

PhD Studentship: Technology-Facilitated Abuse in the Context of Intimate Partner Violence

Submission Deadline: 29th January 2021

Start Date: 27th of September 2021

About the Studentship

This is an exciting opportunity to conduct a funded full-time, four-year long PhD at a world-leading research university. The successful candidate will benefit from the opportunities presented by a thriving research community as part of the Centre for Doctoral Training ([CDT](#)) in Cybersecurity, which encompasses the Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy (STeAPP), the Department of Security and Crime Science, and the Department of Computer Science.

The supervisory team for this project will include [Dr Leonie Maria Tanczer](#) (UCL STeAPP) and [Professor Shane D. Johnson](#) (UCL Crime Sciences).

About the PhD Project

Intimate partner violence such as domestic abuse, sexual assault, and stalking describes a continuum of behaviours, ranging from verbal abuse, threats and intimidation, manipulative behaviour, physical and sexual assault, through to rape and homicide. Increasingly, abuse enabled through smartphones, laptops or even emerging technologies such as “smart”, Internet-connected household devices are being at the centre of attention in research, policy, and practice. So-called “technology-facilitated abuse” or “tech abuse” describes the breadth of harmful actions perpetrators may use to harass and intimidate victims and survivors through digital means.

The proposed PhD project is expected produce unique insights on a *specific issue* of tech abuse. Existing literature has focused on topics such as image-based abuse (“revenge porn”), malicious software such as “stalkerware”, as well as harms that derive from “Internet of Things” devices. However, more research needs to be conducted to quantify the scale and nature of tech abuse, to examine legal and industry responses, and to design, develop and assess possible interventions.

The *exact* remit of the project will be defined by the student in the first year of their PhD and in interaction with their supervisors. However, an aspired vision/topic must be set out at the application stage and showcased in the applicant’s proposal.

This PhD will run in affiliation with the “[Gender and IoT](#)” research project at UCL STeAPP, with the candidate having a chance to gain teaching experience through their contribution to module offerings.

Candidate Profile

The successful candidate is expected to contribute to UCL's vibrant research community and is required to familiarise themselves with the research background of both supervisors to ensure there is a close overlap between their interests as well as the skills and knowledge of the supervisory team.

The successful candidate will have to demonstrate:

- A very good honour's degree (2:1 or equivalent, or above) in sociology, criminology, political science, anthropology, psychology, STS, social work, computer science or other relevant field, and evidence of further study at master's level or equivalent (e.g., MSc Research Methods);
- A strong interest in topics around gender and technology (ideally domestic violence/intimate partner violence);
- Advanced skills in qualitative and quantitative research methods;

Eligibility Criteria

This will be a four-year full-time commitment, which requires applicants to be strongly invested in working on this topic.

The project is ideal for a self-motivated, dedicated, and organised student with a very good academic track-record.

Prior experience having worked with victims/survivors and/or perpetrators of intimate partner violence are strongly welcomed.

Very good communication skills are expected. Thus, a recognised English language qualification is required for this application.

Programming skills (e.g., Python) are a great asset, but are not required.

Please be aware that due to the sensitivity of this topic, candidates may also be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check.

Application Process

Please apply through the Cybersecurity PhD portal <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/graduate/research-degrees/cybersecurity-phd>. You will be a part of the CDT Cybersecurity cohort <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/computer-science/study/postgraduate-research/centre-doctoral-training-cybersecurity>. Candidates interested in the project are asked to submit:

- 2-page CV;
- 2-page Cover Letter (justifying their suitability by outlining their background, skills, experience, interests, etc.);
- Maximum 5-page PhD Proposal including (a) a short literature review that identifies the research gap the candidate wants to investigate, (b) proposed research methodology - including the data and methods - that the candidate aspires to collect, analyse, and deploy, (c) expected research outcomes, as well as (d)

implications of this research for academia, policy and practice (including industry and the support sector).

Selected applicants will be required to attend an interview, via Skype or telephone.

Further Information

Please have a look at the following pages:

- Centre for Doctoral Training in Cybersecurity ([CDT](#))
- [UCL STEaPP](#)
- [UCL Department of Security and Crime Sciences](#)

For an informal discussion about the studentship, please email Dr Leonie Maria Tanczer l.tanczer@ucl.ac.uk.