajfoner

The high level of pet ownership within the UK suggests that animals play an important role within society. Of recent interest is whether interactions with animals can go beyond companionship and enhance human health, well-being and functioning. This studentship will provide an in-depth dissection of which specific elements of human-animal contact enhance health, well-being and functioning in non-clinical populations at different points across the lifespan. An additional aim of the project is to determine whether any increases witnessed in the outcome measures following exposure to animals is also evident when individuals are exposed to inanimate alternatives (e.g., robotic pets). Establishing whether or not inanimate animals can enhance health and well-being would provide an invaluable addition to the evidence base, as inanimate animals may provide a more practical option for many individuals who cannot have their own pet.

Person Specification

- Demonstrated experience in human animal interaction and animal assisted intervention research or practice
- Knowledge and experience in quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Ability to write concise and accessible reports for a non-specialist audience
- Strong verbal and written communication skills
- Publishing track record in the area of HAI or AAI/AAA or related
- Experience of research in an academic environment

Further Details

Heriot-Watt University is inviting applications for PhD scholarships (under the 'James Watt Scholarship' scheme) to undertake research training to PhD level. The scholarships will be funded for three years and will follow standard RCUK (Research Council UK) conditions. The scholarships are open to UK and EU nationals and applicants should hold at least an upper second class Honours (or equivalent) degree in in psychology or other discipline relevant to HAI. The selected James Watt Scholars will be registered for a PhD degree at Heriot-Watt University on the University's Edinburgh campus in the School of Life Sciences.

Please send a CV and 1 page covering letter (outlining your reasons for applying, and why you consider yourself a suitable candidate for the Scholarship), via e-mail, by 5 p.m. on Tuesday 31 May 2016, to N.McGuigan@hw.ac.uk

Interviews will be scheduled in the second half of June. If you wish to obtain any further information on the project then please contact either Dr Dasha Grajfoner D.grajfoner@hw.ac.uk or Dr Nicola McGuigan N.McGuigan@hw.ac.uk