

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	SHANG ZHAO			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☒	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Institute of Education and Humanities			
4	Campus:	SWANSEA			
5	E-mail address:	2405657@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07962640959			
For students:					
7	Student Number:	2405657			
8	Programme of Study:	Full time EDD Doctorate in Education programme			
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Doctor Catherine Morgan			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes	☒
		No	☐
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants: 1. Psychological stress and emotional distress: Adolescents may feel hesitant to discuss their experiences related to cyberbullying, online sexual harassment, and other forms of media usage, particularly if they have never shared such experiences with anyone before. 2. Risk of personal data leakage: Data collection may contain personally identifiable information (e.g., name, school, or family background), which, if not properly protected, could lead to the exposure of participants' identities. At the same time, because research involves cross-border studies, data may face legal or technical compliance issues when transferred across borders.	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to participants:</i> 1. I will clearly state in the study description that participants can choose not to answer specific questions or withdraw from the study at any time without facing negative consequences. Additionally, I will collaborate with professional mental health organizations to prevent psychological harm to minors and provide contact information for psychological support resources at the end of the questionnaire or interview. 2. I will remove all obvious direct identifiers after data collection and replace the real identity of respondents with a code known only to me. When faced with data storage and transmission issues, I will ensure that data is stored in encrypted devices and transmitted through secure channels, while respecting the privacy protection regulations of three countries, including but not limited to China's Personal Information Protection Law and Europe's GDPR.	

	3.Group Dynamics in Focus Groups: When conducting group interviews, participants may experience conflict or discomfort due to sensitive topics, differences in opinions, etc. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	3. I will inform interviewees of a clear code of conduct prior to the group interview to ensure respect between interviewees, and avoid potential conflicts when leading the discussion, and give interviewees a choice of interviews, and set up separate interviews for students who do not want to participate in the group interview. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	Procedures and support measures: This study may involve sensitive topics such as cybersexual harassment or cyberbullying. Participants will be informed of the potential study content and the emotional reactions it may elicit through an information sheet prior to the start of the study. Support resources: The researcher will provide participants with the following resources: Save the Children Finland hotline and Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL) in Finland provide support services for young people with online issues. The UK's NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) provides 24-hour online support Childline (0800 1111), and China's 12355 Youth Helpdesk and the China Youth Internet Association provide educational and support services for cyberbullying and sexual harassment. The research team will also provide educational and support services for participants who need them. The research team will also provide advice on mental health support for participants who need it. Handling of sensitive information: If potential or actual violations of the law (e.g., cyber sexual harassment) are discovered during the study, the researcher will report them to the relevant organisations in accordance with the legal requirements of the participant's location, and provide participants with a full explanation of the process and support. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	

4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: 1. Risks to personal health and safety: The researcher may need to travel to Finland and the UK to collect research data, and will need to work in unfamiliar environments facing language barriers, cultural differences, and unexpected situations. 2. Risk of physical harm: The researcher may experience negative emotional reactions such as sudden emotional outbursts from participants, leading to potential physical conflict. 3. Risk of being accused of harm or misconduct: Because this study involves minors and sensitive topics such as cyberbullying and cybersexual harassment, the researcher may be misinterpreted as invading privacy, leaking information, or triggering emotional harm, and may be	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:</i> 1. I will familiarise myself with the laws and regulations, cultural background and general safety knowledge of each place in advance before travelling. At the same time, liaise with local organisations, schools or communities in advance and establish cooperative relationships to ensure the safety and convenience of the visit. In addition, always choose public places to conduct interviews to ensure personal safety. Interviews online should ensure the security of the platform to avoid data leakage. 2. For offline interviews involving sensitive topics, I will learn about the physical and emotional conditions of the interviewees beforehand and work with mental health professionals to identify high-risk participants and avoid risks. Meanwhile, I will reserve ways to deal with conflicts before the interview. 3. I will strictly adhere to research ethics guidelines (e.g. BERA and UWTSD ethics policies) and ensure that all participants clearly understand the research process and their rights. In addition, record all communication and consent documents using standardised informed consent and

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6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	<i>Risk to the environment:</i> 1. Use of Paper: The use of paper questionnaires or materials in the research process may lead to unnecessary waste of paper, indirectly increasing the consumption of forest resources. In addition, improperly disposed of waste paper may add to the burden of landfills, further impacting carbon emissions and environmental health. 2. Travel to Meetings: Face-to-face interviews or meetings may require travelling across regions (especially for internationally collaborative cross-national studies), resulting in a significant carbon footprint. The travelling process may have a negative impact on the environment due to increased aircraft and vehicle emissions or energy consumption. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to environment:</i> 1. I will make more use of digital forms, such as online questionnaires and digital devices to collect and consolidate data in lieu of paper documents. If paper must be used, recycled and reclaimed paper will be chosen and will not be over-printed. Also recycle paper after it has been used. 2. I will ensure that unless necessary, I will give priority to online platforms such as Zoom, Tencent Meeting, Microsoft Teams, etc. to conduct interviews or discussions and reduce the need for travelling. If offline interviews are really necessary, I will give priority to public transport to reduce per capita carbon emissions. We will also optimise our travel plans, for example, by scheduling the Finnish and UK studies in the same period of time to reduce carbon emissions from flights. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	By explaining to participants the purpose of the study and how the data they provide contributes to the study ensures the transparency of this study and guarantees that the study fulfils its strict ethical responsibilities, the required feedback includes the following points: 1. Timing and planning: inform participants when and how they will be able to find out about the results once data collection is complete. 2. Form and content: informing the results in a way that is easily understood by the respondents, for example, in this study the presentation and summary report on the study for the adolescents and the education stakeholders, because of the difference in comprehension between the two, it is important to differentiate between the two in terms of form. 3. Confirmation in qualitative research: If the respondents are quoted directly in the research report, it is necessary to check the quotes with the respondents to ensure that the direct quotes are correct in order to improve the accuracy of the research. 4. Responding to questions: Provide appropriate answers to respondents' questions and concerns about the results in order to establish a good relationship of trust with the respondents and to ensure the integrity of the ethical guidelines. 5. Acknowledgement: To express gratitude to the respondents for their participation in the study and to recognise their contribution to the study as a sign of respect. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	How information will be provided to potential participants: A detailed Information Sheet will be provided to all potential participants prior to the start of data collection. The sheet will include the following: ● Purpose and objectives of the study. ● The person conducting the study and their contact information. ● Specific tasks to be completed by the participants. ● How the data will be handled, including how it will be stored, analysed and reported. ● The guarantees related to confidentiality and anonymity and their limitations.

- The voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any time.
- Any risks or benefits that may be associated with the research.

Arrangements for providing consent: Participants will be required to sign a written informed consent form with the above information to confirm that they fully understand the study and are participating voluntarily. In the case of online surveys, consent will be obtained electronically via an on-screen consent statement prior to the start of the survey, e.g., by clicking on the 'Next' button, the participant is providing consent.

Handling of special cases: Minors or participants with limited cognitive abilities: consent will be obtained through a guardian or legal representative and appropriate forms of assent will be sought from the minor, e.g., through verbal confirmation or symbols (e.g., a card system of smiley/sad faces). Where it is difficult to obtain written consent: when dealing with participants who are unable to provide written consent, verbal consent will be used and the consent process will be recorded to ensure compliance with data protection legislation. For example, the consent process will be audio recorded and clearly stated before the interview begins.

Records compliant with data protection legislation: All records of consent will be kept appropriately in accordance with relevant data protection legislation (e.g. GDPR). Written consent forms and electronic records will be stored securely and access will be restricted to authorised personnel only. Consent documentation will clearly state what the data will be used for and the participant's right to withdraw consent at any time.

(this box should expand as you type)

3 Confidentiality / Anonymity

Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.

Arrangements to ensure anonymity: In all forms of publication of the study, information about participants will be anonymised to ensure that they cannot be identified. Methods to ensure anonymisation include removing all direct identifiers (e.g. name, address), modifying indirect identifiers (e.g. generalising or substituting occupations, company names or age ranges) and assigning unique codes to each participant to keep track of them in data analyses without revealing their identity.

Arrangements to ensure confidentiality: Information provided by all participants will be kept strictly confidential, with access restricted to the researcher and supervising professor, while data will be stored on encrypted electronic devices and paper documents will be stored in a controlled physical environment (e.g., locked filing cabinets). And, data will only be shared in a generalised or aggregated form, such as statistical results or thematic analyses, and no personal information will be made public.

where anonymity cannot be provided: Anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed as the interviewees of this study include policy makers and R&D practitioners whose positions or roles may be apparent in the research outputs. Therefore, as far as possible, the research outputs will be referred to by job title, e.g. education policy specialist, curriculum development engineer, etc., rather than by name, in order to minimise the likelihood of identification.

At the same time, clear written consent should be obtained prior to the study, specifically identifying that *‘I am aware that due to the specific nature of my position or role, it may not be possible to achieve complete anonymity in the outputs of the study. I understand and agree that the research team will use my title in lieu of my personal identity and use the information for academic research purposes while respecting the principle of confidentiality.’* to ensure that respondents are informed and consent. It was also guaranteed that participants were aware of their right to withdraw consent for the use of unpublished data at any time.

(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 “GDPR” and the Data Protection Act 2018 “DPA”)?	YES	NO
1	“Personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☒	☐
If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:			
2	The research activity involves personal data as defined by GDPR and the DPA. This includes participant names, demographic information (e.g., age, gender, educational background), and audio recordings collected during semi-structured interviews and focus groups. These data are critical for my doctoral research, as they provide detailed insights into participants’ perspectives and experiences regarding media literacy education. The personal data will allow for meaningful analysis and interpretation, particularly in exploring patterns and themes relevant to the research objectives. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	“Special category data” means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),	☒	☐
If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:			
4	The research involves asking participants about their physical or mental health or condition. This is essential to explore how adolescents' current states — such as their susceptibility to internet addiction or experiences with cyberbullying—may relate to media literacy education outcomes. Understanding these aspects is critical for identifying patterns and factors that influence their online behavior and engagement. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☒	☐
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☒	☐
8	Home or other personal computers?	☐	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	Data Storage: All data will be stored on an encrypted USB drive and OneDrive cloud storage. Both storage locations are password-protected, ensuring access is restricted to the researcher and supervisor. Backup Procedures: Regular backups will be performed to OneDrive to prevent data loss. The USB drive serves as a secondary secure backup. Encryption: The USB drive is fully encrypted to protect the data in case of theft or loss. OneDrive also employs end-to-end encryption to safeguard data in transit and at rest. Password Protection: Access to both storage devices and accounts is restricted by strong, unique passwords, which will not be shared with unauthorized individuals. Anonymisation and Pseudonymisation: During the analysis phase, personal identifiers (e.g., names, demographic details) will be replaced with pseudonyms to protect participant identities. Data will be anonymized wherever feasible to further safeguard privacy. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	☒
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☒	☐

18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Dr. Catherine Morgan , Shang Zhao		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	Shang Zhao		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	The research data will be securely stored on an encrypted USB drive and OneDrive, both of which are password-protected. Access is restricted to the researcher and supervisor. Data will be stored digitally for 5 years and securely deleted afterward. It will not be archived as its use is limited to this study. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	no		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒