Alan Ansell

I am a Research Scientist at Google Research in Sydney, with particular interests in multilingual NLP, and parameter-efficient and modular transfer learning.

EDUCATION	**University of Cambridge**, United Kingdom	Oct. 2020 - Jul. 2024

PhD, Natural Language Processing (graduation pending).
Thesis: Efficient and Composable Adaptation for Cross-Lingual Transfer.
Advisors: Anna Korhonen, Ivan Vulić, Edoardo M. Ponti.
Funded by the Harding Distinguished Postgraduate Scholarship.

University of Waikato, New Zealand — Mar. 2019 - Mar. 2020
MSc, Computer Science (Research) (Hons, 1st class) in NLP.
Thesis: Contextualised Approaches to Embedding Word Senses.
Advisors: Bernhard Pfahringer, Felipe Bravo-Marquez.
Funded by the University of Waikato Research Masters Scholarship.

University of Auckland, New Zealand — Feb. 2014 - Nov. 2018
BA/BE (Hons, 1st class) conjoint. GPA: 8.8/9.0.
Funded by the University of Auckland Scholarship.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Google Research, Sydney — Sep. 2024 - present
Research Scientist
Multilinguality for Gemini.

Microsoft Research, Montréal — Jun. - Aug. 2024
Research Intern
Researching modular fine-tuning of LLMs with Alessandro Sordoni and Lucas Caccia.

Google, Sydney — Nov. 2018 - Feb. 2019
Software Engineering Intern
Built a data propagation system for regional autoscaling at Google.

Google, Sydney — Nov. 2016 - Feb. 2017
Software Engineering Intern
Built from scratch a machine learning pipeline for "drain prediction", which detects when traffic should be drained from Google's Blobstore service.

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

University of Auckland, Department of Engineering Science — Nov. 2017 - Feb. 2018
Research Assistant
Advisor: Golbon Zakeri
Modelling of demand and prices in the New Zealand Electricity Market (NZEM).

New Zealand Olympiad in Informatics (NZOI) — 2015 - 2018
Volunteer Tutor
NZOI select and train the New Zealand team for the International Olympiad in Informatics.
Tutor at the NZOI Summer Camps in 2015 and 2018, Deputy Training Director 2018.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

International Olympiad in Informatics (IOI)
Bronze medallist 2014, NZ representative team member 2012-2014.

CodeCup
CodeCup is an international AI game programming competition.
3rd place (2018), 5th place (2016), 9th place (2015), 8th place (2014).

University of Auckland
Senior Scholar Award in the Faculty of Engineering (top of graduating class), 2018.
Senior Scholar Award in the Faculty of Arts, 2018.
10 First in Course awards, 2015-2018: statistics (3), operations research (4), linguistics (3).
Faculty of Engineering Dean's Honours List, 2014-2017.

ACM - International Collegiate Programming Contest
Member of University of Auckland representative team at the 2015 South Pacific Regional Finals.
Top placed New Zealand team and 3rd placed overall.

International Chess Federation (FIDE)
FIDE Master (FM), awarded 2017.

SELECTED
PUBLICATIONS

Lucas Caccia, **Alan Ansell**, Edoardo M. Ponti, Ivan Vulić, Alessandro Sordoni. Training Plug-n-Play Knowledge Modules with Deep Context Distillation. In Conference on Language Modeling, Oct 2025.

Alan Ansell, Ivan Vulić, Hannah Sterz, Anna Korhonen and Edoardo M. Ponti. Scaling Sparse Fine-Tuning to Large Language Models. Jan 2024.

Alan Ansell*, Marinela Parović*, Ivan Vulić, Anna Korhonen and Edoardo M. Ponti. Unifying Cross-Lingual Transfer across Scenarios of Resource Scarcity. In Proceedings of the 2023 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP 2023), Dec 2023. * = equal contribution.

Alan Ansell, Edoardo M. Ponti, Anna Korhonen and Ivan Vulić. Distilling Efficient Language-Specific Models for Cross-Lingual Transfer. In Findings of the 61st Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL 2023), July 2023.

Marinela Parović, **Alan Ansell**, Ivan Vulić and Anna Korhonen. Cross-Lingual Transfer with Target Language-Ready Task Adapters. In Findings of the 61st Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL 2023), July 2023.

Alan Ansell, Edoardo M. Ponti, Anna Korhonen and Ivan Vulić. Composable Sparse Fine-Tuning for Cross-Lingual Transfer. In Proceedings of the 60th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL 2022), May 2022.

Alan Ansell, Edoardo M. Ponti, Jonas Pfeiffer, Sebastian Ruder, Goran Glavaš, Ivan Vulić, and Anna Korhonen. MAD-G: Multilingual Adapter Generation for Efficient Cross-Lingual Transfer. In Findings of the 2021 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP 2021), Nov 2021.

Alan Ansell, Felipe Bravo-Marquez and Bernhard Pfahringer. PolyLM: Learning about Polysemy through Language Modeling. In Proceedings of the 16th Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics (EACL 2021), April 2021.