UNIVERSITY of GUELPH

COLLEGE of ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

# PhD Qualifying Exam

## Wednesday September 27, 2023 at 1PM, online via Zoom (Remote)

## Wanda Li

*Foundational Research on Deceptive Patterns:*
*A QE (Qualifying Exam) on QE (Qualitative Enumeration)*

**Chair:** Dr. Minglun Gong
**Advisor:** Dr. David Flatla
**Co-Advisor:** Dr. Felix Arndt (Department of Management)
**Non-Advisory:** Dr. Luiza Antonie
**Non-Advisory:** Dr. Sandeep Mishra (Department of Management)


## Abstract:

Deceptive Patterns (also known as Dark Patterns) and the 12 Deceptive Pattern types were first introduced by Brignull in 2010. Since then, Deceptive Patterns have garnered substantial interest from various stakeholders, including academics, journalists, end-users, and government agencies like the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). These stakeholders frequently refer to prior academic work as a foundation for future investigations. However, the current conclusions drawn from studies employing Qualitative Enumeration (QE), the leading method for assessing Deceptive Patterns 'in the wild,' suffer from underlying foundational issues. Notably, the QE protocol struggles to accurately demonstrate the prevalence of Deceptive Patterns on real-world interfaces, which contradicts its original purpose.

My Ph.D. research seeks to address these issues by proposing a novel approach for evaluating Deceptive Patterns 'in the wild' and standardizing this evaluation process. The overarching research question guiding my work is: *How can we standardize the evaluation of Deceptive Patterns 'in the wild'?*

To accomplish this goal, my Ph.D. research will be divided into two distinct phases. In Phase One, titled 'The Evaluation of the QE Method,' I will thoroughly investigate and apply the QE method to highlight its limitations and shortcomings. Phase Two, titled 'The New Method,' will focus on exploring innovative solutions to overcome the identified challenges and improve the evaluation of Deceptive Patterns 'in the wild.' This two-phase approach will enable me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the QE method's strengths and weaknesses and subsequently develop a more effective and standardized method for evaluating Deceptive Patterns in real-world contexts.