



Economic
and Social
Research Council



***Digital Gaming/Gambling Harms and Students: Financial Literacy and the
Transition to Adulthood***

ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship

Loughborough University and Young Gamers and Gamblers Education Trust

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 15 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the Universities of Warwick, Birmingham, Nottingham, Aston Leicester, Loughborough, De Montfort and Nottingham Trent.

Loughborough University as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner Young Gamers and Gamblers Education Trust to commence in October 2025. The PhD is based at the Department of Geography and Environment, Loughborough University (Primary Supervisor Prof. Sarah Mills) and co-supervised by Prof. Peter Kraftl (Secondary Supervisor) at the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (University of Birmingham).

This PhD examines a growing challenge of ‘living in a digital society’: how young people and consumers in the UK navigate the blurred boundaries between digital gaming and digital gambling. For example, there is growing evidence of the potential harms and impacts of digital loot boxes on children and families (Ash, Gordon and Mills, 2022; Mills, Ash and Gordon, 2024). However, the experiences of older teenagers and University students are a key but poorly understood group of interest given their transition to financial independence at this critical moment in the lifecourse. This PhD therefore focuses on digital gaming/gambling experiences of students and contributes to a growing but still relatively underdeveloped body of work on children/young people’s digital geographies. The PhD research will address the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of older teenagers and HE students in navigating financial and digital literacy, especially the transition from 17 to 18 years old?
2. How do HE students understand and experience gambling style systems in digital games?
3. What are the financial and social impacts of students’ digital gaming/gambling activities?
4. How can this new knowledge and understanding support Ygam’s programmes with universities?

The PhD project would collect and analyse original primary qualitative data to address the above. Namely, semi-structured interviews with students and professional services at UK HEIs. The PhD has embedded knowledge exchange via Ygam and will directly build on – and hopefully enhance – their existing ‘University and Student Engagement Programme’ and digital hub. The PhD also includes 3 x 1-week internships with Ygam for wider career development. The successful candidate would also join the [‘Digital Communities and Inclusion’](#) research cluster at Loughborough University.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#). Please upload an anonymised CV and cover letter as part of the online application process. Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide transcripts and two references.

Application deadline: Friday 21st February 2025

Interviews: Tuesday 11th March 2025 (Online)

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees at the home rate, a maintenance stipend, and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available to both home and international applicants. For further details, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

Informal enquiries about the research or Loughborough University prior to application can be directed to Professor Sarah Mills, S.Mills@lboro.ac.uk