

**Application: M4C2022**

**Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership**

**Application Form**

## Your Proposed Project

For applicants to the Open Doctoral Competition: Please provide details of your proposed project. Read the Guidance Notes to help you. For applicants to the Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) competition: Please provide details of the purpose and reasons for undertaking research on the collaborative project. Read the Guidance Notes to help you.

**Please provide a project title for your proposed programme of research**

Engagement, Learning and Creative Interpretation: The Videogame in the Museum Sector

### **Project Proposal (max.500 words)**

Please outline as relevant to the stage of your research at the time of applying, and with reference (e.g., Jones, 2017) to existing literature in the field:

The **context** of your project (i.e., the research or practice background to the problem/challenge/research gap you will investigate).

The **research question(s)** it will answer.

The **method(s)** you will use to investigate your research question(s).

The **impact(s)** your project could make in terms of an original contribution to knowledge in the field(s), and beyond academia (e.g., in professional and creative practice, industry, etc).

An **indicative structure/timeline** for your project across the duration of the award you are applying for.

CDA applicants will want to consider the **context** and **research questions** slightly differently, please see the guidance notes for details.

This project will critically and creatively explore the prospective role of videogames in the museum sector, focussing specifically on their potential as tools for creative interpretation and through this, education and engagement. Critically examining current thinking on learning and interpretation in both the museum sector and the games industry, I intend to explore how such concepts can be linked, reviewing literature and games from both fields. Considered in relation to the emergence of a digitally literate generation (Parry 2007) and drawing on current scholarship in playful museum learning (Fraser and Coulson 2012, Derry 2010) I will explore how videogames might encourage thoughtful exploration of physical museum objects, and how they may provide an alternative platform for interpreting intangible forms of heritage. The main areas of focus are to:

- Consider the evolution and understanding of learning and interaction through creative interpretation within museums and explore how this can be integrated into videogames as a medium.
- Explore the concept of playful learning, how people learn from videogames, and the implications of this for the museum sector.
- Demonstrate how technological advances are overcoming the difficulties museums face in creating digital interpretation tools, especially in-house.
- Challenge the ways visitors and museum professionals understand and interact with videogames in a museum context. A creative aspect of my research will be to undertake the development and design of videogames with a professional museum partner as exemplars of critical reflective practice.

This research is situated in the context of two separate disciplines, engaging with the museum sector and the videogame industry. Whilst the potential for a relationship between museums and videogames has been touched upon (Cutting 2011, Flowers 2011) there is little detailed, critical study into how videogames might innovate interpretation as opposed to acting as platforms for traditional information transmission. Instead, development in this area takes the form of practical projects such as GEN, a game by National Museums Scotland, although the progress in videogame scholarship (Bogost 2011) is yet to truly impact upon these projects. Equally, the videogame industry is now recognising its potential for innovation through an emerging body of critical literature (Koster 2005). Such thinking can be evidenced in the announcement of an education-focussed 'discovery mode' for Assassin's Creed: Origins (2017), created in collaboration with historians. Building upon and drawing connections from this, the project will offer insight into the similarities between museums and videogames first recognised by Kapell and Elliot (2013) and how they can be integrated into museum practice. Encompassing the fields of Museum Studies and Games Studies, as well as incorporating museum establishments and the games industry, this research is capable of building interdisciplinary relationships across both academia and professional practice. The project engages with concepts of the cultural relevance of games, and their roles in learning and play. I am also excited by the possibility of working with the Nottingham Castle Trust during their major redevelopment, potentially contributing towards their interpretation through my research as they explore the possibilities of gaming and play in their new galleries.

### **AHRC Subject Remit**

Please review the AHRC subject remit guidelines and indicate as far as you can a primary research area and, if applicable, a secondary research area; these should both be from Level 2 categories.

<https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/research/subjectcoverage/ahrc-disciplines/>

Primary (Level 1): [Cultural and Museum studies](#)

Secondary (Level 2): [Media and Communication studies](#)

### **Ethics (max.200 words)**

All research projects **must** comply with relevant research ethics and integrity guidelines. Please review your proposed home institution's guidelines and outline:

Any **Ethical considerations** in the context of your project (e.g. in relation to research participants/stakeholders, data collection and storage, archive use, copyright, intellectual property etc.); and

How you will **address potential ethical concerns** (e.g., informed consent, anonymisation, ethics training needs for yourself and/or participants, identification of support services etc.)

I do not anticipate any ethical or intellectual property issues during the research, as I do not intend on working directly with the public. Should any arise, I will consult and work to the standards of the NTU Research Ethics policy.

### **Research Activities (max. 200 words)**

Complete this section if your proposed project will require you to undertake fieldwork, study visits or practice (beyond routine dissemination and engagement events). For each activity, please provide indicative details about:

**Where** the activity will take place (i.e., country, institute, archive, centre etc)

**How long** the activity will take (i.e., days, weeks)

**Why** the activity is required (i.e., how will the activity support you to complete your research? e.g., enable data collection, stakeholder engagement, language practice, test theoretical argument etc).

**What costs** are likely to be incurred (travel, accommodation, room hire, training costs)

**Contingency plans** in the event that activity cannot go ahead due to risk assessment outcomes (e.g., restrictions due to COVID-19).

Games For Change Festival – USA (2 days) I will attend the Games For Change Festival and, in particular, the festival's Games for Learning Summit to access the latest thinking and dialogue in videogame learning and education.

The Strong: The National Museum of Play -USA (3 days) I will visit The Strong: The National Museum of Play in order to access their extensive collection of educational videogames. I will access their archival collection of material relating to the development of videogames, their impact on culture, and their effect on how people play, learn, and connect with each other.

The Victoria and Albert Museum – London (1 day) I will visit the V&A's upcoming exhibition 'videogames' to examine the collection and to explore the aspects of the exhibition relating to the culture of videogames, changes in their development, and their impact upon their audiences.

The British Library – London (2 days) I will visit the BL to access and discuss their digital holdings relating to videogames.

The British Museum – London (1 day) I will visit the BM to explore their work facilitating and undertaking the creation of museum-based games, such as Time Explorers and the Museum craft initiative.

### **Extended Funding (max. 200 words)**

A standard award is for 3.5 years full-time. An award can be extended up to a maximum of 6 months full-time or 12 months part-time.

Requests for extended funding can be made where there is a rationale for complex or extended training, skills acquisition (e.g., research cannot be completed without acquisition of new, high-level skills), extended research/fieldwork/extended practice activities, visits, or extended practice or placement needs (e.g., due to significant challenges with collaboration, access and/or logistics).

Please see application guidelines for further details. All such requests must make a case for the need and explain how it is integral to your research.

Complete this section if you anticipate that you will require extended funding. Please provide details of the:

#### **Training/skills development, operational challenges or extended practice activities you anticipate.**

Planned **destinations and purpose** of visits for fieldwork or placements.

and **indicative length** of additional time you will require. The allocation of extended funding will be confirmed after the first mid-year review.

Not applicable

### Person and Preparedness

If applicable, please provide details about your qualifications.

#### **Undergraduate Degree**

Subject History

Degree BA

Classification First

Completion Date xxxx

#### **Postgraduate Degree (Master's or equivalent international qualification)**

If you are not studying for/do not hold a Master's but have equivalent professional experience, please proceed to the next questions and provide details there.

Subject Museum and Heritage Development

Qualification MA

Classification Pass with Distinction

Completion Date xxxx

### **Previous study and Experience (max.500 words)**

Describe how you are ready to undertake your proposed doctoral research project based on your previous study and experience. You might comment on: [max. 500 words].

**Knowledge and skills** developed through previous study (e.g., undergraduate/postgraduate studies (including specific modules), certifications, training etc) and/or **professional and creative practice** (e.g., employment, research assistantships, consultancy, residencies, performances, curations, internships etc).

**Specialised training** (e.g., languages, ICT, methods, EDI etc).

**Academic and professional achievements** (e.g., awards, scholarships, publications etc).

If appropriate, you should also identify any training you might need to undertake or skills you might need to gain in order to complete your project. These may include:

**Language** proficiency

**Research methods** in data collection, such as interviewing, archive use, and associated ethical practice.

**Data management and processing**, particularly where specific software is required

**Project management**, including in practice and curation.

Through my undergraduate and postgraduate studies, I have the necessary academic foundation for this project. I have completed specialist work in museum studies, looking at modes of communication and presentation to maximise engagement from diverse audiences, and it is on this knowledge that I will build my project. I have a consistent record of exceptional academic achievement, gaining a first class undergraduate degree and distinction in my post-graduate studies: the assessment for these awards includes the practice of extended writing, successful completion of field work, and creative practice, including photography, film and videogame design, as well as project planning and completion. In my Masters research project, I designed and developed a narrative videogame based on the collections at Newstead Abbey, which enabled players to find different routes through the collection; this was accompanied by a critical piece locating the game in current discussions of the relationship between play, videogames and museum practice. It was awarded a distinction grade.

Since graduating, I have gained extensive professional experience in the museum sector: first with Mansfield Museum as their Arts Council funded Outreach and 'Pop-Up Museum' Intern, and second as a freelance heritage assistant with Culture Syndicates. During the former I gained experience in project management, planning and delivering two outreach events at the museum, one of which was based upon a temporary exhibition. Preparation for the events included working to a budget, designing and distributing marketing materials, and fostering new or building upon existing partnerships with local community businesses and companies. I also assisted the Education Officer with the running of education sessions for Years 1-6 to improve my understanding of museum learning. During the second, I have been involved in a variety of museum and heritage projects from collections care and inventory to audience development. Frequently working with museum and heritage partners including the National Trust and Nottingham City Galleries and Museums, I have also gained further experience in event and project management acting as administrator for the Historic House Group seminar and in

professional report writing and data analysis. I would hope to extend my professional experience while studying by undertaking a placement in the museum sector, for instance with Nottingham Castle and Museums or with the National Videogame Museum.

While I already possess the necessary coding skills to design and build games, I would value the opportunity to extend and develop these skills during my studies, and to upgrade my knowledge of alternative approaches. Digital technology is constantly changing, and staying abreast of these in my area of research will be vital to the success of the project and my future career.

**Any other information (max.150 words)**

Is there any other information you would like to bring to the panel's attention? For instance, you might wish to note extenuating circumstances, such as illness, which have affected your previous performance.

Not applicable