

**CMP6200 Individual Undergraduate Project**

**DIG6200 Individual Undergraduate Project**

**2019-20**

Full Project Proposal

Loot Boxes and their connection to gambling and gambling addiction

Computer Games Technology

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**IMPORTANT – PROJECT origin – please complete the appropriate section below**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Projects originated:** | **Please complete:** | |
| in second year module | Year 2 Module code / name |  |
| from Placement | Placement company name |  |
| from Research List | Name of Research Centre Name of Supervisor |  |
| from Industry List | Name of Company Name of Supervisor |  |
| from Tutor lists | Name of Tutor |  |
| by student only | Yes / No |  |
| If you have spoken to a member of staff regarding them supervising your please enter name here | | Chris Creed |

For initial approval and allocation of supervisors Sections 1, 2., 3 and 5 are the minimum sections that must be completed.

# Introduction

## Project Title

Loot Boxes and their connection to gambling and gambling addiction.

## Background

Loot boxes are quite a common practice in modern day video games. The idea is that the player can spend in-game currency, that can either be earned in game of purchased with real money, in order to open a ‘box’ which contains virtual rewards to be used within the game. This includes but not limited to new weapons, new vehicles, new costumes etc.

With these loot box systems becoming more popular it is a common thought that they are a form of gambling. These systems are believed to have the un-desired effect of instilling unhealthy mental behaviours that could lead to the users developing an addiction to gambling in other forms.

The idea for this project is to test not only how addictive these loot box systems are but also to see if there is any connection to other forms of gambling. This will be achieved by checking results gathered in this survey against the current known methods of detecting gambling addiction displayed by people.

## Key Themes/Topics

A key theme for this project is to investigate mental health and assess the impact of loot box systems within video games and what impact they have on the mental health of it’s uses.

The themes and topics of this project are as follows:

* Mental Health
* Gambling Addiction
* Loot Box Systems in Video Games

# Aims and Objectives

## Project Aim

The aim of the project is to find a connection between video game loot boxes and gambling and a gateway to gambling addiction.

## Project Objectives

* Research what gambling is and the factors that make a person have gambling addiction and how to collect data that correlates to this research, this should be done before any other research or work commences, within the first week of the project start date.
* Research existing implementation of loot boxes in video games in order to help create a loot box opening simulator by analysing current systems and replicating the look and feel to make the results as accurate as possible (Deadline - 2nd November 2019).
* Research current findings about the connection between video game loot box systems and gambling if any exists and extract the data that should be collected from this study in order to make sure findings are reliable and consistent (Deadline – 2nd November 2019).
* Create a loot boxing opening simulator in Unity Game Engine that gives the participant a set number of virtual coins and presents several tiers of loot boxes, each costing a different amount. The higher the amount, the more chance of better rewards.
* Measure the participants choices and record them in order to correlate between the results gathered and the results of the research into gambling and gambling addiction.
* Create an in-game virtual horse racing simulator that allows the participants to bet some or all their current virtual coins on the outcome of the virtual horse race in order to win more virtual coins.
* Create a physical reward system for participants of the tests that are linked directly to the virtual loot boxes within the loot box opening simulator, with the better virtual rewards giving better physical rewards.
* Evaluate the results and compare them to the research into gambling and gambling addiction, considering the factors that define a person as having a gambling addiction.
* Gather the results and show them in an appropriate format within the research paper to best illustrate the findings of the study.
* Create a research paper that explains everything about the study, looks at and references relevant literature, compiles and displays the results in a format easy to understand for people of any knowledge level and summarises the study.

# Rationale

## Rationale and benefits

Loot Boxes within video games have been a hot topic at current with many negative views on them. This research will aim to show whether these negative views are justified. This research will benefit video game developers and publishers to help determine if there are any negative effects due to loot boxes and will also benefit the consumers of video games that have loot boxes in them for the same reason

## Industry relevance

Loot boxes are one of the most highly debated features within the video games industry at present so research into them will help shine a light on the quite new and unknown topic.

The results of the research would affect video games companies and how they design the business model for their projects. Negative results could result in them choosing the remove the loot box model from their game whereas positive or even neutral results could show that with no negative effects that loot boxes are ok to include in their games.

Any video game developer or publisher that currently uses loot boxes or is looking to implement them in a future project could be approached to aid in this research and provide general support or possibly even be a client of the project.

## Research relevance

The project would support current industry research into loot boxes. Currently there is a lot of talk about loot boxes being a form of gambling, with this study there should be a better understanding of whether loot boxes create the same mental issues as gambling can. It will also see if having loot boxes in video games can cause people that play them (mainly young people but not excluding any age range) to form a gambling addition at some point in their life.

# Tasks and Methods

*A list of tasks detailing proposed activities and approach/possible solution(s) to the problem(s). These normally relate closely to the objectives and include consideration of the methods used to achieve each task. These are will also include ‘process’ items – what you need to actually do to meet each objective.*

* Objective 1
  + Task
  + Task
* Objective 2
* Objective 3

# Resources

For this project there will be very few resources required. A PC that has the Unity game engine installed will be required to create the loot box opening simulator that would be used with volunteers to gather results.

There is a physical reward system proposed to be used for this project in order to give more accurate results. For this, physical rewards would need to be purchased. This would be in the form of chocolates or sweets in order to give participants something physical to ‘gamble’ with. These would be low cost items to make sure the project is financially viable.

# Literature Search Methodology

When it comes to searching for literature to aid this study the words ‘Loot Boxes’ will widely be used to find relevant pieces about the loot box systems within video games.

There will also need to be plenty of research into both ‘gambling’ and ‘gambling addiction. The gambling research will investigate the definitions of what gambling is and how to identify something as gambling. The gambling addiction research will focus on what defines a person as begin addicted to gambling. It will look at what factors and symptoms to look out for when defining if actions taken can be derived as those of a person with gambling addiction or those with a higher chance of becoming a gambling addict.

A paper was published in 2019 which investigates virtual slot machines and whether the introduction of Virtual Reality has an impact on a person developing gambling addiction, this will be an initial key resource [1].

# Risk Assessments

## Health and Safety

*Any potential sources of health and safety risk should be identified and ways of eliminating the hazard discussed with your supervisor. This heading must be included. If you assess there to be no risks, there should be a statement to this effect. You do not need a full risk assessment at this time but will need to undertake appropriate risk assessments during the project.*

As users will be sat down in a comfy seat while participating in this study there are minimal health and safety issues.

## Project Risks

*Consider any issues that could prevent the project from being completed on time. This may include access to particular resources such as software, equipment, individual specialists, availability of people to test etc.*

# Ethics Review

*You need to consider whether there are any potential ethical issues that need to be planned for. You should consider how personal data may be handled in interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, tests etc. The areas for consideration are:*

* *Physical or Psychological Harm, discomfort or stress*
* *Participant/Client Confidentiality*
* *Consent – Data handling*
* *Conflicts of Interest*
* *Vulnerable participants*
* *Bringing the University into dispute*
* *issues in line with Government Prevent Strategy Guidance*

# Bibliography

1. IEEE Explore. 2019. Sebastian Oberdörfer. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/8798021>. [Accessed 18 October 2019].