



UiA University of Agder

Academic Esports Seminar

University of Agder
Campus Grimstad

11-13 May 2026

academicesports.net
twitch.tv/esportsresearchnetwork



FLARE
Future Lab for Academic
Research in Esports

THE JOURNAL OF
ELECTRONIC
GAMING AND
ESPORTS



Esports
Research
Network



The Research
Council of Norway



Welcome in Grimstad

Dear colleagues, partners, and friends,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Academic Esports Seminar 2026, here at the University of Agder in Grimstad. Over the next three days, we will explore how esports can help us better understand, and actively shape, the digital society we are all a part of.

AES is more than a seminar. It is a platform for insight, exchange, and transformation. Through keynotes, research presentations, and panel discussions, we will investigate how competitive gaming intersects with education, wellbeing, policy, and inclusion. From grassroots development and gender equity to gamification frameworks and human rights in esports, AES 2026 showcases the full breadth of academic thought leadership driving this rapidly evolving field.

This year, we are particularly proud to bring together voices that bridge research and practice. Our panels tackle pressing questions: how esports translates into real-world skills across education and industry, how it can foster multiculturalism and diplomacy across borders, and what it will take to build a sustainable future for grassroots esports. These conversations reflect the ambition at the heart of AES: not just to study esports, but to use it as a catalyst for meaningful change.

We are honored to feature contributions from scholars and practitioners spanning the globe, from Sydney to Tsukuba, from Seoul to Austin, from The Hague to Las Vegas. Each session represents a step forward in rethinking not only how we study esports, but how we use it to reimagine education, community, and culture.

Your participation reflects a growing recognition that esports is more than entertainment. It is a lens through which we can understand the challenges and opportunities of a digitally connected world.

Welcome to Grimstad. Welcome to AES 2026. Let's chart the future together.

Warm regards,

Rune Andersen
Head of FLARE (Future Lab for Research in Academic Esports)
University of Agder



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Program 11th May 2026

08:30–09:00 Registration (Entry of the Building)

09:00–09:15 Opening Words (Zhiyu Jiang, Vice-Dean for Research, University of Agder)

Research Session 1: Education & Grassroots Esports (C2 042)

09:15–09:35 **Academic Esports as Liminal Innovation in Hierarchical Organizations**
A.P. (Tony) Ammeter & Sirkka L. Jarvenpaa — University of Mississippi / University of Texas at Austin

09:35–09:55 **Between Performance and Inclusion: Exploring the Role of Coaches in European Grassroots Esports**
André Baumann — Bredder-e-sport Allianzen

09:55–10:15 **Exploring Esports Sessions in Educational Context: Impacts on Cognitive Functions**
Florian Strady, Alexandra Perrot & Nicolas Besombes — Université Paris Cité / Université Paris-Saclay

10:30–11:00 **Coffee Break (Entry of the building)**

Research Session 2: Academic Programs & Frameworks (C2 042)

11:00–11:20 **A Multidisciplinary Framework for Youth Esports Development (GAKU Framework)**
Sayo Okamoto — GAKU

11:20–11:40 **Building a Culture: Pro-Player Integration into College Esports Programs**
John McDermott & Aaron Colaiacomo — University of Mississippi / Fisher College

12:00–13:00 **Lunch Break (Uglandsstua)**

PANEL: From Game to Practice: Applying Esports in Education, Work, and Life
Moderator: Tobias Scholz
• Cathrine Hopstock, Senior Vice President / Head of Technology, Gard AS
• Sayo Okamoto, CEO, GAKU
• Nicole Minkyung Choi, Business Development – Global Part Lead, Gen.G Global Academy

Research Session 3: Pathways, Gender & Society (C2 042)

14:15–14:35 **When Usernames Matter: Gender Signals and Harassment in Multiplayer Games**
Raphael Pifti — The Hague University of Applied Sciences

14:35–14:55 **Grassroots Development of Traditional Sports to Amateur, Olympic, and Professional Pathways**
Kurtis Homan — St. Cloud State University

14:55–15:15 **Grassroots Esports and the Transformation of Education and Cultural Participation in the Digital Society**
Murtaza Mohiqi — University of Agder

15:30–16:00 **Coffee Break (Entry of the building)**

16:00–17:00 **KEYNOTE: Brett Abarbanel, Executive Director, International Gaming Institute**

Program 12th May 2026

08:30–09:00 Check-in

Research Session 4: Physical Health in Esports (C2 042)

- 09:00–09:20 **Esports and Fitspiration: Potential Impact on Sedentary Epidemic**
Thomas Andre — University of Mississippi
- 09:20–09:40 **Esports Preparticipation Screening Tool: An Investigation of the Health of Esports Players**
Sam Di Nicola — University Campus of Esports, London
- 09:40–10:00 **Personalized Nutrition, Lifestyle, and Supplementation Strategies to Support Cognitive Performance and Well-Being in Esports Athletes**
Loizos Georgiou — Bredde-esport-Alliansen
- 10:30–11:00 **Coffee Break (Entry of the building)**

Research Session 5: Wellbeing, Gender & Competence (C2 042)

- 11:00–11:20 **Sleep Quality and Duration on Cognitive Performance in Esports Athletes**
Louis O'Doherty — University Campus of Esports, London
- 11:20–11:40 **The Impact of Athlete Gender on Esports Viewership: Insights from Eye-Tracking Analysis**
Cornel Nesseler, Petr Parshakov, Iuliia Naidenova, Daria Semenova & Sofya Kulikova — University of Stavanger / HSE University
- 11:40–12:00 **The Effect of Early Gaming Toxicity on Long-Term Participation in Competitive Esports Across All Genders**
Katie Holgate — University Campus of Esports, London
- 12:00–12:20 **The MageTower of Choice: Translating Esports Mastery into Real-World Competence**
Tobias Scholz — University of Agder
- 12:30–13:30 **Lunch (Uglandsstua)**
- PANEL: Playing Across Borders: Esports, Multiculturalism, and Diplomacy**
Moderator: Rune Andersen
- 13:30–14:20
- Former Ambassador Eric Whitaker
 - Jordan Whitaker Director, William & Mary
 - Nyle Sky Kauwelo, Director, UH Esports
- 14:20–14:35 **Signing Ceremony: UiA & Óbuda University, Budapest**
- PANEL: Grassroots Esports at a Crossroads: Overcoming Legacy Barriers for Sustainable Growth**
Moderator: Tobias Scholz
- 14:35–15:30
- HRH Prince Omar bin Faisal, President, Jordan Esports Federation; Board Member, IeSF
 - Elin Yoojung Moen, Board Member, IeSF; Vice President European Esports Federation
 - Sturla Frøyland, Head of Innovation, NIF-NOC
- 15:30–16:00 **Coffee Break (Entry of the building)**
- 16:00–17:00 **KEYNOTE: Benjamin Bays, Associate Professor of Instruction**
- 18:00 **Barbeque (Uglandsstua)**
- 19:30 **Games Night (A3120 Board Games | A3121 Esports | A3099 Arcade)**

Program 13th May 2026

- 09:00–09:30 Check-in
- 09:30–10:30 **KEYNOTE:** Nyle Sky Kauwelo, Director, UH Esports
- 10:30–11:00 **Coffee Break (Entry of the building)**

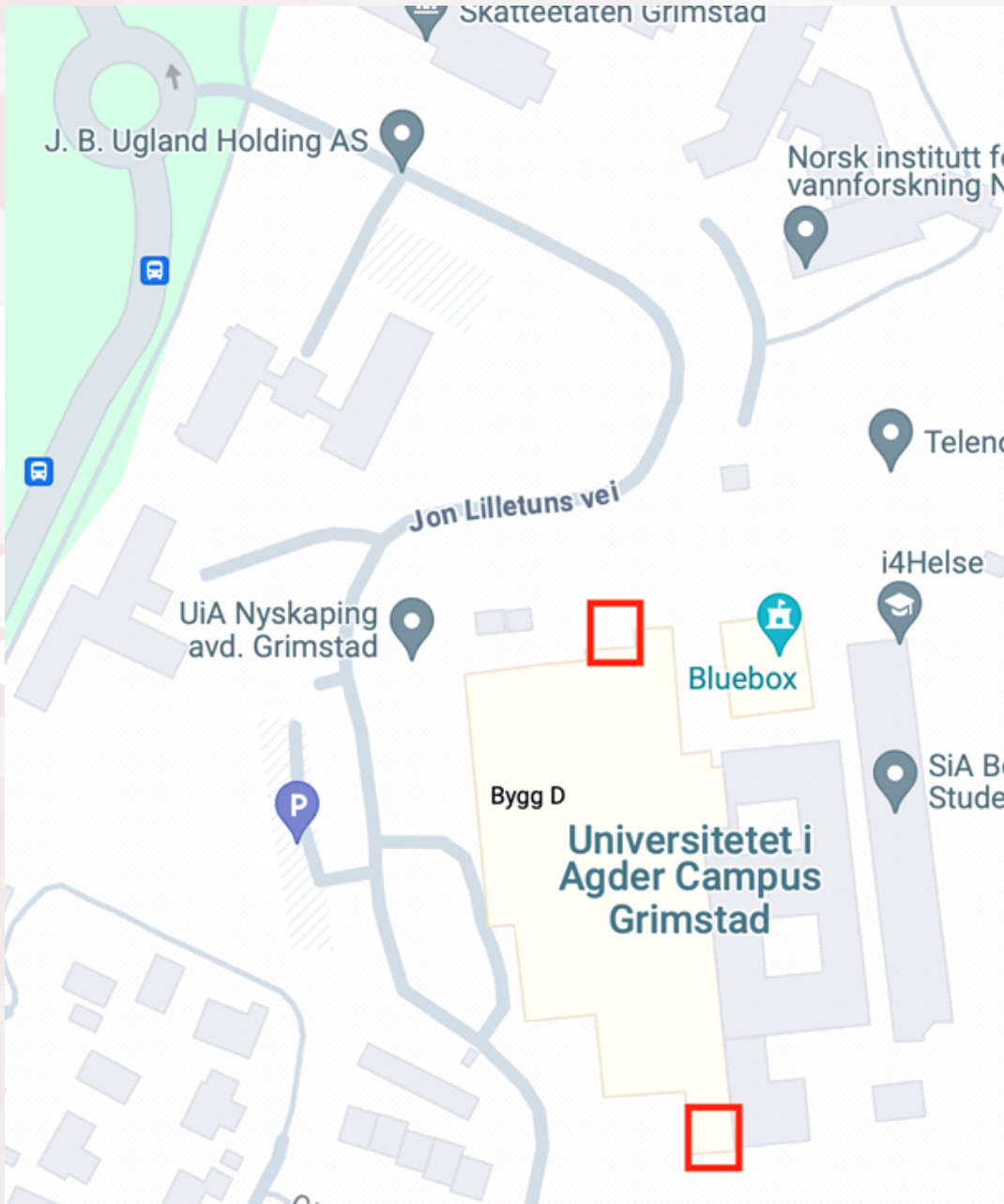
Research Session 6: Community, Innovation & Rights (C2 042)

- 11:00–11:20 **A Human-Centered Framework for Gamification in Metaverse Esports**
Ahmed Gamal — University of Agder
- 11:20–11:40 **A Qualitative Study of Socialization Among Female Gamers**
Trude Tonholm — Østfold University College
- 11:40–12:00 **Inclusive Learning Through Games**
Maj-Elin Milla Heigre — Prepare
- 12:00–12:20 **Anti-Doping Regime and Human Rights Risks in Esports**
Tsubasa Shinohara — University of Tsukuba
- 12:30–13:30 **Lunch Break (Uglandsstua)**

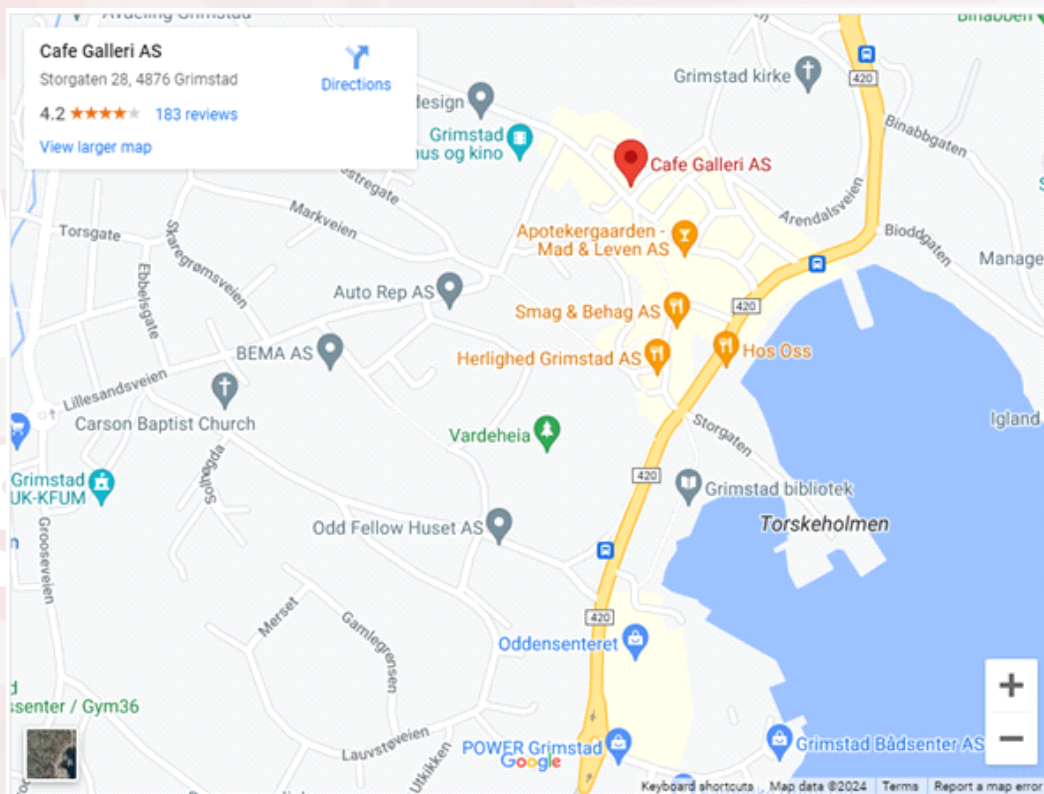
Research Session 7: Aesthetics & Innovation (C2 042)

- 13:30–13:50 **Escaping Obsolescence: Eternal Visual Aesthetics in Esports Games**
Guy Lobwein — University of New South Wales
- 13:50–14:10 **Innovation in Norwegian Sports and Esports (to be confirmed)**
Sturla Frøyland — The Norwegian Confederation of Sports / NIF-NOC
- 14:10–14:25 **Closing Words (Folke Haugland, Head of Department of ICT, University of Agder)**
- 14:25–14:40 **Official Group Photo**

Main Entrance Building



Location Pub Quiz



Information

Some practical details

Norway is a largely cashless, highly digitalized society where debit/credit cards and mobile apps are the primary payment methods. [Vipps](#) is the dominant mobile payment app, while BankAxept is the standard debit card system.

Key Payment Methods

- **Cards:** Debit cards (BankAxept) are the most popular for everyday purchases. Visa and Mastercard are also widely used, with high penetration of contactless (NFC) technology.
- **Mobile Apps:** **Vipps** is universal, used for P2P transfers, in-store payments, and online shopping.
- **Cash:** Rarely used, but possible.

There is approximately ½ hour walk between the hotel and campus, and I enclose a road description for your information: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/VogXqAgtMRTWiQiY7> Destination “Bluebox” is a part of campus area and closely located to the campus main building.

Airport Transportation

Participants are advised to use the combination of local bus lines 35/36 (Kjevik–Kristiansand) and 100/100D/100E (Kristiansand–Grimstad–Arendal). Optimal transfer points include Vige, Vollevannet, University stop, or Kristiansand bus station. Detailed timetable and route information can be found on the AKT website.

Taxi services are also available and can be arranged directly at the airport.

Campus Parking

If you plan to drive, please be aware that parking at the University of Agder is managed through the APCOA FLOW app. It can be downloaded from Google Play or the Apple Store.

Communication

To facilitate discussions, collaboration, and coordination of travel or accommodation among attendees, please join the event's dedicated Discord server at Event Discord <https://discord.gg/KzxAQtTt>

Contact

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