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Project Title: The First Three Years
Pro00102288

Consent to Participate in Research Study

Dear Participant,

Earlier this year we invited you to complete a demographic survey to determine your eligibility to participate in a multi-year study on video game education and the transition to work for graduates of post-secondary games education programs. Based on your responses, we would like to invite you to participate in the full study.

Dr. Sean Gouglas, a Professor in Media and Technology Studies at the University of Alberta, is leading this study. In this study, we will follow participants for their first three years in the workforce following graduation from a post-secondary program in a video game-related discipline. We are interested in what university experiences best help prepare students for the game industry, how new graduates negotiate the industry, and how employment practices at different games companies may support or hinder the success of entry-level employees.

This study will last for 5 years and participation involves several activities. Because of the length of the commitment to participation, we ask you to review the steps of the study listed below and ensure that you are willing to participate in all mandatory components of the research before providing your consent to participate.

Components of the Study:

Interviews: Prior to the completion of your degree, you will be interviewed by a member of our research team. The interview should last approximately one hour, and will cover information related to your post-secondary education experiences, including whether you participated in internships or co-ops, your area of study, and the kinds of coursework and activities you undertook while in university or college. We will also discuss your career goals and any prior paid or voluntary game development experience. This part of the research

study is an essential component for participation in the study, though you can choose to skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

In each of the three subsequent years of the study (ie. 2023, 2024, and 2025) the research team will contact you to schedule an annual follow-up interview. This interview will last approximately one hour, and will cover information related to your professional and career developments over the past year, including successes, challenges, and your reflections on your experiences. These interviews are essential components for participation in the study, though you can choose to skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Interviews will be conducted, and audio recorded using Zoom. Zoom recordings will be saved locally prior to being uploaded to our secure server. At no point will recordings be saved to the Zoom cloud. Interview audio will be automatically transcribed using Otter.ai. Transcripts of interviews will be promptly downloaded and removed from Otter.ai as they are generated, however, Otter.ai will briefly hold audio and written transcripts of interviews. If you have any concerns about the use of these technologies, we invite you to consult their respective privacy policies (Zoom: [explore.zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy.html](https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy.html), Otter.ai: blog.otter.ai/privacy-policy/). At no point will any video be recorded. Alternative arrangements can be made in the case of participants who are uncomfortable with audio recording.

When information is transmitted over the internet privacy cannot be guaranteed. There is always a risk your responses may be intercepted by a third party (e.g., government agencies, hackers). Further, while study researchers will not collect or use IP addresses or other information which could link your participation to your computer or electronic devices without informing you, there is a small risk of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. If you are concerned about this, we would be happy to make alternative arrangements (where possible) for you to participate, perhaps via telephone. Please note that it is the expectation that participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a session.

Surveys: Prior to each annual interview, you will complete a 10-minute survey that will help us prepare for your interview. These surveys will ask questions about your current employment as well as any important professional events or transitions that took place during the previous year. The survey will also ask your age, gender and ethnicity which may be important factors in understanding your experiences. These surveys are essential components for participation in the study, though you can choose to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. The data is collected through the confidential online platform REDCap, which houses its data on servers located in Canada and is subject to laws in that

country as related to privacy and access to information. RedCap had been vetted and approved by the University of Alberta and, unlike commercial survey platforms (e.g., Qualtrics, Survey Monkey etc.), it does not collect any participant data (i.e. IP addresses) without their permission.

Public Social Media Posts: We would like to review your Twitter feed and LinkedIn profile for employment-related posts and career developments so that we can be better informed about your career. While these media platforms are generally public, we would like to ensure you are aware of our intentions to review this material. You may also submit a current copy of your CV/resume as a supplement or if you do not have a social media profile. Providing these is optional for participation in the study.

If you participate in the interviews and surveys but choose not to grant access to your other information, you may still remain in the study. Only the interviews and surveys are essential to participation in the study.

Compensation

You will be compensated \$50 CAD for each year you remain in the study. This is defined as participation in the annual surveys and interviews. Total compensation will be a maximum of \$200 CAD for participants who participate in all four study milestones (entry, end yr 1, end yr 2, end yr 3). You will be paid annually. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will still be compensated for the study milestones in which you participated.

Confidentiality

Protecting your privacy is our first priority. Only the research team will have access to any information that could identify you, including your name, contact information, Twitter and/or LinkedIn profiles, age, gender, ethnicity and information about your educational institution, employer and position. This is called 'identifying information', and it will be removed from our dataset before we move the information from our secure database. In place of identifying information, we will assign a unique study number to your data. A master list connecting your name and contact information to your unique study number will be stored separately from your data.

An anonymized version of the data will be shared with our research partners, the Higher Education Video Game Alliance (HEVGA, see hevga.org), the Education group of the International Game Developers Association (IGDA, see igda.org/sigs/game-education/), and the International Game Developers Association Foundation (IGDAF, see

igdafoundation.org/). The anonymized version of our data will not include any information that could be used to identify you, and some potentially identifying information may be made more general so that it provides information without specifics (for example, rather than the name of your employer, we might say 'large AAA game studio', or 'small indie'). These organizations will receive a dataset that includes statistical summaries from the anonymized social media analysis, general demographic information, and statistical summaries of employment trends amongst graduates. No identifying information will be passed along. A copy of this anonymized dataset will also be permanently archived in the University of Alberta's institutional repository, ERA (era.library.ualberta.ca/).

We may use direct quotations from your interviews in eventual publications. These will be fully anonymous (using only your study number). We may also use excerpts from public-facing materials from participants, such as LinkedIn or Twitter profiles. These will only be published in paraphrased format, such that the exact wording used by the participant could not be traced back to them.

Only the research team will have access to the information collected in this project. Your name will not appear in any reports of this research. You have a right to review a copy of any survey, questionnaire, checklist, etc. that is being administered and we will send you a copy of your data each year of the study.

Any research assistants involved with this project will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants.

Any other research personnel (e.g., transcribers) will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement that prohibits them from conveying any details about the data collected during this project to anyone other than the research team members for this project.

Risks

Participation in this project is voluntary and involves no unusual risks to you. The interviews will ask you to reflect on structural and organizational barriers that may have impacted your career success and this may result in negative emotional reactions. You can refuse to participate, skip questions, take a break, or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequences. We will not disclose your participation in the project. You may disclose your participation in the project at any time (on social media for example), though such a course of action may increase public awareness of comments made about employment in the industry. By consenting to participate in this study you are in no way waiving your legal rights.

Data Use, Storage and Withdrawal

Data will be kept for 7 years following completion of the research study and will remain in secure storage during that time. You are entitled to a copy of the final report of this study. Results from this research study may be used for research articles, presentations, and teaching purposes. For all uses, data will be handled in compliance with the University Standards.

You have a right to review a copy of any survey, questionnaire, checklist, etc. that is being administered and we will send you a copy of your anonymized data each year of the study. If you consent, we will send this data via email. We cannot guarantee secure data transfer via email, but we will take steps to mitigate risk including the use of password protected documents in an encrypted email and the deletion of emails containing data files immediately after they are sent. After we send you a copy of your yearly data you will have 30 days to tell us if you wish to withdraw any of it. After that point, your data for the year cannot be withdrawn. Withdrawal of data in one year does not prohibit you from continuing your participation in other years.

Summary

There are several very clear rights that you are entitled to as a participant in any research conducted by a researcher from the University of Alberta. You have the right:

- To not participate.
- To withdraw at any time without prejudice to pre-existing entitlements, and to continuing and meaningful opportunities for deciding whether or not to continue to participate.
- To opt out without penalty and any collected data withdrawn from the database and not included in the study.
- To privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality.
- To safeguards for security of data (data are to be kept for a minimum of 7 years following completion of research).
- To the disclosure of the presence of any apparent or actual conflict of interest on the part of the researcher(s) to the participant.
- To a copy of any final report that may be a result of the collected data.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.

This study has also been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #42377). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics at 1-519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or reb@uwaterloo.ca.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may also contact The Office of Human Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, 1-844-720-9816, email: ethics@uwo.ca. This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies at Western University and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential. Delegated institutional representatives of Western University and its Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research in accordance with regulatory requirements.

This research has additionally received ethics review and approval by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Consent

As identified above, there are several components of the study to which you may or may not consent; only the first two are required. You may opt in or out of different components of the study in the future while staying enrolled.

Do you consent to:

- Participate in annual audio-recorded video call interviews with members of the research team? (required)
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Participate in annual online surveys? (required)
☐ Yes ☐ No

- Allow the research team to collect posts, follower, and other network data from your professional/public Twitter account? (optional)
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable (don't have Twitter)
- Allow the research team to collect updates, connections, and other network data from your LinkedIn account? (optional)
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable (don't have LinkedIn)
- Annually share your current CV/resume with the research team? (optional)
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Allow the research team to include anonymous direct quotations from the material you provide in future publications (optional)
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Allow the research team to send a deidentified copy of my yearly survey responses and interview transcripts in an encrypted email.
☐ Yes ☐ No

You can print a copy of this letter for your records

Enter your name and signature to provide consent:

Name:

Signature: