



## **School of Computing, Engineering, and the Built Environment Edinburgh Napier University**

### **PHD STUDENT PROJECT**

#### **Funding and application details**

**Funding status:** Self funded students only

**Application instructions:**

Detailed instructions are available at <https://blogs.napier.ac.uk/scebe-research/available-phd-student-projects/>

*Prospective candidates are encouraged to contact the Director of Studies (see details below) to discuss the project and their suitability for it.*

#### **Project details**

**Supervisory Team:**

- DIRECTOR OF STUDY: Hanne Wagner (Email: [H.Wagner@napier.ac.uk](mailto:H.Wagner@napier.ac.uk))
- 2<sup>ND</sup> SUPERVISOR: Dimitrios Darzentas

**Subject Group:** Applied informatics

**Research Areas:** Human Computer Interaction or Videogames

**Project Title:** Playful engagement with Politics in the time of misinformation

**Project description:**

Background: Education and knowledge have long been considered core factors in explaining why individuals engage in political and civic activities (Galston, W.A., 2001, Ashley, Maksl and Craft, 2017). The emergence of the notion of “fake news” and increased targeted misinformation however make it more and more difficult to distinguish between credible sources of political information and those promoting alternative content, with potentially malicious intent (Pennycook and Rand, 2021; Munger et al, 2022). Concurrently, media consumption and communication habits are changing, moving towards less traditional and more fast-moving methods of information exchange and increasingly into an end-to-end encrypted space, in

which moderation and fact-checking become more difficult (Kamara et al., 2022, Kazemi et al., 2022).

**Aim:** This project aims to investigate novel digital ways and strategies to improve political engagement and political literacy, especially with a playful or game design informed approach. It will consider the most effective ways for distributing (political) knowledge in a changing world of media consumption and communication, while also asking how the credibility of information can be ascertained.

### **References:**

- [1] Ashley, S., Maksl, A, and Craft, S. (2017). News Media Literacy and Political Engagement: What's the Connection? *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 9(1), 79-98.
- [2] Galston, W. A. (2001). Political knowledge, political engagement, and civic education. *Annual review of political science*, 4(1), 217-234.
- [3] Kamara, S., Knodel, M., Llansó, E., Nojeim, G., Qin, L., Thakur, D., & Vogus, C. (2022). Outside looking in: Approaches to content moderation in end-to-end encrypted systems. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2202.04617*.
- [4] Kazemi, A., Garimella, K., Shahi, G. K., Gaffney, D., & Hale, S. A. (2022). Research note: Tiplines to uncover misinformation on encrypted platforms: A case study of the 2019 Indian general election on WhatsApp. *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*.
- [5] Munger, K., Egan, P. J., Nagler, J., Ronen, J., & Tucker, J. (2022). Political knowledge and misinformation in the era of social media: Evidence from the 2015 UK election. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(1), 107-127.
- [6] Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2021). The psychology of fake news. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 25(5), 388-402.

## **Candidate characteristics**

### **Education:**

A first-class honours degree, or a distinction at master level, or equivalent achievements in Computer Science, HCI, Political Science, Social Sciences, Digital Media and Communication or Psychology

### **Subject knowledge:**

- User-focus research methods
- Knowledge of or interest in politics and political education as well as digital literacy
- Game Studies or Game Design (or willingness to learn fundamentals of)

### **Essential attributes:**

- Competent in or willing to engage in multidisciplinary research
- Good written and oral communication skills
- Strong motivation, with evidence of prior independent research experience

### **Desirable attributes:**

- Practical experience in qualitative and/or quantitative research methods
- Awareness of issues and problems surrounding misinformation and 'fake news'