

Department of Game Design: guidelines for inquiries about research collaborations

We love to collaborate and we get frequent requests to do so from other units inside the university as well as outside. Here are a few things we kindly ask you to consider before contacting us:

What we are NOT interested in:

We are not developers for hire. As a department, if we create games/apps/IT solutions with others, it must offer a meaningful research angle that is of interest to the various qualifications and expertise amongst our faculty and contribute to the production of relevant scientific results.

Project Vetting Process

Timeframe: If you want to collaborate with us, please pay careful attention to the following guidelines of our project vetting process. Of course, you are encouraged to reach out to us informally to see if there is any interest in your proposal amongst our faculty (in that case, feel free to contact the faculty member you have in mind directly and / or loop in our research director, Dr. Doris C. Rusch doris.rusch@speldesign.uu.se), but make sure there is plenty of time between an initial “testing the waters” and putting together a solid proposal. Our faculty is very busy and has many obligations with teaching, service and research. Freeing up a faculty member’s time to engage in a collaborative project can take up to a year of resource planning.

Our first impulse when approached with projects that ask us to say “yay” or “nay” with short timeframes is to say “nay”.

Further, we much prefer to be involved in the planning stages of a collaboration, rather than being asked to partner e.g. when a funding application has already been approved or is in its final stages to be submitted somewhere. It is much more fruitful, if we can have a say in the research angle and our particular role in the project when we are involved from the start.

Further criteria we will consider in the decision-making process:

1. Is there one key faculty member at the department who is willing and able to supervise the project and is dedicated to its management and follow-through?
2. Is there a meaningful research angle that is worth and feasible to explore for our involved faculty members?
3. Is the project a collaboration with another department at UU or another research institution and what are we to gain from this collaboration? What are the project partners bringing in, in terms of e.g. subject matter expertise, network, resources, access to target audiences, research outcome dissemination possibilities etc.?
4. Is there one key person at this collaborating institution that is committed to the project, knows how much time (or other resources) are expected of them and agrees to honor their commitment over the run-time of the project or as long as they are needed for the successful completion of the project?
5. Is there capacity for student involvement in the project? Projects that afford educational opportunities for our bachelor and / or master students are desirable, although it might not always be practically feasible to involve students throughout the project. Considering brainstorming sessions, kick off game jams, playtests or inviting students to design

reviews are low-level ways of engaging students that give them insight into the game design research process.

6. A project proposal should include a tentative project plan that allows assessment of the project timeframe, milestones and resources needed.

Proposed projects will be discussed at a department management group meeting once or twice throughout Fall and Spring semester.

For collaborations directed at the Games & Society Lab

The above guidelines on project vetting hold true for the Games & Society lab. It is noteworthy, though, that the lab has a particular focus on game *design* and proposals will first be discussed in the lab's research group before being presented to the department management group.

The Games & Society Lab is dedicated to the research and development of playful, interactive experiences that advance our understanding of games as media and push the boundaries of what games can be. Every project that is housed at the lab must engage a research question related or contributing to game design and be of practical value to the game design community. This can involve research on, for or through design - in other words: the process of designing games (on), background / contextual research before implementing a design (for), or the creation of a game as a means of answering a research question (through). This shall not exclude other approaches or disciplines, e.g. psychological, sociological or technical perspectives. The main point in any case, however, is: *what can we learn from this research for the design of games and / or their impact on society?*

Ideally, each project also involves the actual development of a digital, non-digital or hybrid game / part of a game / prototype to some degree. The intersection of theory and practice is key, because this is a game design research lab. We do not just study existing projects. We learn through making. This does not need to be true for every project, but finding a way to apply theoretical knowledge to practice is definitely a plus and weighs in favor of supporting a project. Collaborations with strong partners inside and outside Uppsala University, nationally and internationally, are desirable. It is a declared goal of the lab to not only increase our research output in ways that move the field forward and foster tangible results in the form of publications and games / playful, interactive experiences, but to create a network of partners that contributes to student and faculty exchanges all over the world.

Topics for projects are negotiable and decisions on which project to take on are made based on the vetting process described below.

To begin a dialogue with the Games /& Society lab to explore collaboration, please reach out to the research director, doris.rusch@speldesign.uu.se.