



Job Description and Person Specification

Summary

Job title:	Research Associate in Developmental Psychology
Area:	Psychology
Reference:	EHA2665-0926
Grade and Salary:	£32080 - £32080 per annum, pro rata. Grade 6, Points 23 - 26
Contract Type:	Fixed Term for 3 years.
Hours:	Full Time (36.25 hours per week)
Location:	Campus based role, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 4QP
Accountable to:	Head of Research/ Head of Department
Reporting to:	Principal Investigator/ Research Project Lead

About the Role

The Psychology Department at Edge Hill University is seeking to appoint a **full time Research Associate** to deliver a 3-year ESRC-funded research project lead by Dr Calum Hartley (PI) in collaboration with Dr John Shaw (Co-I, Edge Hill University), Dr Mengyi Gong (Co-I, Lancaster University), and partners at Ygam, Internet Matters, and ADHD UK.

The project you will be working on will be investigating developmental trajectories for primary school children's engagement with video games, microtransactions, and loot boxes. 92% of UK children aged 5-11 years play video games and one-in-three purchase in-game items, spending £26 per month on average. In-game purchases ("microtransactions") involve exchanging currency for specific virtual items or the opportunity to open enticing digital containers offering randomised rewards ("loot boxes"). Coercive pressure is exerted on children to engage with microtransactions through time-limited availability, rarity, and social desirability of virtual items. Crucially, loot boxes share psychological and mechanistic similarities with gambling and are concurrently linked with mental health difficulties in adolescents. The risks posed by loot boxes may be particularly great for neurodivergent children, including those with ADHD and autism, who often spend more time playing video games than neurotypical peers.

Research has yet to determine how engagement with loot boxes develops, how they impact on children's broader psychological development, or who is most vulnerable. Generating this knowledge is vital to safeguard children and promote digital literacy for families navigating increasingly commercialised gaming environments.

Developed in partnership with the charities YGam, Internet Matters, and ADHD UK, our project addresses four critical objectives:

- 1)** Establish developmental trajectories and predictors for engagement with video games and loot boxes in primary school children, including those with ADHD and autism.
- 2)** Determine how children's engagement with video games and loot boxes impacts on their long-term wellbeing, including mental and physical health, risk taking, and gambling vulnerability.
- 3)** Examine whether caregivers' engagement with video games and loot boxes longitudinally predicts similar behaviours in their children.

4) Understand the factors driving children's valuation of in-game items (avatar skins) and their motivations for opening loot boxes.

This project will significantly advance how children's engagement with video games and microtransactions are conceptualised and studied within the family system. Our results will determine developmental pathways and implications associated with children's and caregivers' gaming, providing a vital foundation for much-needed evidence-based interventions and policy recommendations. Collaboration with our partner organisations will guarantee community and stakeholder engagement throughout the project, and ensure impact through digital dissemination of key findings, development of online resources for families and educators, policy action briefings, and knowledge-exchange events.

About You

The successful candidate will:

- Have experience conducting research involving in-person interactions with neurotypical and neurodivergent children.
- Have excellent verbal and written communication skills and the skills required to manage research projects effectively.
- A good understanding of ethics and data protection regulations in relation to research activity involving children.
- Be willing to engage in Open Science practices, including pre-registering research and data sharing.
- Be willing to disseminate research to non-academic audiences and stakeholders.

About Us

Founded in 1885 as the first non-denominational teacher training college for women, Edge Hill was born from a belief that education could – and should – change lives. It's a university that has always been shaped by those willing to move forward, even when it meant standing apart. Today, Edge Hill is a pioneering university defined by action, where staff play a vital role in connecting students to real skills, real networks and real futures.

The University's teaching, research and innovation transforms lives, creates opportunity and strengthens society. 62% of the University's research was classed as 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent' in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework.

It has over 12,000 students studying at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. As a university based in the heart of the North West, it takes a connected

approach in bringing together education, business, public services and communities.

Edge Hill was awarded University of the Year for Student Experience (Daily Mail University Guide 2026) and 5th in the UK Overall (Uni Compare 2026). In 2024, it was the first University to achieve Ofsted Outstanding for all phases of its Initial Teacher Training provision under the new Inspection Framework.

The University aims to create an environment in which colleagues can thrive, adapt and lead in a changing world. With a strong focus on continuous improvement, inclusion and wellbeing, the University places staff, students and communities at the heart of its success. For staff, this means the opportunity to contribute to a values-led institution, work collaboratively across disciplines and services, and build a rewarding career in an ambitious university community.

Continued investment in campus facilities and digital infrastructure supports an ambitious and inclusive working environment. This includes a £17.4m Life Sciences Building, alongside a £35m investment in brand new accommodation and a Students' Union building which opened at the beginning of October 2024. It has also been recognised as one of the UK's best green spaces for 14 successive years (Green Flag Award 2025).

The University is committed to providing staff and students with accessible, high-quality services, underpinned by innovation, collaboration and a culture that values people.

The Edge Hil Psychology Department is a busy teaching and research active Department. It is home to a friendly group of over 40 Academic staff, with teams of Research and Professional Services and Technical staff. The Department supports a large cohort of Undergraduate students; a thriving group of Masters and Postgraduate research students; and a wide range of research projects including several cross-institution grants.

Further information about the Department is available at: [Psychology- Edge Hill University](#)

Duties and Responsibilities

The post holder will be expected to:

1. Contribute to conducting a UKRI-funded longitudinal research project investigating developmental trajectories for primary school children's engagement with video games, microtransactions, and loot boxes over two years. We will be assessing (a) how individual differences influence variability (e.g. cognitive traits, behavioural characteristics, and neurodivergence – specifically autism and ADHD), (b) impacts on long-term wellbeing (e.g. mental health, physical health, and risk-taking), and (c) to what extent caregivers' engagement with video games, microtransactions, and loot boxes influences similar behaviours in their children. The project will also involve delivering computer-based experimental tasks.
2. Undertake participant recruitment for the Project, and maintenance of a confidential participant database. You will manage confidential information provided by participants in accordance with University and Funder's guidelines, and deal with ethical and administrative issues relating to the Project and efficiently manage and catalogue large volumes of data in accordance with the Project's Data Management Plan.
3. Undertake participant timetabling for studies, contacting children's caregivers, and reception duties for families arriving for studies.
4. Undertake data collection, working to established Department protocols, including safeguarding policies; and contribute to data coding and analysis.
5. Contribute to the dissemination of the research, including research publications and conference presentations.
6. Contribute to project reports and presentations to stakeholders where appropriate.
7. Contribute to and support general participant recruitment activity for the Department's Infant and Child Development research facilities.
8. Contribute to the Project's and Department's Impact Agenda by creating materials and assisting in arranging events for academic and non-academic partners.
9. Identify and engage in personal development opportunities to support your career development; as provided by the Department, by the University, or by external bodies.
10. You may also be required to carry out any other duties, commensurate with the grade of the post, as directed by your line manager or their nominee.

In addition to the above all Edge Hill University staff are required to: adhere to all University policies and procedures; complete all mandatory training and induction modules, including Equity, Diversity & Inclusion and Health & Safety; engage in appropriate learning and development activities; actively participate in performance review; demonstrate excellent customer care; contribute to an inclusive environment for everyone; respect confidentiality; act in a sustainable and environmentally conscious manner; and proactively consider accessibility in all aspects of your work.

Eligibility

Candidates should note that shortlisting will be based on information provided on the application form with regard to the applicant's ability to meet the criteria outlined in the Person Specification attached.

It is important to note that the successful applicant will be required to undertake an enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service, including a check of the Children's Barred List and that this will form part of the conditions of offer of employment.

Additional information

Pension Scheme: This post is eligible for the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Annual Leave: 36 days annual leave per annum, (inclusive of bank holiday and University closure days) Please note, support staff annual leave entitlement increases in line with post grade and length of continuous service.

It is important to note that this job description is a guide to the work you will be required to undertake. It may be changed from time to time to meet changing circumstances. It does not form part of your contract of employment.

It is expected that the post-holder will work flexibly according to the on-going demands of the job.

Person Specification

Please note that applications will be assessed against the Person Specification using the following criteria, therefore, applicants should provide evidence of their ability to meet all criteria. Where a supporting statement is indicated you will be asked to provide a statement of how you meet this criterion within the application form.

Criteria	Essential/ Desirable	Method of Assesment
An undergraduate degree in psychology or a related discipline.	Essential	Application Form
Experience of conducting research with neurodivergent primary school children involving in-person interactions (e.g. conducting standardised assessments, interviews, or experimental tasks).	Essential	Supporting Statement and Interview
Experience of cleaning and coding data appropriately for statistical analyses.	Essential	Supporting Statement
Demonstrate a good understanding of ethics and data protection regulations in relation to research activity involving children.	Essential	Supporting Statement and Interview
Excellent communication skills both oral and written	Essential	Supporting Statement and Interview
Excellent organisational and administrative skills, including report writing and the preparation of presentation materials.	Essential	Supporting Statement and Interview
A postgraduate degree in psychology or a related discipline.	Desirable	Application Form
Experience of engaging in Open Science practices, including pre-registering research and data sharing.	Desirable	Supporting Statement
Experience of engaging in disseminating research to non-academic audiences and stakeholders.	Desirable	Supporting Statement and Interview

Candidate Guidance and How to Apply

At Edge Hill University we value the benefits a rich and diverse workforce brings to our community and therefore welcome applications from all sections of society.

For informal enquiries about this vacancy, you may wish to contact: John Shaw, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, john.shaw@edgehill.ac.uk.

When you are ready to start the formal application process, please [visit our Current Vacancies website](#), search for the role you wish to apply for, and select the 'Apply Online' button at the bottom of the job advert. The online application form can be completed in stages and can be revisited at any time. The form automatically saves as you enter your information, and you can move backwards and forwards between individual form sections at any time prior to application submission. Help is available at each stage to guide you through the form. Before final submission, you can preview your application and can then choose to refine or submit the form.

As part of your application, you will be asked to provide details of two referees. Please see our application form for guidance on how to nominate your referees.

Please refer to the advert for the closing date for this vacancy, all applications must be submitted by 11:59pm on this date. Please note that you will receive an automated email from our online recruitment portal to confirm receipt of your application. Please check your spam/junk mail if you do not receive this email.

Following the closing date, we will contact you by email to let you know whether or not you have been shortlisted to participate in the next stage of the selection process. We try our best to inform all applicants within two working weeks following the closing date.

If you are offered the post, the offer will be subject to pre-employment clearance. You will be asked to provide: proof of your right-to-work in the UK; proof of your identity and evidence of your qualifications and professional memberships as referenced as essential or desirable in the person specification for this role. You will also be asked to complete onboarding forms including a pre-employment health questionnaire to support the University make appropriate adjustments to support you in the role. The University will also contact the referees you have nominated. Please note that you may be asked for alternative or additional referees as we seek references that cover your previous three years of employment history. Following successful completion of pre-employment clearances (including an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check, as relevant, please see job advert) a start date will then be arranged with you.