

## Award Sought: MA in Online Communication

**Title of Proposal:**

Frontier – Massively Multiplayer Online Community Building Application

**Overall aims of programme and studies:**

There are many goals associated with this proposed MA in Online Communication. The ultimate aim however, to design, create and launch a new online community application that will not only be influenced from the culmination of detailed research relating to existing provisions, current and future technologies, and social models of online behaviour, but will push the boundaries of communication between web and mobile applications into an exciting new direction.

Some of the research conducted throughout the programme will be of a technical nature to ensure the incorporation of new and exciting technologies where justified by enhancement of the user's experience. Some will be relating to existing studies of behaviour in online environments and communities, However the field in which my proposed programme is placed is relatively new and at the forefront of change, and so a majority of non-technical research will take the form of critical and competitive analysis, and the exploration of possible new parameters afforded in part by advances in technology.

The outcomes of the aforementioned investigation of technical best practice, together with the non-technical analysis of existing online environments and communities, will be applied and utilised in the creation of a final online community application with a level of originality at the "forefront" of both the area of academic discipline and of professional practice.

Candidate: JAMES FIELD

## SUPERVISORS AND EXAMINERS

**Academic Supervisor:**

Sarah Humphreys

**Address:**

New Media  
Hull School of Art & Design  
Hull College  
Queens Gardens  
HULL  
HU1 3DG

**Second Supervisor:**

Richard Vickers

**Address:**

New Media  
Hull School of Art & Design  
Hull College  
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HULL  
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**External Examiner:**

Derek Hales  
Stuart Nolan  
\*\* tbc \*\*

**Address:**

tbc

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## SUMMARY OF LEARNING CONTRACT

**Award: MA in Online Communication**

Unit	Summary of Work	M Level Credit Points	Start Date	Completion Date	Assessment Date	Letter Grade
A	Completion of Learning Contract	12	01 Nov 05	24 Mar 06	05 Apr 06	
B	Research Methods Module **tbc**	12			30 Jan 10	
C	Social Aspects Review	12	05 Apr 06	16 Jun 06	30 Jan 10	
D	Competitive Analysis & Technology Review	24	01 Dec 05	16 Jun 06	30 Jun 06	
E	Production of Design Document	12	17 Jun 06	28 Jul 06	11 Sep 06	
F	Stage One Application Development	48	01 Jan 06	01 Sep 06	11 Sep 06	
G	Final Application Development	60	01 Sep 06	11 May 07	01 Jun 10	

**Academic Supervisor** ..... **External Examiner** ..... **Date** .....

**Student** .....

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## UNIT: Completion of Learning Contract

Unit	Learning Objectives	Activities	Assessment Criteria	Mode of Assessment
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To complete and submit a learning contract.</li> <li>The design of a learning programme that meets stipulated staged levels of attainment.</li> <li>To detail individual, academic assignments that form an integrated, coherent, and substantial piece of research.</li> <li>To develop management skills related to project planning and research technique by structuring overall aims and objectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine individual areas of research and indicate their correlation to an integrated and thematic whole.</li> <li>Consider a range of practical research skills defined by the projects rationale and theoretical underpinning.</li> <li>Produce a final study outline in contract format using a computerised proforma.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The demonstration of coherence, progression, and achievability of the intended programmes objectives and activities.</li> </ul>	Submission of a learning contract to be approved by the Faculty Research Degrees Board.

Resources Required	Supervisors	Assessors
Word-processing facilities. Weekly student-tutor consultations.	Sarah Humphreys	Faculty Research Degrees Board.

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## UNIT: Research Methodologies

Unit	Learning Objectives	Activities	Assessment Criteria	Mode of Assessment
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of Research Methods Module.</li> <li>• To develop a conceptual and theoretical underpinning to the practical application of research methods.</li> <li>• To acquire knowledge of research methodologies with emphasis on qualitative theoretical analysis.</li> <li>• To identify a prospective outline of a workable methodology for progressive stages of MA study in Online Communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at scheduled Research Methods Module and related seminars.</li> <li>• Participation in discussion with Supervisor, and demonstration of independent, analytic thinking.</li> <li>• The critical consideration of differing methodologies within given philosophical and theoretical frameworks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The successful completion of assessment set by the University of Lincoln.</li> </ul>	Submission of 3,500 - 5,000 word essay.

Resources Required	Supervisors	Assessors
Word-processing facilities. Library resources. Weekly student-tutor consultations.	***tbc depending on which Research Methods module is taken from a number of options, we would welcome advice from the Research Degrees committee.	***tbc depending on which Research Methods module is taken from a number of options, we would welcome advice from the Research Degrees committee.

**UNIT: Social Aspects Review**

Unit	Learning Objectives	Activities	Assessment Criteria	Mode of Assessment
C	<p><b>At the end of this unit, the student will be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate a critical awareness of existing studies conducted on how people behave in online environments and communities.</li> <li>• Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between key features of chosen online communities, technological innovation, and related behaviour.</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the parameters of the proposed new online community application in relation to the above.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore existing studies carried out by advanced scholars in the field of online behaviour.</li> <li>• Engage in primary research to examine behaviour in contemporary online community provisions, based on case studies examples.</li> <li>• Identify parameters for own work based on findings from the above.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critique of studies already conducted on behaviour in online environments and communities.</li> <li>• Analysis of case study examples and associated findings regarding behaviour in contemporary online community provisions particularly in relation to new technologies.</li> <li>• Outline of parameters for the proposed new online community application in response to findings from the above.</li> </ul>	<p>A 3,500 - 5,000 word essay with critique of existing studies, outline of own research and findings, and definition of parameters for the proposed new online community application .in relation to research outcome.</p>

Resources Required	Supervisors	Assessors
<p>Internet &amp; Library resources. Weekly student-tutor consultations with both Mentor and member of theory staff.</p>	<p>Sarah Humphreys John Hudson (Rose Spielberg)</p>	<p>Sarah Humphreys John Hudson (Rose Spielberg)</p>

## UNIT: Competitive Analysis & Technology Review

Unit	Learning Objectives	Activities	Assessment Criteria	Mode of Assessment
D	<p><b>At the end of this unit, the student will be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate a range of existing products that offer opportunities to create communities both offline and online, critically analysing key features required to make community establishment possible and sustainable.</li> <li>Critically evaluate the range of technical software currently available for the creation of online community applications.</li> <li>Identify viable means of establishing the functionality of proposed application, considering the implications of recent innovation in server provision.</li> <li>Identify the parameters of visual style within the constraints of software available, considering the implications of recent innovation in mobile technologies.</li> <li>Establish the feasibility of creating a community building tool with original features, visual style and communication methods. In particular an innovative implementation of the product using mobile technologies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse a range of current products currently in circulation that offer opportunity for community creation.</li> <li>Compile a critique of key features with commentary on how they facilitate community creation and sustainability.</li> <li>Investigate and analyse all software that has the ability, or potential, to enable the creation of a community building application.</li> <li>Identify and trial key software that may be appropriate for the creation and implementation of original features within an online community application.</li> <li>Evaluate potential for creation of a new online community application.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critical analysis of a range of appropriate existing provisions, with comparison of the aims of these existing provisions against actual delivery.</li> <li>Critical analysis of the relevant areas of software and technologies, noting the various advantages and disadvantages.</li> <li>Rationale for the eventual choice of software for both the functional requirements and the visual style of the project.</li> <li>Critical evaluation of the feasibility of producing a community building application with original features, visual style and communication methods.</li> </ul>	<p>A website (equivalent to 6,000 words) comprising critical reviews of the identified competition, of technical and artistic software available with consideration of recent and future innovation, and rationale for choice of production means.</p> <p>An interactive presentation of key original and innovative features for proposed product.</p>

Resources Required	Supervisors	Assessors
Internet & offline resources. Weekly student-tutor consultations.	Sarah Humphreys, Richard Vickers (Rose Spielberg), (Kevin Whittaker)	Sarah Humphreys, Richard Vickers (Rose Spielberg), (Kevin Whittaker)

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## UNIT: Production of Design Document

Unit	Learning Objectives	Activities	Assessment Criteria	Mode of Assessment
<b>E</b>	<p><b>At the end of this unit, the student will be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to draw together the outcome of research relating to competitive analysis, technological and social issues with regard to the creation of online community applications.</li> <li>• Demonstrate a conceptual understanding of these issues that enables an evaluation of the research outcome.</li> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to produce a Design Document which specifies the scope and detail of the proposed new online community application in response to this evaluation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a detailed Design Document specifying user experience, framework, specific project content and structure, and visual design.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suitable quality of research; selectivity; critical perspective.</li> <li>• Suitable quality, coherence and relevance of Design Document.</li> </ul>	<p>A detailed Design Document, approximately 40 pages in length, specifying user experience, framework, specific project content and structure, and visual design.</p>

Resources Required	Supervisors	Assessors
<p>Word-processing and DTP facilities. Weekly student-tutor consultations with Mentor.</p>	<p>Sarah Humphreys Richard Vickers</p>	<p>Sarah Humphreys Richard Vickers</p>

## UNIT: Stage One Application Development

Unit	Learning Objectives	Activities	Assessment Criteria	Mode of Assessment
<b>F</b>	<p><b>At the end of this unit, the student will be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge relating to the production of the proposed new online community application, as specified in the Design Document.</li> <li>• Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the techniques and problem solving required on order to produce a prototype for the proposed new online community application.</li> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to produce a working prototype of the proposed new online community application.</li> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to review and critically evaluate the prototype.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a working prototype of the proposed new online community application as specified in the Design Document.</li> <li>• Keep an up-to-date written development journal with a weekly summary uploaded in the form of a blog.</li> <li>• Undertake a review and critical evaluation of the prototype through the process of peer evaluation and user testing.</li> <li>• Revise the Design Document in response to the evaluation findings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality and appropriateness of the “solution” (prototype) in relation to research outcomes and evaluation.</li> <li>• Appropriate application and use of technology, and visual style, in relation to the Design Document specification.</li> <li>• Evidence of sophisticated approaches to developmental problem solving.</li> <li>• Suitable evaluation of prototype and appropriate revision of Design Document in response.</li> </ul>	<p>Working prototype of core features of the proposed application supported by a presentation to peers.</p> <p>A blog to support the development progress.</p> <p>Final Design Document, 70 to 80 pages in length.</p>

Resources Required	Supervisors	Assessors
<p>Access to development software and the internet. Weekly student-tutor consultations with Mentor.</p>	<p>Sarah Humphreys Richard Vickers</p>	<p>Sarah Humphreys Richard Vickers</p>

## UNIT: Final Application Development

Unit	Learning Objectives	Activities	Assessment Criteria	Mode of Assessment
G	<p><b>At the end of this unit, the student will be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate the ability to create a fully developed, self-contained online community application with original features, which is at the forefront of both the area of academic discipline and of professional practice.</li> <li>Demonstrate the ability to advance own knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.</li> <li>Demonstrate self direction and originality in problem solving techniques to an extent relevant to this level of award.</li> <li>Demonstrate the ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.</li> <li>Demonstrate the ability to critically analyse and evaluate the online community application development, accepting and implementing changes as determined by research findings and recommendations from user feedback.</li> <li>Demonstrate critical awareness of current problems relating to the online community application, and the ability to identify areas for future development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production of new online community application, and associated complex problem solving.</li> <li>Ongoing production of an up-to-date written development journal with a weekly summary uploaded in the form of a blog.</li> <li>Regular user testing and feedback sessions, with implementation of changes to the online communication application as appropriate.</li> <li>Report on the implementation of changes in response to the user testing and feedback received during development, and with reference to earlier research findings.</li> <li>A written evaluation of the online communication application, its place within the appropriate area of academic discipline and of professional practice including additional features that could be implemented into the application its sustainability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality and appropriateness of the final application in relation to research outcomes and evaluation.</li> <li>Quality and appropriateness of application and use of technology, and visual style.</li> <li>Level of originality in relation to the “forefront” of both the area of academic discipline and of professional practice.</li> <li>Evidence of sophisticated approaches to developmental problem solving through the production of the final application.</li> <li>Evidence of critical analysis of the online community application, and of how feedback can be differentiated and productive good ideas identified and implemented.</li> <li>Understanding of current position of the application, and future developments from which it may benefit.</li> </ul>	<p>Fully functional and developed version of the application supported by a presentation to appropriate audiences.</p> <p>A blog to support the development progress.</p> <p>A report, 8,000 to 10,000 words in length, featuring:</p> <p>a) An evaluation of the project and personal appraisal including project management schedule.</p> <p>b) The outcome of testing and changes implemented.</p> <p>c) Critical evaluation and full future development plan.</p>

Resources Required	Supervisors	Assessors
Access to development software and the internet. Weekly student-tutor consultations with Mentor.	Sarah Humphreys, Richard Vickers (Rose Spielberg), (Kevin Whittaker)	Sarah Humphreys, Richard Vickers (Rose Spielberg), (Kevin Whittaker) Derek Hales, Stuart Nolan (external)