

**Faculty of Business, Law and Social Sciences**

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| **Proposed Title:**  Exploring the impact of touchscreen technologies on cognitive and social development of children |
| **School:**  School of Social Sciences |
| **Proposed Supervisory Team:**  Dr Olga Fotakopoulou (School of Social Sciences, Department of Psychology)  Dr Jane O’Connor (School of Education, Department of Childhood, Youth and Community)  Dr Shannon Ludgate (School of Education, Department of Childhood, Youth and Community) |
| **Abstract:**  In the 21st century, children from a very young age are growing up in a digital world (Marsh et al., 2019) surrounded by a wide range of technological devices on a daily basis. A substantial amount of research has focused on children’s television and computer consumption with television watching increasing since 2016 for over an hour a week for 3-7-year olds (Ofcom, 2017).  Published research has focused upon the significant impact upon increased technology use resulting in a decline in social interaction (Fidler, Zack & Barr, 2010), language skills (Bavelier, Green & Dye, 2011) and increased aggression for those reported playing computer games (Subrahmanyam et al., 2000). However, the use of technology has additionally been reported to encourage interpersonal communication (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield, Kraut & Gross, 2001) and develop preschool children’s cognition through early exposure to computers (Li & Atkins, 2004). This PhD study proposes to build on previous research to explore the impact of the use of touchscreen technologies (iPad and tablet devices) on pre-school and school-aged children’s cognitive and social development, children’s views and experiences, and practices, implications and benefits of technology use as reported by parents. A mixed-methods research design will be employed to investigate the impact of touchscreens on children’s cognitive and social development, children’s voices and parental views and practices. |
| **Research Environment:**  The student will be working closely with the Research Centre of Lifespan and Behavioural Sciences within the School of Social Sciences and the Cultures in Education Research Group (CiERG) in the School of Education. Cross-faculty collaboration in the framework of Techno-babies project aims to produce high quality multi-disciplinary research, theory and practice to explain children’s development in a complex, transforming environment.  The members of the supervisory team have interdisciplinary links and collaborate with partners at local, national and international level. |
| **Applicant Requirements:**  The ideal candidate for the proposed project would be a psychology graduate who has a good undergraduate degree classification (2:1 or above, in accordance with most research council criteria for PhD bursaries). A demonstrated understanding of quantitative and qualitative research methods is essential. A Masters’ degree in Educational Psychology or Developmental Psychology or Research Methods, or Learning and Teaching is desirable, but not necessarily essential. Also, experience (voluntary or paid) in various school settings could be beneficial. Access to a car and a valid driving licence are desirable, but not essential, in order to facilitate data collection at the various school settings. The student will be offered the opportunity to undertake the PGCert in L&T if they feel it would enhance their employability, professional skills, and personal development. |
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