NOT-EQUAL

EPSRC NetworkPlus: Social Justice through the Digital Economy

Project Final Review Form

Please submit this form within one month of completing your project to **notequal@ncl.ac.uk**.

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Lead Applicant (PI): Jamie Woodcock **Email address:** jamie.woodcock@open.ac.uk **Job Title:** Senior Lecturer **Department:** Department for People and Organisations **Organisation:** The Open University	**Co-Investigators (names and organisations):** Six Silberman (Organise, UK); Hannah Johnston (Independent) **Supporting Partner(s):** **Project Title:** Crowdsourcing Wage Pledge **Project Reference Number:**

1. SUMMARY

Please outline the research challenge and question your project aimed to address, in less than 100 words.

Our project developed a 'Crowdsourcing Wage Pledge' to improve wages for crowdworkers, and to thus ensure fairer futures for digital workers in the platform economy. The project fit within Not-Equal's 'Fairer Futures for Business and Workers' challenge area with the desired outcomes of improving the recognition of poor compensation on digital labour platforms, redistributing economic resources more fairly, empowering crowdworkers to make more informed labour market decisions, and improving accountability in online labour markets – particularly within the academic sector.

2. APPROACH

Please provide a summary of the approach of your research project, including any deviations from your work plan, the reasons for this and how you addressed any issues.

Our research project was divided into three sections. These included:

(1) a survey of academic requesters to better understand how the pledge could be instituted internationally, to discover their needs and concerns, and to help draft the wage pledge.

(2) The development of an online website and tool for requesters to sign the wage pledge. This was built to accommodate the variable financial and administrative needs of requesters and will be readily accessible by workers so that they can easily see (while choosing tasks) which requesters have signed the pledge.

(3) An enforcement mechanism for the wage pledge. We anticipated that this would include internal enforcement protocols and rules, and would also engage with stakeholders (grant funders and university ethics boards) to review possible collaboration for the purpose of enforcement.

Our workplan proceeded largely as planned. As we reported in our midterm report, we were able to successfully conduct a survey with over 100 respondents. Our respondents were mostly from the US. We also successfully recruited multiple respondents from the UK, Japan, Mexico, Canada, and the Middle East. In sum, we collected the data required to draft the language and structure for the wage pledge. From these respondents, we were also able to recruit individuals (all academics involved in crowdsourcing) to take part in consultative meetings and workshops where we presented draft versions of the online website and of the enforcement mechanism.

When it comes to the enforcement mechanism, we had initially envisioned a rules-based compliance policy. However, our consultations with varied actors and stakeholders ultimately led us to reform our internal rules-based enforcement mechanism to an internal mediation process, the outcomes of which (resolved or unresolved) are also visible to worker-users of the pledge. This is not a major change in content, but rather a reframing of our approach to ensuring compliance (from 'enforcement' to 'mediation'). This decision is based on input from stakeholders resulting from our consultative design approach to the project.

3. ACTIVITIES & OUTPUTS

Please list any outputs from your project to be entered in the Not-Equal Researchfish submission. These include events, publications, workshops, webinars, invited talks, media coverage and tools (please include links to open source, git-hubs if relevant) that have resulted from your project.

Please include the following for each entry:

Tools/Tech
Title: Crowdsourcing Wage Pledge Website
Date: August 26, 2021
Type of Output: Website
Number of People Reached: TBD
Primary Audience: Crowdsourcing users, workers, and those interested in regulation
Key Outcomes/Impact: Website to facilitate and publicize the project
URL: wagepledge.org

Title: Crowdsourcing Wage Pledge Prototype, Github
Date: August 26, 2021
Type of Output: Website code
Number of People Reached: TBD
Primary Audience: Crowdsourcing users, workers, and those interested in regulation
Key Outcomes/Impact: Website design information for the wage pledge, code posted publicly on Github

URL: https://github.com/fiveplusone/crowdsourcing-wage-pledge-prototype

Title: Crowdsourcing Wage Pledge Website - FAQ
Date: August 26, 2021
Type of Output: Best practices
Number of People Reached: TBD
Primary Audience: Potential Wage Pledge Signatories and users of crowdsourcing, IRB and ethics officials, journal reviewers/editors
Key Outcomes/Impact: Wage rate suggestion calculation, additional resources for academics
URL: https://wagepledge.org/faq.php

Worker consultation
Title: Meetings and Correspondence, Academic Wage Pledge
Date: March and July, 2021
Type of Event: Meetings
Number of People Reached: 3 (representatives of organizing initiatives involving hundreds of workers)
Primary Audience: N/A
Key Outcomes/Impact: Design and dissemination input
URL: N/A

Workshops
Title: Wage Pledge for Academic Use of Crowdsourcing Workshop 1
Date: July 12, 2021
Type of Event: Internal Consultative Workshop
Number of People Reached: 14
Primary Audience: Potential Wage Pledge Signatories
Key Outcomes/Impact: Design input for the pledge and signatory recruitment
URL: N/A

Title: Wage Pledge for Academic Use of Crowdsourcing Consultative Workshop 2
Date: July 16, 2021
Type of Event: Internal Consultative Workshop
Number of People Reached: 3
Primary Audience: Potential Wage Pledge Signatories
Key Outcomes/Impact: Design input for the pledge and signatory recruitment
URL: N/A

Invited Talks and Presentations
Title: The Wage Pledge for Academic Use of Crowdsourcing
Date: May 13, 2021
Type of Event: Guest Lecture
Number of People Reached: 30
Primary Audience: University of Pennsylvania Students

Key Outcomes/Impact: Knowledge dissemination among users of crowdsourcing
URL: N/A

Title: The Wage Pledge for Academic Use of Crowdsourcing
Date: October
Type of Event: Guest Lecture
Number of People Reached: TBD
Primary Audience: International Network on Digital Labour and University of Edinburugh
Key Outcomes/Impact: Knowledge dissemination among users of crowdsourcing
URL: N/A

Media

Title: Academia and the Ethics of Crowdsourced Research
Date: August 27, 2021
Type of Output: Blog post
Number of People Reached: Public
Primary Audience: American Association of University Professors Members and readers of Academe
Key Outcomes/Impact: Knowledge dissemination among users of crowdsourcing
URL: https://academeblog.org/2021/08/27/academia-and-the-ethics-of-crowdsourced-research/

Academic Papers
Title: Institutional experimentation and improving crowdwork wages through demand-side interventions
Date: February 2022 (Submission deadline, Target Journal: Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research)
Type of Output: Peer-reviewed article
Number of People Reached: TBD
Primary Audience: Academic Audience
Key Outcomes/Impact: Pending acceptance
URL: https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy.queensu.ca/pb-assets/cmscontent/trs/2021%20Transfer%20Call%20for%20Papers%20for%20Open%20Issue%204-2022%202021%2002%2022-1615205030.pdf

Title: Crowdsourcing wage pledge: A system to let requesters publicly commit to pay minimum wage
Date: January 2022 (Submission deadline, Computer Human Interaction Conference and Published Proceedings)
Type of Output: Peer-reviewed article and conference submission
Number of People Reached: TBD
Primary Audience: Academic Audience
Key Outcomes/Impact: Pending acceptance
URL: https://chi2022.acm.org/

4. INSIGHTS & IMPACT

Please describe the findings of your project and their significance in relation to potential or actual social impact.

Our project has demonstrated that academic requesters are overwhelmingly willing to commit to paying workers the minimum wage, but that the available institutional guidance offered to researchers – be it from universities, academic journals, or ethics boards – even where it exists – has been largely insufficient when it comes to questions of how much to pay workers and how researchers can make their wage commitments publicly known. This confirms the need for a mechanism like the 'Crowdsourcing Wage Pledge'.

Our survey confirmed this need. When it comes to wage payment levels, our survey revealed that academic requesters are willing to commit to minimum wage levels that correspond to the regulations where requesters' academic institutions are located; over seventy percent of our respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fewer than 10 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Requesters, regardless of their academic position (graduate student, tenured faculty, etc.) did not express concern about their ability to pay workers at these rates. As we reported in our midterm report, this finding is consistent with our 2018 survey data showing a willingness to participate in this type of voluntary governance mechanism. To incorporate this into our project, we developed guidance on what we believe requesters should pay crowdworkers and have posted this on the FAQ portion of the site as well as our accompanying logic for how we arrived at this wage level. This guidance has already been used by academic requesters with their respective university boards as a reference in their respective discussions about establishing *university policies* on the ethical use of crowdsourcing in the UK.

We received secondary input via internal consultative workshops that we held with potential signatories. These suggested additional significant and opportunities for the outcome of this project. Through these meetings (though this was also mentioned by one respondent of our survey), we learned that multiple peer-reviewers from academic journals are not willing to accept journal submissions where crowdworkers are poorly paid. This suggests that our project may be a way for academics to *signal* that they pay fair rates. We have thus highlighted this on our FAQ page, suggesting both draft language and citations for anyone using the pledge as part of their academic research methods.

These two findings from our project are likely the most influential as they work towards the goal of *normalizing* higher pay for crowdworkers, and in turn – helping to address the issues of recognition, redistribution, and accountability that we set forth in our application. We have received correspondence from academics involved in consultation – either through workshops or those who were survey respondents – that they intend to use the wage pledge for their future projects.

5. REFLECTIONs & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Please list the key highlights from your project, summarize any lessons learned from this work and outline any future directions or plans to continue activities beyond this project.

Our survey confirmed the need for this type of mechanism. We have created it, and it is published for use. We can now focus our energies on raising awareness about the Crowdsourcing Wage Pledge and recruiting signatories. Funding from Not-Equal made it possible to achieve this.

With a view to future directions and plans to continue activities related to the Academic Wage Pledge, they are as follows:

1. We intend to submit our academic papers later this year/early next year. We have identified the target journals for these dissemination activities and feel that they are a strong fit for the audiences we seek to reach and the contributions we can make. They include an IR focused paper to be submitted to Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research; and a computing paper which will go to ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.
2. We may run a user test of the platform to encourage use and as possible content for a third academic paper. Our decision to do this will depend on uptake of the pledge during Fall 2021.
3. We intend to meet with journal editorial boards and to reach out to funding agencies to promote use of the pledge later in 2021.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this form, please contact notequal@ncl.ac.uk