# PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

## for an Undergraduate or Integrated Master's Programme Leading to an Award of Games Design & Virtual Reality

## The University of Northampton

***Unless otherwise stated all sections must be completed.***

| | |
|---|---|
| **1 Awarding Institution** | The University of Northampton |
| **2 Teaching Institution** | Solihull College and University Centre (Validated) |
| **3 Programme Accreditation** | |
| **4 Final Award** | *BSc (Hons)* |
| **5 Title of Programme/Route/Pathway** | *Games Design & Virtual Reality* |
| **6 UCAS Code** | *Contact Admissions Officer* |
| **7 Benchmarking Group (QAA or other) where appropriate** | *Computing (2016) - http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Computing-16.pdf Art Design- http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Art-and-Design-consultation-16.pdf (2016)* |

| **8 Educational aims of Programme** |
|---|
| *State main educational aims of the programme and pathways if relevant, preferably in bullet points.*<br><br>The programme is designed to meet the need for professionals within the computer games sector, the emerging virtual and mixed reality sector and other related sectors that have a "T shaped" background. That is, a strong technical backbone |

but with awareness and experience of other areas, such as art. This mix of skills is typically sought after by smaller companies and startups especially to cover a broad base.

It also aims to;

- Develop students interpersonal, logistic and problem solving skills as well as provide them with the ability to work both independently and as part of a range of group makeups.
- Inform and demonstrate to students current best practice within the development of computer games and virtual reality and understand current and future developments.
- Understand the need for continuing professional development within the games and virtual reality industry and be able to plan and develop their own learning that will be assessed formally at honors degree level through a variety of assessment methods.
- To equip students with skills and knowledge needed to enter a changing job market and provide appropriate understanding of the need for continued professional development.

Successful students will be able to consider careers in games development, virtual reality development, systems and app development, analysis and design, and other related disciplines as well as moving on to masters level study in a relevant subject such as Computing, App Development, Games Design or Creative computing.

**9 Learning outcomes of a programme and teaching, learning and assessment strategies**

*State the learning outcomes for the award and the teaching, learning and assessment methods used to enable students to achieve and demonstrate these outcomes.*

| **A Knowledge and understanding** | Teaching/learning methods |
|---|---|
| Be able to<br><br>A1 Evaluate and influence of the software development lifecycle on current techniques and methods of games development<br><br>A2 Interpret and apply current gaming theory<br><br>A3 Compare the human factors associated with the design and use of | A variety of teaching and learning methods are used including lectures, seminars, lab sessions and workshops.<br><br>Projects will be used to ensure learning is contextualised into a format relevant to the problems and situations likely to be faced in the work place.<br><br>Assessment<br><br>Knowledge and understanding are tested |

| | |
|---|---|
| virtual reality and gaming systems and design a system with an awareness of them.<br><br>A4 Compare the relationship between art skills and Computing skills within VR and Games development<br><br>A5 Demonstrate professional responsibilities in the context of a game design employee<br><br>A6 Evaluate systems in terms of quality attributes and understand possible trade-offs within a given problem | via both individual and group assessment. Some units, such as the group project have a substantial part of their assessment as part of the group work and are assessed both on their ability to work in a group and the outcomes. In some, it is just the individual's outcomes that are assessed and in others such as games techniques the assessment is 100% related to individual work. Most of the assessment will be based around projects with essays and presentations to supplement and enhance this. Assignments will involve both a written portion and creation of a computer program where appropriate. |
| **B Subject specific/practical skills**<br>B1 Be able to breakdown a problem and apply industry standard techniques;<br>B2 Design and construct computer games and experiences using relevant industry standard techniques;<br>B3 Evaluate technology and challenges behind games software and hardware<br>B4 Create game design documentation informed by research and game theory and practice<br>B5 Evaluate games products based around gaming theories and practices | **Teaching/Learning methods**<br><br>Practical skills are acquired through a mixture of projects, laboratory sessions and assignments working individually and in small groups in both tutor and student led assignments. As they progress through stages modules will emphasise the development of these skills using reflection to highlight limits to these skills and research and independent working to manager acquisition of these.<br><br>**Assessment**<br><br>Assignments for the units that correspond require students to demonstrate their practical skills in various ways simulating as closely as possible real life situations. Each of these skills will begin to be developed in the first year and will continue to be developed throughout the programme. Later stages will focus on utilising the range of techniques to solve problems in unfamiliar contexts and different situations. The project module in every year allows demonstration of these skills |

| | |
|---|---|
| | and the final year project, designed as a 60 credit module allows students to devote the time needed to explore in the depth required to produce a high quality piece. |
| **C Key skills**<br><br>C1 learn new material in a restricted time frame;<br><br>C2 apply appropriate strategies to solving problems.<br><br>C3 use a range of software applications competently;<br><br>C4 make positive contributions to group work<br><br>C5 manage time and workload effectively<br><br>C6 communicate clearly and effectively both verbally and in writing | **Teaching/learning methods**<br><br>Key skills will be specified for each module, some are developed during seminars and practical sessions whilst others are developed over time through assignments and in class learning and the use of key resources. Each year will have a personal tutor to highlight necessary development of these key skills and ways this may happen. Additionally the programme makes use of online learning packages to aid in the development of key skills and study skills. Feedback in assignments may refer a student to this.<br><br>**Assessment**<br><br>Key skills are assessed through assignments as indicated in the module specification. This assessment will take different forms depending on the key skill being assessed. |

| **10 Learning outcomes for Intermediate Awards** |
|---|
| **Certificate of Higher Education**The award of a Certificate of Higher Education indicates that the student:<br>has knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study;<br>has an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study<br>can evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work<br>is able to communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments |

has a the ability to undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment
has the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

**Diploma of Higher Education**Knowledge and Understanding

- Demonstrate an understanding of game design from the perspective of broad cultural and critical contexts.
- Apply the required skill set within an innovative and creative context to generate a number of outcomes.
- Demonstrate understanding and application of appropriate tools, skills and techniques to develop innovative creative solutions.
- Engage in the review, analysis and evaluation of own work within the context of industry and professional expectations.

Subject - specific Skills

- Demonstrate the use of relevant digital content creation tools with a focus on games ready assets.
- Apply appropriate research methods and techniques to generate informed innovative and creative solutions.

Key Skills

- Communicate ideas and present information effectively for a particular purpose, using different media.
- Study independently, set own goals and manage effectively own workload.

## Ordinary Degree

Knowledge and Understanding
Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the principles underlying project management and be able to translate these requirements into actions, develop and deliver to a project plan.
Refine ideas to a fully professional standard and format; for example images, games programs/scripts, game assets, show reels, associated visual and written documents plus presentations.
Understand key concepts and drivers in content development, market trends and personal direction as determined by social, economic and cultural imperatives.
Understand how to contact and engage with the digital industries for the purpose of career progression and future employment.
Synthesise and extend creative practice
Refine ideas to a fully professional standard and format; for example images, game assets, processes, associated documents and presentations.

Subject - specific Skills
Employ a creative approach to the realisation of concepts to ensure a logical and innovative solution in 2D/3D media formats.
Apply appropriate methods and techniques to visually communicate a completed

creative solution.
Engage with a diverse range of formats through which to promote self and to network effectively in relation to future career aspirations.

Key Skills
Sustain independent enquiry to resolve complex problems that require information to be gathered from a number of sources.
Demonstrate high production values in visual and oral presentations, and through text and different media formats, when engaging with a range of specialist and non-specialist audiences.
Manage and organise own time to comply with assignment deadlines.

**11 Key skills strategy**

Students can be expected to demonstrate capability in key skills on successful completion of each level of the programme/subject. The University of Northampton key skill categories are:-

- managing the learning process;
- communication skills;
- groupwork skills;
- information skills;
- problem solving;
- use of IT;
- application of number

It is recognised that key skills are integral to the achievement of programme objectives and students are expected to display highly developed levels of achievement. Students will have multiple opportunities to develop these skills, primarily through project based learning. These projects will enable them to take responsibility for their own learning, communicate in groups, using problem solving, information and IT skills to work towards a given goal. Responsibility will be demonstrated by completion of projects, supporting others, asking questions and demonstrating independence in their development.

Support will be given in level 4 modules to help teach and develop these skills explicitly but they will be developed throughout. In particular the first year project will give opportunity to begin to develop all of these skills with support via taught sessions for this. In addition support will be available to develop these skills outside of programme via tutorial time or with sessions with learning support tutors as

needed for those with individual needs.

To ensure and monitor communication between groups we will require evidence of group communication for some assessments (via a suitable form e.g.collaboration tools, audio, minuted meetings), other units may have a schedule of meetings or organised and witnessed meetings with tutors. No groups of less than three are generally to be permitted except in extreme circumstances discussed with module leader.

A curriculum map showing where these key skills are taught, developed and assessed within modules is shown in Appendix 2, Skill Map. On completion of the course students will have the ability;

- To communicate clearly and effectively in oral, written and visual forms.
- To select from and use a wide variety of presentation techniques.
- To function effectively as a member of a team.
- To engender a critical attitude to opinion and evidence; and produce coherent and effective analysis and use of information
- To use appropriate skills and techniques of self-management, including management of time.
- To exercise well-informed choices, established personal academic programmes and work independently.
- To analyse situations and problems and question assumptions.
- To make critical judgments in relationship to own work and that of others.
- To assess and evaluate personal abilities, attitudes and skills in relation to learning objectives.
- To recognise the importance of innovation, creative thinking and experimentation.
- To set and achieve targets and plan the progress of project work.
- To exercise the effective use of IT skills across the different areas of the curriculum

**12 Assessment strategy**

Assessment is used as a tool to both gauge understanding and prompt review and the assessment within the course should reflect this. Assessment can be used as a learning tool, the process of undertaking the assessment and the resultant evaluation of their progress a crucial part of the learning process. Assessment set is to be as close to replicating real life as possible and allow students to apply skills and knowledge in a variety of different ways increasing competency. In addition, assessments will provide opportunity for development and demonstration of key skills as shown above.

Students are assessed by a variety of assignments only the assessment contains a variety of tasks and task types/ formats as appropriate. Assessment tasks may take the form of written reports or essays, creation of “artefacts” and vive voce style and formal presentations. Assessment can be both group and individual dependent on

the criteria being assessed and care will be taken to ensure evidence provided can be mapped back to the relevant creator. The intention of the assessment is to ensure that, where possible, practical, vocational skills are assessed in a vocational way, ensuring each assessment method is not just fitting to the unit but also replicates real life scenarios. This will be done via a combination of live briefs, briefs and projects set in conjunction with industry and briefs constructed in house. The programme of study is supported by projects in each year that help tie together units holistically.

If a group task is given care will be made to ensure that there is ample scope for each member of the group to contribute and clear deliverables are present for each member in order to determine contributions. Markin and assessment will ensure no student is disadvantaged by another student in their group and instead is marked solely on their submission. If a student fails a group task they will be asked to resit by providing a reflective piece of writing detailing their contribution and adding something of value to the implementation of their group's project.

## 13 Programme structure

The structure of the programme in terms of modules, units and stages/levels, including the credit requirements for the award or awards is shown in:

Appendix 2 Award Map.

## 14 Admissions Policy and criteria

The Admissions Policy for the BSc Games Design & Virtual Reality is in accordance with the College's Admissions and Equality and Diversity policies. We seek to recruit to the programme students from diverse educational and social backgrounds who have the ability to benefit from and motivation to complete the programme. The programme welcomes applications from those with a wide variety of educational qualifications, and will consider on merit applicants with no formal qualifications.

- Entry Requirements
  In addition to the college's general Requirements for Entry, applicants should be able to evidence:
  - A knowledge, commitment and interest in the games industry and an awareness of the skills required. These may be demonstrated through the interview process and a verbal discussion, prior work in game dev (e.g. own projects).
  - The satisfactory completion of a Unity based short task..
- Admissions Procedures and Selection Criteria

- Applicants are selected for interview on the basis of information provided in the application form, the personal statement and academic reference. In some cases where the applicant has been out of education for a period of time (usually more than 3 years) a current employment reference may be accepted.
- The following criteria are taken into account:
  - Formal qualifications and experience
  - Evidence of written English and a good quality of Maths (usually level 2)
  - Predicted grades
  - Commitment and enthusiasm for Games Design & Virtual Reality
- Selection criteria for the offer of a place following interview are a clear understanding of what the programme will entail and demonstration of entry requirements.

- Direct Entry and APL
- Direct entry onto the final year of a BSs Games Design & Virtual Reality is dependent on achievement of an appropriate HND or FdSc in terms of content. The entry threshold onto the third year is deemed to be 50% of modules graded at Merit of above for those candidates that apply for direct entry.
- Students that have successfully completed a qualification in a relevant subject but not met the above criteria may be offered direct entry to year 2 Games Design & Virtual Reality dependent on suitable module content being completed.

## 15 Assessment Regulations

Modular framework regulations apply.

Full details of the programme assessment arrangements will be available in the programme handbook.

## 16 Support for learning

All students are allocated a personal tutor who has responsibility for providing pastoral and welfare support as well as being a first port of call for any problems. Leading on from this the college provides a number of specialist support services which a student can be directed to.

At institutional level support includes those services offered by Library Services, Information Technology Services and Student Services. This includes study support, IT support and general advice and support.

Students are supported and encouraged, particularly at level 5 and above to both attend and submit/ present papers, research and products at the SHEAR (Solihull Higher Education and Research) internal conference to a mixed groups of students, staff and external academics and entities. This helps them refine and reflect on their research and provide key links to people outside their usual zone.

Students are also supported by engaging in a student election progress that sees them elect reps to ensure issues within the group that need support are referred to the correct processes.

This programme is supported by 2 specialist computer laboratories fully equipped for VR, a dedicated studio resource for the art elements, access to careers advice through student services, dedicated VLE with online notes, tutorials, guides and important information.

## 17 Evaluation and quality enhancement

The University of Northampton has several methods for the monitoring and enhancing of academic quality and standards. These include:

- External Examiners
- Boards of Examiners
- Annual Review processes via Quality improvement Plan
- Staff-Student Liaison Committees
- Periodic Subject Review
- Student evaluation surveys (including module reviews)

The guidelines set out in the Annual Review Handbook require that the Programme Team operates a continuous process of self-review via a Rolling Action Plan whereby programme quality is progressively enhanced and good practice shared.

The programme is continuously monitored by the Programme Team through the

receipt of both formal and informal feedback. Informal student feedback is continuously sought and responded to by the Programme Team as a major part of the monitoring process. More formal feedback is obtained from students via module reviews carried out annually and other forms of student surveys. Student representatives are invited to attend the Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings and the Quality improvement Plan process where they have the opportunity to raise issues of concern for discussion. Further formal feedback is obtained from the External Examiner, who normally visits at least once per academic year to examine various aspects of the programme and submits a written report to the University at the end of each academic year. Any matters arising will be considered and responded to by the Programme Team as part of the Quality Improvement Plan.

**18 Indicators of quality and standards**

For the previous Solihull college and University centre run Pearson HND in Games Design the most recent reports from the External Examiner for the period 2014 to 2017 has been complimentary and in particular positive comments were received relating to;

- Assessment and innovative assessment methods
- Resources
- Management of Academic Standards
- Opportunities and management of student feedback

Alongside this student feedback and comments via NSS data have been positive, in particular 92% agreeing that "Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand" and "92% agreement that "Staff are good at explaining things". Internally feedback via our programme quality boards and other avenues of student feedback have also produced some positive comments.

Also of note is the glowing QAA report received Feb 2016 with particular relevance given to the positive comments regarding.
"The internal course design, development and approval processes that demonstrate rigour of College oversight and responsiveness to local and regional need (Expectations B1 and Enhancement)"

Student feedback via previous student evaluations and feedback meetings have been positive and have helped shape the current programme.

| **19 Date of approval or revision** | |
|---|---|

| **20 Appendices** | |
|---|---|
| **Appendix 1** | |
| **Appendix 2** | |
| **Appendix 3** | |
| **Appendix 4** | |