Programme Specification

Postgraduate Programmes

Awarding Body/Institution	University of London
Teaching Institution	Goldsmiths, University of London
Name of Final Award and Programme Title	MA in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design
Name of Interim Award(s)	PG Cert in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design; PGDip in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design
Duration of Study/Period of Registration	1 year FT or 2 years PT
UCAS Code(s)	N/A
QAA Benchmark Group	Computing
FHEQ Level of Award	Level 7
Programme Accredited by	N/A
Date Programme Specification last updated/approved	June 2017
Primary Department/Institute	Computing

Departments which will also be involved in teaching part of the programme
Institute for Creative & Cultural Entrepreneurship

Programme overview

Digital games have evolved past consoles and into the fabric of everyday experiences. This evolution has been married to a leap forward in the sophistication of content in game experiences. No longer are games a facile form of entertainment but a complex landscape for ground breaking narratives, immersive experiences and creative expression. The result has been the rise of the integration of games and game elements into a vast range of experiences with media such as advertising, museums, medical training, psychology, education and theatre.

As new opportunities emerge both technologically and conceptually, new markets grow. According to the UK Interactive Entertainment report for 2015, the UK has the sixth largest games market globally. It grew by 7.4% in
2014 to £4.2 billion. Significantly for this programme, less traditional platforms now control a large proportion of the market. Mobile gaming controls 21.2%, and PC Games control 25%. These two platforms are critical for small developers. There are 1,902 video game companies in the UK. The number of small companies grew by 22% between 2011 and 2013.

To serve this new interactive landscape, this MA programme focuses on developing a new form hybrid creator well
suited to take or create a role for themselves in experience design or independent games. Potential graduates are well suited to start small companies or join a vast array of companies such as W+K, Pan Studios, Molecule Games, Kin, The Science Museum, Play Lab and similar ventures.

Programme entry requirements

A BA or BSc Degree at 2.1 level or above. The BSc or BA can be from a wide range of subjects including Art, Theatre, Design, Literature, Computer Science or Engineering. A two-week interactive media and programming boot camp will be offered before this degree program for students who are transitioning from different fields outside of computing.

Outstanding practitioners or individuals with strong creative experience may also be considered. Non-native English students should normally have a minimum IELTS score of 6.5 or equivalent.

Aims of the programme

This programme seeks to provide relevant skills to reflect recent and rapid changes in the games industry which have been driven by the burgeoning independent and alternative sectors over the past decade. Appealing to wider audiences than the traditional console market, indie games employ broader ranges of visual aesthetics and narrative development often critically engaging with contemporary themes. The scene has attracted diverse players through the rise of casual gaming platforms which use mobile and online platforms. Through cutting edge physical technologies and virtual reality, the industry has expanded further into neighbouring sectors and forms such as advertising, museums, medical training, psychology, education and theatre. The result has been the rise of the integration of games and game elements into a vast range of experiences with media. With their broad audiences, technologies, and themes, independent games contrast strongly with the console sector which narrowly focus on predominantly male markets.

In these small businesses, which make up 95% of the UK games industry according to Nesta, there is a need for a new kind of independent practitioner - an interdisciplinarian, who can develop, prototypes and sell compelling experiences by themselves or within small teams. In order to serve this new interactive landscape, this programme focuses on developing aesthetic awareness, creating compelling mechanics and the ability to craft innovative narratives in games and physical experiences.
We have existing links with many of these independent companies, games festivals and press venues which will help facilitate job placement and the exhibition and promotion of student work. Additionally, students are requested to be

These connections are complementary to our strong links within large scale games development and will help facilitate employability, promote student work, and empower students to have a national and international presence.

Graduating students will have:

A knowledge of creative coding technologies applied across a range of rapidly evolving disciplines such as VR, Physical Computing and Storytelling
Game Design skills particularly relevant to independent games and environmental design

The ability to craft compelling physical systems in participatory environments

Experience prototyping creative, interactive environments with a range of modern fabrication technologies

Strong transferable skills across the creative sector in particular the ability to rapidly pitch, prototype then critically assess the validity of a concept
The ability to take a project from prototype to complete concept within a team or alone within a limited time frame

What you will be expected to achieve

Students who successfully complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design (60 credits) will be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding		**Taught by the following modules**
A1	leverage and use the basic building blocks of playable experiences	Approaches to Play 1
A2	analyze the narrative, world building, game mechanics and game aesthetics in games	Approaches to Play 1
A3	critically discuss and criticise attitudes and trends in independent games and creative technologies.	Approaches to Play 1; Creative Coding 1
A4	apply their understanding of current creative technologies to their own creative practice.	Approaches to Play 1; Physical Computing; Creative Coding 1

Cognitive and Thinking Skills		**Taught by the following modules**
B1	design compelling stories and immersive worlds leveraging game mechanics and game aesthetics	Approaches to Play 1
B2	analyze and critique games on a socially relevant level	Approaches to Play 1
B3	critically analyse their own games and digital technologies	Approaches to Play 1

Subject Specific Skills and Professional Behaviours and Attitudes		**Taught by the following modules**
C1	programme as required to make embodied interactive experiences	Creative Coding 1&2; Physical Computing
C2	prototype small games on paper and with drag and drop or text based game engines.	Approaches to Play 1

Transferable Skills		**Taught by the following modules**
D1	communicate effectively both in writing and presentations to an audience	Throughout programme
D2	plan small group and individual projects	Throughout programme
D3	research emerging technologies of interest and apply this research to creative output	Throughout programme
D4	Develop and prototype design ideas quickly	Throughout programme

Students who successfully complete the Postgraduate Diploma in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design (120 credits) will be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding		**Taught by the following modules**
A1	describe the state-of-the-art in independent games and playable experience design	Approaches to Play 2
A2	describe the role of playtesting and user experience to evaluate playable experiences	Approaches to Play 2
A3	reproduce, communicate and apply further subject-specific knowledge	Option modules

Cognitive and Thinking Skills		**Taught by the following modules**
B1	relate game mechanics to user experience and	Approaches to Play 2

	experience design	
B2	interpret and respond to user feedback data on interactive systems	Approaches to Play 2; Physical Computing
B3	use and create environmental sensing systems	Physical Computing; Approaches to Play 2
B4	implement specialist knowledge in playable environments	Physical Computing; Approaches to Play 2

Subject Specific Skills and Professional Behaviours and Attitudes		**Taught by the following modules**
C1	conceptualize and execute multiple original creative projects at a professional level	Physical Computing
C2	research and plan small creative projects	Creative Coding 1&2; Entrepreneurial Modeling
C3	rapidly prototype and develop creative interactive software and hardware	Approaches to Play 2; Physical Computing; Creative Coding 1&2
C4	use fabrication techniques to create participatory environments	Physical Computing; Approaches to Play 2; Final Projects
C5	design and implement software and hardware subject to the constraints of deployment in public spaces	Physical Computing; Final projects

Transferable Skills		**Taught by the following modules**
D1	conceptually develop an idea based on research and testing	Physical Computing, Approaches to Play 2
D2	execute and plan a project on a deadline based on a creative brief	Approaches to Play 2

In addition to the learning outcomes above, students who successfully complete the MA in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design (180 credits) will be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding		**Taught by the following modules**
A1	describe the stages involved in a medium-scale playable experience project	Entrepreneurial Modeling; Final project
A2	independently broaden and deepen their understanding of theory and practice of aspects of independent games and playable experience design	Final project

Cognitive and Thinking Skills		**Taught by the following modules**
B1	research and critically analyse related work	Final Project

Subject Specific Skills and Professional Behaviours and Attitudes		**Taught by the following modules**
C1	execute a medium-scale playable experience project plan, adapting it to circumstance if necessary	Final Project
C2	Exhibit and present a playable experience to the general public	

Transferable Skills		**Taught by the following modules**
D1	communicate (in person and in writing) the execution and outcomes of a medium-scale	Final project

	playable experience project	
D2	Work as a group to plan a presentation of creative work for the general public	Final Project

How you will learn

The Department of Computing is committed to a diverse and stimulating range of learning and teaching methods that ensure the programme outcomes are addressed rigorously and effectively.
The course will be taught by a number of methods including a minimum of four one-hour weekly lectures, plus four weekly supervised two-hour lab sessions for development work, and “one to one” tutorials.
The Department's fabrication facilities provide state of the art technologies for students, who will also be able to use the motion capture facilities and theatre spaces. These facilities and spaces allow useful “peer to peer” learning to occur naturally. Small industry lead talks will happen within the term and students will be invited to attend. Students will be encouraged to attend wider Goldsmiths lectures including the Whitehead Lectures and conferences occurring on campus.

How you will be assessed

The Department is committed to providing diverse types of assessment. Our methods of assessment are designed to reflect research and commercial activities and to encourage independent creative thinking and working mixed with collaborative work. Students will be required to present their work in several different ways including game play demos with associate code / analytics data, reports and short management reports, oral presentations and software delivery. Each module in the programme will have its own assignments, reflecting to the nature of the module. In addition to modular assignments, students will have a major final project in the summer term, which should build on what students have learnt throughout the programme. The final project is an opportunity for students to work independently on a large project at a research level or undertake a work placement externally, on-site at a company (which includes delivery of a Report and a presentation of the work done in the placement). Placements are optional and not guaranteed. It is the responsibility of the student to secure their placements with the support of the Module Leader for the Final Project.

In collaborative assignment work, care must be taken by students to describe clearly and precisely the nature of their contributions, and the contributions of their group collaborators. This must be delivered as part of students' assignment written reports and/or evaluation documentation, as required in the documentation brief.

Final projects will be assessed based on the submission of a final report and a presentation in a viva. Guidance on the structure and writing of the report will be given in the module handbook. Projects will be marked by a panel composed of two members of academic staff.

Students who are unable to submit an assessment on time due to illness or other unavoidable circumstances, must provide documentary evidence to their personal tutor to be allowed a late submission. Evidence must also be supplied for students to apply for consideration of mitigating circumstances in assessment.

Marking criteria

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
80-100%	Distinction	Represents a demonstration of exceptional understanding,

	(Outstanding/Exceptional)	insight and achievement of the aspects described in the criteria for a distinction grade.
70-79%	Distinction	Demonstration of excellence in understanding based on a thorough graphs of relevant concepts, methodology and content; display of skill in applying and interpreting complex material; organization of material at a high level of competence. Students should be able to demonstrate the ability to work independently to research and implement and in some cases extend state-of-the art technologies.
60-69%	Merit	Demonstration of a deep level of understanding based on a competent grasp of relevant concepts, methodology and content; display of skill in applying interpreting complex material; organization of material at a high level of competence. Students should be able to demonstrate the ability to work independently to research and implement state-of-the-art technologies.
50-59%	Pass	Demonstration of a sound level of understanding based on a competent grasp of relevant concepts, methodology and content; display of skill in organizing, discussing and applying complex material. Students should be able to implement state-of-the-art technologies under guidance.
30-49%	Fail	Represents an overall failure to achieve the appropriate learning outcomes. A mark at this level is given to work which may have some positive features, but is not at Masters standard: for example, by lacking structure, having a poor-quality line of argument, or does not demonstrate sufficient application
10-29%	Bad fail	Represents a significant overall failure to achieve the appropriate learning outcomes at Masters standard.
1-9%	Very bad fail	A submission that does not attempt to address the module's specified learning outcomes. It will be considered a non-valid attempt and the module must be re-sat.
0%	Non submission or plagiarised	Work was not submitted or it was plagiarised.

How the programme is structured

Academic Year of Study 1

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
Approaches To Play 1	IS71077A	15	7	Core	1
Approaches To Play 2	IS71078A	15	7	Core	2
Final Project in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design	IS71079A	60	7	Core	2
EITHER: Physical Computing	IS71013C	15	7	Optional	1
OR: Physical Computing: Using Micro-controllers with Fabrication Techniques	IS71065C	30	7	Core Option	2
A selection of optional modules to the value of 15 and 30 credits from an annual list made available by the department		15/30	7	Optional	1,2

Academic support

Support for learning and wellbeing is provided in number of ways by departments and College support services who work collaboratively to ensure students get the right help to reach their best potential both academically and personally.

Students are allocated a personal tutor and a Senior Tutor in each department has overall responsibility for student progress and welfare. Departments arrange regular communication to students in the form of mailings and meetings as well as regular progress reports and feedback on coursework and assignments. This is in addition to scheduled seminars, tutorials and lectures/workshops.

Personal tutors will invite students to meet in the first two weeks of a new term and regularly throughout the duration of a programme of study. These meetings aim to discuss progress on modules, discussion of the academic discipline and reports from previous years if available (for continuing students). This way progress, attendance, essay/coursework/assessment marks can be reviewed and an informed discussion can be about how to strengthen learning and success.

Students are sent information about learning resources in the Library and on the VLE so that they have access to programme handbooks, programme information and support related information and guidance. Timetables are sent in advance of the start of term so that students can begin to manage their preparation and planning.

Taught sessions and lectures provide overviews of coursework themes, which students are encouraged to complement with intensive reading for presentation and discussion with peers at seminars. Coursework essays build on lectures and seminars so students are encouraged to attend all taught sessions to build knowledge and their own understanding of their chosen discipline.

In depth feedback is provided for written assignments and essays via written feedback forms and formative feedback with module tutors/leads is provided to endure that students' work is on the right track. Feedback comes in many forms and not only as a result of written comments on a marked essay. Students are given feedback on developing projects and practice as they attend workshops and placements.

Students may be referred to specialist student services by department staff or they may access support services independently. Information about support services is clearly provided on the College Website and as new students join Goldsmiths through new starter information and induction/Welcome Week. Any support recommendations that are made are agreed with the student and communicated to the department so that adjustments to learning & teaching are able to be implemented at a department level and students can be reassured that arrangements are in place. Opportunities are provided for students to review their support arrangements should their circumstances change. The Inclusion & Learning Support and Wellbeing Teams maintain case loads of students and provide on-going support.

The Careers Service provides central support for skills enhancement, running the Gold Award Scheme and other co-curricular activities that are accredited via the higher education achievement award (HEAR).

The Academic Skills Centre works with academic departments offering bespoke academic literacy sessions. It also provides a programme of academic skills workshops and one-to-one provision throughout the year, which students can access directly at gold.ac.uk/eas/.

Links with employers, placement opportunities and career prospects

We already have existing links with many of these independent companies. These include, Fabulous Beasts, Public Domain Corp, Original Content London, Six for Start, PlayLab London, Hellicar Lewis, Matteson Marcault, Molecule Games - owned by Playstation, and Funomena. We also have links with London and international games events such as Now Play This, Indiecade, Wild Rumpus, A MAZ,

Resonate, Creative Coast, Game City, Quo Valis, Control and Screen Shake. Finally, we have links to media outlets and industry affiliations including Vice, Motherboard, Kill Screen, Polygon, Gamasutra, Rock, Paper Shotgun, Women in Games, Code Liberation Foundation, Geeks for Equality, Gaymer X, Make Magazine, Hackaday, Facets Conference, Unity 3D, UKIE, V&A, Sony, Microsoft, The Guardian, and The BBC.

These connections are complimentary to our strong links within large scale games development and will help facilitate employability, promote student work, and empower us to have a national and international presence.

In addition, new opportunities are in the process of being formalized with organizations like Unity, Molecule Games, FACT in Liverpool and Sam Labs for students to collaborate with as well as for them to meet and hear from industry professionals.

The requirements of a Goldsmiths degree

Master's Degrees
All Master's degrees at Goldsmiths have a minimum value of 180 credits. Programmes are comprised of modules which have individual credit values. In order to be eligible for the award of a Master's degree students must have passed all modules on the programme.

Intermediate Exit Points
Some programmes incorporate intermediate exit points of Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma, which may be awarded on the successful completion of modules to the value of 60 credits or 120 credits respectively. Individual programmes may specify which, if any, combination of modules are required in order to be eligible for the award of these qualifications. The awards are made without classification.

Final Classification
There are four possible categories of final classification for Master's degrees: Distinction, Merit, Pass and Fail.

For further information, please refer to the Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Students, which may be found here: http://www.gold.ac.uk/governance/studentregulations/

Programme-specific rules and facts

Students are required to select one of Physical Computing (15 credits) or Physical Computing: Using Micro- controllers with Fabrication Techniques (30).

How teaching quality will be monitored

Goldsmiths employs a number of methods to ensure and enhance the quality of learning and teaching on its programmes.

Programmes and modules must be formally approved against national standards and are monitored throughout the year in departmental staff / student forums and through the completion of module evaluation questionnaires. Every programme also has at least one External Examiner who produces an annual report which comments on the standards of awards and student achievement.

This output is considered with other relevant data in the process of Annual Programme Review, to which all programmes are subject, and which aims to identify both good practice and issues which require resolution.

Every six years all programmes within a department are also subject to a broader periodic review. This aims to ensure that they remain current, that the procedures to maintain the standards of the awards are working effectively and the quality of the learning opportunities and information provided to students and applicants is appropriate.

Detailed information on all of these procedures are published on the webpages of the Quality Office (http://www.gold.ac.uk/quality/).