

MA Games and Playful Design

Previously known as “MA Independent Games & Playable Experience Design”

Programme Specification

Awarding Institution:

University of London (Interim Exit Awards made by Goldsmiths’ College)

Teaching Institution: Goldsmiths, University of London

Name of Final Award and Programme Title:

MA Games and Playful Design

Name of Interim Exit Award(s):

Postgraduate Certificate in Games and Playful Design

Postgraduate Diploma in Games and Playful Design

Duration of Programme: 1 year full-time or 2 years part-time

UCAS Code(s): Not applicable

HECoS Code(s): (CAH11-01-06) computer games and animation

QAA Benchmark Group: Computing

FHEQ Level of Award: Level 7

Programme accredited by: Not applicable

Date Programme Specification last updated/approved: November 2021

Home Department: Computing

Department(s) which will also be involved in teaching part of the programme:

Institute of Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship (ICCE)

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 games and experience design.

This is different from a more traditional game programme as it offers students a more game design oriented approach, with transferable skills that are applicable not only in the videogame market but also everywhere a game design perspective is needed, from interactive theatre to escape the room design, from playful installations to alternative controllers.

Potential graduates are well suited to start a job either in the game industry, both at independent and AAA level or in many neighbouring markets. The ideal career path will see the student work their way to become creative directors for games and interactive playful experiences. As for the industry output, students will be able to start small companies or join a vast array of companies such as W+K, Punchdrunk, Nexus, Media Molecule, Frontiers, The Science Museum, Electric Square, Ubisoft and similar ventures.

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. The MA, with its peculiar design first approach, will provide students with all the tool to access this new thriving markets as well as the more traditional AAA environment with the long term aim of becoming a creative director in the interactive entertainment and experience design field.

In these small and mid-sized businesses, which make up 95% of the UK games industry according to Nesta, there is a need for a new kind of 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 companies, games festivals and press venues which will help facilitate job placement and the exhibition and promotion of student work.

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:

- Game Design skills particularly relevant to digital and hybrid games and environmental design
- The ability to craft compelling physical systems in participatory environments
- A knowledge of real-time interactive technologies applied across a range of rapidly evolving disciplines such as VR, Physical Computing and Storytelling
- 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

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 or alternative online resource might 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.

What you will be expected to achieve

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

Knowledge and understanding

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	leverage and use the basic building blocks of playful experiences	Approaches to Play 1
A2	analyse the narrative, world building, game mechanics and game aesthetics in games	Approaches to Play 1, Interactive Narrative and Digital Storytelling
A3	critically discuss and criticise attitudes and trends in independent games and creative technologies	Approaches to Play 1; Visual Game Design
A4	apply their understanding of current creative technologies to their own creative practice	Approaches to Play 1; Visual Game Design; Level Design and Game Feel

Cognitive and thinking skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
B1	design compelling stories and immersive worlds leveraging game mechanics and game aesthetics	Approaches to Play 1, Interactive Narrative and Digital Storytelling; Visual Game Design
B2	analyse and critique games on a socially relevant level	Approaches to Play 1, Approaches to play 2
B3	critically analyse their own games and digital technologies	Approaches to Play 1; Approaches to play 2

Subject specific skills and professional behaviours and attitudes

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C1	programme as required to make interactive experiences	Visual Game Design; Level Design and Game Feel
C2	prototype small games on paper and with drag and drop or text based game engines	Approaches to Play 1; Visual Game Design

Transferable skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
D1	communicate effectively both in writing and presentations to an audience	Throughout programme
D2	plan small group and individual projects	Throughout programme

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
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 Games and Playful Design (120 credits) will be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	describe the state-of-the-art in Games and Playful 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

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
B1	relate game mechanics to user experience and experience design	Approaches to Play 2
B2	interpret and respond to user feedback data on interactive systems	Approaches to Play 2; Visual Game Design
B3	use and create compelling game spaces	Level Design and Game Feel; Approaches to Play 2
B4	implement specialist knowledge in playable environments	Level Design and Game Feel; Visual Game Design; Approaches to Play 2

Subject specific skills and professional behaviours and attitudes

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C1	relate game mechanics to user experience and experience design	Approaches to Play 1&2
C2	interpret and respond to user feedback data on interactive systems	Approaches to Play 2

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C3	Drive the audience through the exploration of game spaces	Level Design and Game Feel; Approaches to Play 2
C4	implement specialist knowledge in playable environments	Visual Game Design; Approaches to Play 2

Transferable skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
D1	conceptually develop an idea based on research and testing	Visual Game Design, 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 Games and Playful Design (180 credits) will be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	describe the stages involved in a medium-scale playable experience project	Approaches to Play 2; Final project
A2	independently broaden and deepen their understanding of theory and practice of aspects of Games and Playful Design	Final project in Game and Playful Design

Cognitive and thinking skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
B1	research and critically analyse related work	Final Project in Game and Playful Design

Subject specific skills and professional behaviours and attitudes

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C1	execute a medium-scale playable experience project plan, adapting it to circumstance if necessary	Final Project in Game and Playful Design
C2	exhibit and present a playable experience to the general public	Final Project in Game and Playful Design

Transferable skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
D1	communicate (in person and in writing) the execution and outcomes of a medium-scale playable experience project	Final project in Game and Playful Design
D2	work as a group to plan a presentation of creative work for the general public	Final Project in Game and Playful Design

How the programme is structured

Full-time mode

Academic year of study 1

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
Approaches To Play 1	IS71077B	15	7	Compulsory	1
Visual Game Design OR Games Programming 1	TBC	15	7	Compulsory	1
Approaches To Play 2	IS71078B	15	7	Compulsory	2
Interactive Narrative and Digital Storytelling	IS71073B	15	7	Compulsory	2
Final Project in Games and Playful Design	IS71079A	60	7	Compulsory	2
A selection of optional 15 or 30 credit modules to the value of 60credits from an annual list made available by the department	Various	60	7	Optional	1,2

Students should take Visual Game Design as compulsory module unless they already have a consolidate experience with programming.

Part-time mode

Academic year of study 1

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
Approaches To Play 1	IS71077B	15	7	Compulsory	1

Visual Game Design OR Games Programming 1	TBC	15	7	Compulsory	1
Approaches To Play 2	IS71078B	15	7	Compulsory	2
A selection of optional 15 or 30 credit modules to the value of 15 to 30 credits from an annual list made available by the department	Various	15-30	7	Optional	1,2

Students should take Visual Game Design as compulsory module unless they already have a consolidate experience with programming.

Academic year of study 2

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
Final Project in Independent Games	IS71079A	60	7	Compulsory	2
Interactive Narrative and Digital Storytelling	IS71073B	15	7	Compulsory	2
A selection of optional modules to the value of 30 to 45 credits from an annual list made available by the department depending on what has been taken in the first year	Various	30-45	7	Optional	1-2

A different module allocation for part time students can be agreed if necessary.

Academic support Placement opportunities

Students are able to take a paid placement in place of an academic final project. We have a strong network of Games companies and studios and have a succeeded in placing a large number of students, the majority of which have gone on to permanent jobs in the organisation. In additional to paid commercial placement, we offer the option of projects that

are sponsored and co-supervised by non-profit organisations or other academic departments or institutions.

We already have existing links with many of these independent companies. These include Niantic, Nexus, Six to Start, PlayLab London, Matheson Marcault, Media Molecule, Punchdrunk, Electric Square, Chorus, Frontier, Ubisoft, Payload Studios, Unit 9, Preloaded. We also have links with London and international games events such as Now Play This, Indiecade, Wild Rumpus, A MAZE, Resonate, Creative Coast, Game City, Control. 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.

Employability and potential career opportunities

The degree aims to prepare students to access the game industry, both in the AAA and in the independent sectors, as game designers. It also give extensive access to companies working in all sorts of interactive entertainment, as a game designer and professional expert in using interactivity for designing immersive experiences.

In addition, the degree allows students to start their own game studio or related activity with a clear and defined path.

In the mid-long term, students who have successfully taken the degree can aspire to become creative directors, both in games and in other interactive experiences.

Students are supported from the start to the finish of this programme in order to understand the different potential career journeys they can follow and to build a portfolio of work to demonstrate their capability to gain employment or freelance work in that area. Assessment has been designed to facilitate this process through the development of transferable or soft skills listed in the section above. Regular guest lectures from industry support the development of sector knowledge and awareness of different career paths.

The Department's External Advisory Board ensures relevance of all our programmes to the current and future needs of employers. All programmes are designed in consultation with employers to make sure you develop transferable skills to improve your career opportunities and you will be applying your skills to real-world problems through live project briefs and

group projects. The board and other employers attend showcase events where you can present your ideas, get feedback and build important connections.

We have dedicated employability resource within the department to build employer relations and manage additional initiatives to support your future career opportunities, including regular communication of external opportunities for mentoring and work experience and an annual Career week (a focussed week of career support every June in the department where you can access alumni panels by programme and a range of industry talks).

Programme-specific rules and facts

Not applicable.

Tuition fee costs

STANDARD TEXT

Specific programme costs

Not applicable.