

Hier  
entsteht  
Zukunft!



UNIVERSITÄT  
DES  
SAARLANDES

Foto: Oliver Dietze



Saarland University is a campus university that is internationally recognized for its strong research programmes. Fostering young academic talent and creating ideal conditions for teaching and research are a core part of the university's mission. As part of the University of the Greater Region, Saarland University enables students and staff to share and exchange knowledge and ideas between disciplines, between universities and across borders. With over 17,000 national and international students, studying more than a hundred different academic disciplines, Saarland University is a diverse and dynamic learning environment. Saarland University is officially recognized as one of Germany's family-friendly higher-education institutions and with a combined workforce of more than 4,000 it is one of the largest employers in the region.

The research groups of [Michael Hahn](#) and [Alexander Koller](#) are inviting applications for the following position commencing **at the earliest opportunity**.

### Academic research assistant (m/f/x)

**Reference number W2846**, salary in accordance with the German TV-L salary scale<sup>1</sup>, pay grade: E13 TV- L, duration of employment: 3 years, volume of employment: 100 % of standard working time.

#### Workplace/Department:

The position is funded through the new project "Structural generalization in transformer-based LLMs", which is part of the DFG Special Priority Program [Robust Assessment and Safe Applicability of Language Modeling: Foundations for a New Field of Language Science and Technology](#).

The goal of the SPP is to bring together research in linguistics and LLMs so they can mutually inform each other.

The starting point of the project is the observation that transformers struggle with \*structural generalization:\* they do not perform well on test instances that are more complex than the training instances. We see this e.g. when parsing complex sentences or when managing complex reasoning chains.

In the project, we want to develop theory that explains this limitation, carry out empirical research to pinpoint the transformer's capabilities, understand them through mechanistic interpretability, and find ways to improve structural generalization in transformers. Methods range from formal language theory to training and prompting-based experiments to circuit analysis.

We will carry out the project in collaboration with [Will Merrill](#) and [Yuekun Yao](#).

<sup>1</sup> TV-L = collective agreement on remuneration of public sector employees in the German *Länder*

### Job requirements and responsibilities:

We are looking for candidates who have finished, or are about to complete, an excellent Master's degree in computer science, computational linguistics, or a related discipline.

The ideal candidate will have outstanding programming skills and algorithmic understanding; a strong understanding of current methods in machine learning; and strong communication skills in English (spoken and written).

### What we can offer you:

- A flexible work schedule allowing you to balance work and family, among other things the possibility of teleworking
- Secure and future-oriented employment with attractive conditions
- A broad range of further education and professional development programmes (for example language courses)
- An occupational health management model with numerous attractive options, such as our university sports programme
- Supplementary pension scheme (RZVK)
- Discounted tickets on local public transport services ('Job-Ticket' of the saarVV)
- Job bike leasing (JobRad)

We look forward to receiving your **meaningful online application** (in a PDF file) by **11.05.2026** to **apply-ak@coli.uni-saarland.de**. Please include the reference number **W2846** in the subject line of the e-mail.

Include a **single PDF file** with the following information:

1. a statement of research interests that motivates why you are applying for this position and outlines your research agenda;
2. a full CV including your list of publications;
3. scans of transcripts and academic degree certificates;
4. the names, affiliations, and e-mail addresses of two people who can provide letters of reference for you.

If you have any **questions**, please contact us for assistance. Your contact:

Prof. Alexander Koller or Prof. Michael Hahn  
Department of Language Science and Technology  
koller@coli.uni-saarland.de mhahn@lst.uni-saarland.de

Pay grade classification is based on the particular details of the position held and the extent to which the applicant meets the requirements of the pay grade within the TV-L salary scale. Part-time employment is generally possible.

If you have obtained a foreign university degree, a proof of the equivalence of this degree with a German degree by the Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen (ZAB) is needed before hiring. If necessary, please apply for this in time. You can find more information at <https://www.kmk.org/zeugnisbewertung>.

Unfortunately, neither costs for attending an interview at Saarland University nor costs for any certificate evaluation by the ZAB can be reimbursed in principle.

We welcome applications regardless of gender, nationality, ethnic and social origin, religion/belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation and identity. In accordance with its policy of increasing the proportion of women, the University actively encourages applications from women. Applications from severely disabled persons will be given preferential consideration in the event of equal suitability.

When you submit a job application to Saarland University you will be transmitting personal data. [Please refer to our privacy notice for information on how we collect and process personal data in accordance with Art. 13 of the Datenschutz-Grundverordnung](#). By submitting your application you confirm that you have taken note of the information in the Saarland University privacy notice.