2027 Summer Research Project Template

Help us present your project in a way that connects with the right students. Thoughtful, engaging descriptions tend to attract stronger and more suitable applications. Thank you for putting a project forward - these programs rely on your contribution, and we couldn't do it without you.

Section	Description
Project title	Pornography use and addiction: Mapping the evidence base
Hours & delivery	Approximately 20 hours per week during the Summer Research Program, primarily in McElwain Building (24A), UQ St Lucia campus with the NCYSUR team. Typical working days and hours will be agreed with the successful student in consultation with the project team. Some flexibility for hybrid work arrangements.
About the project (150–250 words)	Problematic pornography use is often described as a behavioural addiction, but this classification remains contested. Researchers have variously understood it as compulsive sexual behaviour, an impulse-control problem, a coping or emotion-regulation strategy, a habitual behaviour, or distress shaped partly by moral beliefs about pornography. These competing explanations matter because they influence how problematic use is measured, diagnosed and treated. This project will contribute to a scoping review examining how problematic pornography use has been conceptualised, operationalised and evaluated as a potential addictive behaviour. The review will map the addiction-related features studied- including impaired control, craving, salience, tolerance, withdrawal-like experiences and continued use despite harm- and consider whether the evidence genuinely tests an addiction model or assumes it through terminology and measurement. It will also examine relationships with substance use, gambling, gaming and other potentially addictive behaviours, while considering alternative explanations such as moral incongruence, religiosity and high-frequency use without impairment. The student will join the review team during the study-selection and data-charting stages. Their work will make a substantive contribution to identifying eligible research, systematically extracting study characteristics and findings, and developing a focused review of the broader literature. Together, these activities will help clarify what the existing evidence can and cannot tell us about pornography and addiction.
What you'll do (100-150 words)	Working with the lead investigator and research team, the student will: • Learn and apply the review protocol and eligibility criteria. • Screen titles and abstracts, followed by full-text articles, using systematic-review software. • Participate in screening calibration exercises and help resolve uncertainties through team discussion. • Extract and chart information about study designs, samples, terminology, theoretical frameworks, measures, addiction-related processes, findings and authors' conclusions.

	• Help identify whether studies considered competing explanations such as moral incongruence, distress or high-frequency use. • Conduct targeted literature searches and prepare a structured literature review on an agreed component of the project. • Maintain clear records and contribute to regular review-team meetings. • Depending on progress, assist with summarising findings, developing evidence tables or figures, and preparing material for dissemination. The student will receive guidance, feedback and regular supervision throughout each stage.
What you'll learn (100–150 words)	The project will provide practical experience conducting a rigorous scoping review on a complex and increasingly debated topic. The student will develop skills in systematic searching, applying eligibility criteria, screening research literature, extracting data and maintaining a transparent audit trail. They will learn how theoretical assumptions can shape research questions, measures and conclusions, and how to critically distinguish evidence of behavioural dysregulation from frequency, distress or self-perceived "addiction." They will also have the opportunity to learn from a team of AOD/addiction specialists about current conceptualisations, frameworks and intervention approaches in this space. The student will also gain experience synthesising quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods evidence; using systematic-review software; writing a focused academic literature review; and communicating findings clearly in tables, figures and narrative form. Regular supervision and calibration will build confidence in making defensible research decisions, working collaboratively and managing ambiguity in an interdisciplinary evidence base.
Project outcomes (75–125 words)	By the end of the project, the student is expected to have contributed substantially to title and abstract screening, full-text review and data extraction for the scoping review. They will also produce a structured literature review or synthesis addressing an agreed aspect of problematic pornography use and addiction. Collectively, this work will support an evidence map of the conceptual frameworks, measures, addiction-related features and study designs used in the field. Depending on the review's progress, outputs may also include preliminary evidence tables, figures, a conference abstract or components of a manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.
Who should apply? (75–125 words)	This project would suit a second- or third-year psychology student with interests in clinical psychology, mental health, alcohol and other drug use, addiction, gender and sexuality. Applicants should be comfortable engaging critically and respectfully with sensitive topics involving pornography, sexual behaviour and mental health. Careful attention to detail, reliability and the ability to apply criteria consistently are particularly important. Research-methods coursework and strong academic reading and writing skills would be useful, but prior experience conducting a review is not required. The strongest candidates will be curious, organised, comfortable asking questions and able to engage with complex ideas.
Team & supervision (75–125 words)	The student will be supervised by Hannah Schuurs within the National Centre for Youth Substance Use Research and School of Psychology at The University of Queensland. The student will also work as part of the broader research team and participate in regular supervision and calibration meetings. Supervision will include training in review methods, structured feedback on screening and extraction decisions, support with academic writing, and opportunities to discuss pathways into Honours, postgraduate study, and other research projects available across the team.

Additional opportunities (optional)	Subject to the project's progress and the student's contribution, there may be opportunities to contribute to a conference presentation or peer-reviewed publication. Any authorship will be determined transparently according to established authorship criteria and will reflect substantive contributions to the work. For students interested in continuing in research, the project may also provide a pathway towards a future Honours project, either extending this review or contributing to other projects within the broader research team. It will provide opportunities to learn more about postgraduate study and research careers in clinical psychology, mental health, addiction, gender and sexuality.
Additional requirements (if applicable)	The project involves reading academic literature that discusses pornography, sexual behaviour, mental health and potentially distressing or explicit topics. Applicants should consider whether they are comfortable working with this material. The project **does not** involve viewing pornographic images or having direct contact with research participants. The student will be expected to complete any required research-integrity, data-management or systematic-review training and to handle unpublished review materials responsibly.
Contact	Yes, students may contact the supervisor before applying. Direct enquiries to: h.schuurs@uq.edu.au