

PhD student position at the Institute of Public Health, Faculty of Biomedical Sciences at USI Università della Svizzera italiana

Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) is a young and lively university, a hub of opportunity open to the world where students are offered a quality interdisciplinary education in which they can be fully engaged and take center stage, and where our researchers can count on having the space to freely pursue their initiative.

Established in 1996, USI is in constant evolution, always taking on new challenges while remaining true to its three guiding principles: quality, openness and responsibility.

The Institute of Public Health (IPH) is an inter-faculty institute dedicated to teaching, research and service activities in public health sciences and its component disciplines. As such, it brings together, among others, the expertise of epidemiology, psychology, communication sciences, and economics. A key research area in the IPH is the study of determinants contributing to child and adolescent well-being and the identification of strategies and actions to promote a healthy development in early age.

The Institute invites applications for a fully funded Ph.D. position in a 4-year Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) project on *The Role of Offline, Hybrid, and Online Play in Socio-emotional and Cognitive Functioning among School-aged Children and Adolescents in Italian-speaking Switzerland* (ital. Gioco Ibrido, Offline, e Online (GIOCO): Sviluppo e Ruolo nel Funzionamento Socio-emotivo e Cognitivo dei Giovani).

The project

GIOCO aims to explore how school-aged children and adolescents play today and how play is linked to their socio-emotional and cognitive development.

This SNF project uses a mixed-methods design: Study 1 encompasses a qualitative focus-group study to explore recent trends in offline, hybrid, and online play among school-aged children and adolescents, motivations for play, and to what extent the different forms of play are guided by adults. Study 2 comprises a deductive-inductive content analysis of categorizations of play available in the scientific and grey literature and based on insights from the focus groups to create a holistic map of offline, hybrid, and online play. Study 3 includes a longitudinal study in which an online questionnaire will be administered three times over two years to investigate the reciprocal relationship between offline, hybrid, and online play and socio-emotional and cognitive functioning in children and adolescents, taking into consideration personal and contextual factors to explain potential disparities. Study 4 consists of an evidence collection to formulate recommendations and co-creation workshops that bring together children, adolescents, parents, and educators to jointly design an intervention to promote age-appropriate leisure play which is beneficial for socio-emotional and cognitive development during childhood and adolescence.

The Ph.D. Position

The Ph.D. student will be enrolled in the doctoral school of the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences and follow the Ph.D. program in Public Health. The doctoral student will work under the scientific supervision of Dr. Anne-Linda Camerini and be part of the MEDIATICINO research team.

Within project GIOCO, the Ph.D. candidate will collaboratively work together with a second Ph.D. student, though develop his or her own research line and cumulative (paper-based) dissertation. In addition, the successful Ph.D. candidate will participate in a variety of tasks related to the research streams in which s/he is involved.

On the teaching side, s/he will work as teaching assistant in courses at either bachelor or master level, helping in the preparation of teaching materials and tutoring students.

The Ph.D. candidate is also asked to present the research output at scientific conferences and produce publications for scientific journals as part of his or her cumulative dissertation and beyond.

Candidates' profile

Ideal candidates should satisfy the following requirements:

- A Master (or equivalent title) in Psychology, Communication Science, Public Health, or related disciplines
- Excellent skills in oral and written English (official language of the Ph.D. program)
- Excellent skills in Italian (project GIOCO will be conducted in Italian-speaking Switzerland)
- Be curious, creative, and interested in learning from different disciplines
- Be adept in qualitative and quantitative research methods, including data analysis, with a demonstrated ability to learn new techniques
- Ability to work independently, to proactively plan and direct own work, and to manage one's time and resources efficiently
- Ability to work in team and autonomy in scheduling research steps. Interest for teaching and tutoring students and availability to collaborate with colleagues (engage in scientific dialogue, listen and think critically) are required.

Contract terms

Admission to the Ph.D. program is highly competitive. Admission decisions are based on the candidate's background, interests, attitude and potential for academic achievement. Successful enrolment in the Ph.D. program and the position as doctoral researcher are not compatible with a further professional activity.

The position is fully financed, and the salary levels correspond to those set by the Swiss National Science Foundation for Ph.D. researchers.

Workplace is USI Università della Svizzera italiana, located in Lugano, Switzerland. Availability to travel to other parts of Switzerland and abroad (for purposes of collaboration and research) is required.

Starting date is 1.5.2024 (at the earliest). However, the position will be kept open until a suitable candidate has been found.

The Application

Applications should contain:

- A letter in which the applicants describe their research interests and the motivation to apply,
- A complete CV including any scientific output to date, if applicable

- copies of relevant diplomas, certificates as well as the full transcript of records that prove the candidates' eligibility for doctoral studies
- An electronic version of the Master thesis accompanied by a short summary in English (1 page maximum)
- A support letter written by the Master thesis supervisor (or another Professor who knows the candidate well)

Please send your application in electronic form or requests for further information to Dr. Anne-Linda Camerini (anne.linda.camerini@usi.ch).

Applications received before 31.3.2024, will be given priority. However, applications will be received until the position is filled.

USI strives to be an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples. We guarantee that the selection process will give equal opportunities to female and male researchers.

As an institution that values diversity, USI particularly encourages applications from women and from all individuals from underrepresented groups.

Lugano, 1.2.2024