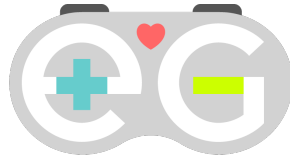


DiGRA 2026 Workshop

## Call for Participants



## eTHICAL Games

How academia and the game industry can co-shape a transdisciplinary agenda to support and inform guidelines within the Ethical Games Initiative

### Overview

**Workshop Date:** Tuesday, June 16th, from 14:00-17:00 at DiGRA 2026

**Workshop Leaders:** Celia Hodent, Fran Blumberg, Bruno Dupont, Kimberly Voll, Rachel Kowert

In this workshop, we aim to collaboratively develop a research agenda to inform and support the goals of the [Ethical Games Initiative](#): A multi-stakeholder effort, launched in 2020, to build bridges between the game industry and academia and to develop an evidence-based code of ethics as well as guidelines for the production and publishing of video games.

Participants will engage in facilitated breakout sessions examining three core areas of the code:

- (1) Player protection against disruptive or harmful behaviour;*
- (2) Respecting players' time and money in the business model; and*
- (3) Protection of minors.*

### To Participate

This workshop will be open to all DiGRA 2026 attendees with participation capped at 30 members. Interested attendees are invited to share their desire to participate through our registration form:

<https://forms.gle/gmC5E1jzaipRzUcy7>.



We will endeavour to inform all participants of their acceptance status a week before the workshop date.

## Workshop Description

The [Ethical Games Initiative](#) was launched in 2020 to bring together the games industry and academic researchers in developing an evidence-backed code of ethics for the production and publishing of video games. Alongside these guidelines, the initiative aims to establish a supporting research agenda that strengthens and validates best practices, while building stronger connections between those who study games and those who create, publish, and monetise them for players of all ages. This workshop invites participants to help shape that research agenda and contribute to the future of ethical game development.

The current draft of the [code of ethics](#) emerged from an iterative policy recommendation design process described by Dunlop et al. (2023), that amalgamates four key sources of data:

- *Review of academic and industry literature;*
- *Insights from co-creation workshops involving representatives from the game industry, game culture, media, policymaking, and academia;*
- *Reflection within the project team before, during, and after this data collection; and*
- *Feedback from a broader group of stakeholders, including professional ethicists.*

This effort is intended to complement work featured in a 2024 special issue of *ACM Games: Research and Practice* in which academic researchers explored a range of issues related to ethical play.

The workshop is designed to encourage further academic research into ethical game development and publishing, informed both by the draft ethical games guidelines to date and members of the game industry.

The code of ethics is expected to be formally presented to the games industry in 2026.

## Workshop Objectives

- (1) Enhance awareness of the [Ethical Games Initiative](#)
- (2) Promote productive dialogue among members of the game industry about specific questions that warrant examination
- (3) Foster awareness of the benefits of science-informed findings for the support of these protocols.
- (4) Contribute to realising the vision of ethical practice and ethical game design protocols within the game industry.

## Expected Outcomes

- (1) Greater appreciation among participants for the value of collaboration between academic researchers and the game industry in developing games that support the well-being of all players.
- (2) Development of a research agenda to guide academic research, informed by the needs, priorities and realities of game industry professionals.
- (3) Identification of practical ways to build stronger bridges between academia and industry by highlighting shared challenges, opportunities, and considerations.
- (4) Establishment of a foundation for a future academic publication (e.g. in *ACM Games: Research and Practice*) featuring the perspectives and insights of workshop members.

## Programme (3 hours)

<b>Opening presentation and Q&amp;A</b>	<p>The workshop leaders will share an overview of the Ethical Games Initiative from its inception to the present day, including the development process behind the code of ethics and its three major sections.</p> <p>To be followed by a question-and-answer period.</p>	45 minutes
<b>Breakout sessions</b>	<p>In small groups, participants will consider one of the three major sections of the code of ethics:</p> <p><i>(1) player protection against disruptive or harmful behaviour;</i> <i>(2) respecting players' time and money in the business model; and</i> <i>(3) protection of minors.</i></p> <p>Groups will develop research questions that warrant investigation within each area, considering both academic and industry perspectives.</p>	60 minutes
	<i>Coffee break</i>	15 minutes
<b>Group reports</b>	Each breakout group reports their findings and proposed research questions to the full workshop	30 minutes
<b>Plenary wrap-up and discussion</b>	The role of the academic community and the DiGRA community in the adoption and evolution of the code of ethics will be discussed, along with next steps for the research agenda.	30 minutes

## Workshop Leaders

**Celia Hodent, Ph.D.:** An independent game UX strategist with a 17-year experience in the game industry and a background in developmental psychology (Paris 5 Sorbonne), founder of the Game UX Summit and of the Ethical Games initiative.

**Fran Blumberg, Ph.D.:** A cognitive developmental psychologist on faculty within Fordham University's Graduate School of Education. She has been a contributor to the Ethical Games Initiative developed by Dr. Hodent. Her research examines children and early adolescents' learning in the context of digital games.

**Bruno Dupont, Ph.D.:** A game researcher, and coordinator of the KU Leuven Digital Society Institute. His research examines the intersection between games and the social life of youth. Recently, he has been managing projects related to gaming and gambling, ethical game design, and inclusive design.

**Kimberly Voll, Ph.D.:** A researcher, designer, and programmer focused on digital social dynamics and video games as social infrastructure, whose development work spans independent to AAA productions. Co-founder of the Thriving in Games Group (2017) and board member. CEO of Brace Yourself Games.

**Rachel Kowert, Ph.D.:** A research psychologist with 15+ years studying digital games, often with a focus on trust and safety and mental health. She currently serves as the Research Director at Games for Change and is a visiting researcher at the University of Cambridge (UK).

## References

1. Dunlop, L., Rushton, E. A., Atkinson, L., Blake, C., Calvert, S., Cornelissen, E., ... & Yuan, X. (2023). An introduction to the co-creation of policy briefs with youth and academic teams. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 47(1), 149-159.
2. Hodent, C., Blumberg, F., Deterding, S. (2024). Ethical Games: Toward Evidence-Based Guidance for Safeguarding Players and Developers. *ACM Games: Research and Practice*, 2(2), 1-11.
3. Hodent, C., Voll, K., Dupont, B., Blumberg, F. (2025). Ethical Game Design: On the Content, Appeal, and Applicability of an Ethical Code for the Game Industry. Paper presented at the International Conference for an Inclusive Digital Society, Leuven, 15-16 September.