

MA Independent Games and 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 Independent Games and Playable Experience Design

Name of Interim Exit Award(s):

Postgraduate Certificate in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design

Postgraduate Diploma in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design

Duration of Programme: 1 year full-time or 2 years part-time**UCAS Code(s):** Not applicable**HECoS Code(s):** (101268) Computer Games Design**QAA Benchmark Group:** Computing**FHEQ Level of Award:** Level 7**Programme accredited by:** Not applicable**Date Programme Specification last updated/approved:** February 2020**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 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 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.

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.

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

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	leverage and use the basic building blocks of playable experiences	Approaches to Play 1
A2	analyse 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 1; Creative Coding 1

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
B2	analyse 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

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C1	programme as required to make embodied interactive experiences	Creative Coding 1&2; Physical Computing 1
C2	prototype small games on paper and with drag and drop or text based game engines	Approaches to Play 1

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
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

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	describe the state-of-the-art in independent games and playable experience design	Approaches to Play 2

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
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; Physical Computing 1
B3	use and create environmental sensing systems	Physical Computing 1; Approaches to Play 2
B4	implement specialist knowledge in playable environments	Physical Computing 1; 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 2
C2	interpret and respond to user feedback data on interactive systems	Approaches to Play 2; Physical Computing 1
C3	use and create environmental sensing systems	Physical Computing 1; Approaches to Play 2
C4	implement specialist knowledge in playable environments	Physical Computing 1; 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	Physical Computing 1, 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

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
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

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

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
C2	exhibit and present a playable experience to the general public	Final Project

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
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 (Outstanding/ Exceptional)	Represents a demonstration of exceptional understanding, 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; organisation 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; organisation 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 organising, 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.

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
0%	Non submission or plagiarised	Work was not submitted or it was plagiarised.

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	IS71077A	15	7	Compulsory	1
Approaches To Play 2	IS71078A	15	7	Compulsory	2
Final Project in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design	IS71079A	60	7	Compulsory	2
A selection of optional 15 or 30 credit modules to the value of 90 credits from an annual list made available by the department	Various	90	7	Optional	1,2

Part-time mode

Academic year of study 1

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
Approaches To Play 1	IS71077A	15	7	Compulsory	1
Approaches To Play 2	IS71078A	15	7	Compulsory	2
Final Project in Independent Games and Playable Experience Design	IS71079A	60	7	Compulsory	2
A selection of optional 15 or 30 credit modules to the value of 90 credits from an annual list made available by the department	Various	15-90	7	Optional	1,2

Academic year of study 2

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
Final Project	IS71079A	60	7	Compulsory	1
A selection of optional modules to the value of 90 credits from an annual list made available by the department depending on what has been taken in the first year	Various	15-90	7	Optional	2

Academic support

Support for learning and wellbeing is provided in a 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.

All students are allocated a Personal Tutor (one in each department for joint programmes) who has overall responsibility for their individual progress and welfare. Personal Tutors meet with their student at least twice a year either face-to-face, as part of a group and/or electronically. The first meeting normally takes place within the first few weeks of the autumn term. Personal Tutors are also available to students throughout the year 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 provides an opportunity for progress, attendance and assessment marks to be reviewed and an informed discussion to take place about how to strengthen individual learning and success.

All students are also allocated a Senior Tutor to enable them to speak to an experienced academic member of staff about any issues which are negatively impacting their academic study and which are beyond the normal scope of issues handled by Programme Convenors and Personal Tutors.

Students are provided with information about learning resources, the [Library](#) and information available on [Learn.gold \(VLE\)](#) so that they have access to department/programme handbooks, programme information and support related information and guidance.

Taught sessions and lectures provide overviews of themes, which students are encouraged to complement with intensive reading for presentation and discussion with peers at seminars. Assessments build on lectures and seminars so students are expected to attend

all taught sessions to build knowledge and their own understanding of their chosen discipline.

All assessed work is accompanied by some form of feedback to ensure that students' work is on the right track. It may come in a variety of forms ranging from written comments on a marked essay to oral and written feedback on developing projects and practice as they attend workshops.

Students may be referred to specialist student services by department staff or they may access support services independently. Information about support services is provided on the [Goldsmiths website](#) and for new students 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 and 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 [Disability](#) and [Wellbeing](#) Services maintain caseloads 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 Report ([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 for students throughout the year.

Links with employers, placement opportunities and career prospects

We already have existing links with many of these independent companies. These include, Niantic, Public Domain Corp, Original Content London, Six to Start, PlayLab London, Hellicar Lewis, Matheson Marcault, Molecule Games - owned by Playstation, Punchdrunk, Nexus and Funomena. 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, Quo Vadis, 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.

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

All taught postgraduate degrees have a minimum total value of 180 credits and involve one calendar year of full-time study. Some programmes may extend over more than one calendar year and, when this is the case, they have a higher total credit value. Programmes are composed of individual modules, each of which has its own credit value. Part-time students normally take modules to the value of 90 credits each year. If a programme has a part-time pathway, the structure will be set out in the section “How the programme is structured” above. Normally, all modules are at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

More detailed information about the structure and requirements of a Goldsmiths degree is provided in the [Goldsmiths Qualifications and Credit Framework](#).

Modules

Modules are defined as:

- “Optional” – which can be chosen from a group of modules
- “Compulsory” – which must be taken as part of the degree

Progression

Some programmes may require students to pass specific modules prior to completion of the dissertation/major project (or equivalent). Additionally, where a programme of study extends beyond one calendar year, students may be required to pass specific modules in their first year of study before progressing to the second year. Where this is the case, these requirements will be set out in this Programme Specification.

Award of the degree

In order to graduate, students must successfully complete all modules specified for the programme, as set out within the section “How the programme is structured” above.

Classification

Final degree classification is calculated on the basis of a student's mean average mark (based on credit value) across all modules on the programme.

Masters degrees are awarded with the following classifications:

Distinction – 70%+

Merit – 60-69%

Pass – 50-59%

More detail on the [calculation of the final classification](#) is on our website.

Interim exit awards

Some programmes incorporate interim exit points of Postgraduate Certificate and/or Postgraduate Diploma, which may be awarded on the successful completion of modules to the minimum value of 60 credits or 120 credits respectively. The awards are made without classification.

When these awards are incorporated within the programme, the relevant learning outcomes and module requirements will be set out within the “What you will be expected to achieve” section above.

The above information is intended as a guide, with more detailed information available in the [Goldsmiths Academic Manual](#).

Programme-specific rules and facts

Not applicable.

General programme costs

In addition to your tuition fees, you will be responsible for meeting standard costs associated with your study. Find out more information at gold.ac.uk/programme-costs.

Specific programme costs

Not applicable.

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 are formally approved against national standards and are monitored throughout the year, such as in departmental committees, a variety of student feedback mechanisms and through the completion of module evaluation questionnaires. Every programme has at least one External Examiner who reviews comments annually on the standards of awards and student achievement. External Examiner(s) attend Boards of Examiners meetings and submit an annual written report.

Modules, programmes and/or departments are also subject to annual and periodic review internally, as well as periodic external scrutiny.

Quality assurance processes aim to ensure Goldsmiths' academic provision remains 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 these procedures are published on the [Quality Office web pages](#).