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Abstract

This is a ‘looking back at’ document; analysing James Moran’s performance of the unit entitled; ‘Work Based Learning’; for the course entitled ‘FdSc Computer Games Technology’; studied at the University of Huddersfield; in the 2011-2012 academic year.

Critical Appraisal

Created for the unit; ‘Work Based Learning’ of the course; ‘FdSc Computer Games Technology’

# Critical Appraisal

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## Introduction

This document details the critical appraisal of James Moran and gives a concise look at each week of the learning and development process for both the Unreal Tournament 3 (UT3) level created in Unreal Editor 3(UE3) as well as for the XNA game created using XNA 4.0 and Microsoft visual studio 2010.

Each week will be looked at and detail given towards analysing the strengths and weaknesses shown each week as well as the attitudes shown each week. After this is done, suggestions will be given as to how the person in question could have shown less weakness and more strengths as well as a better attitude towards the project in places where this is deemed to be appropriate. Finally, a plan of action will be stated based on this analysis for the year as a whole as to what needs to be acted upon for next year.

## Week 1

This was the first week in the development process of the unreal level and the first week overall. This week introduced the student to the course and what was required of them as well as supposed to be when all the students were to play UT3 to get a feel for the game that they were developing a level for.

However, this did not happen and this was left out till next week. Looking back on this week, the student showed a strength in getting to know what was required of them and making sure everything was clear yet showed a weakness in not taking initiative to get and play UT3 in their own time; their attitude reflects this strength and weakness, therefore, the student should have bought a copy of UT3 and played it in their own time to get a feel for the game that they were designing a level for as soon as possible.

## Week 2

This is the second week in the unreal level development process and the second week overall. This week introduced the student to gameplay and level design by playing an online game with the other students.

Looking back, the student showed strengths in getting to know how and why the game was designed as well as how it played, their attitude showed that of determination to understand this as well as looking forward to the task of creating a level themselves.

## Week 3

This is the third week in the unreal level development process and the third week overall. This week introduced the student to UE3 and taught them how to create a basic level.

Looking back, the student showed strength towards understanding the tutorial for that week but showed weakness to going beyond what was taught in that week as it was soon later found that the tutorials could be gone through at a pace faster than one a week and this would be required.

Their attitude was adequate towards the work required for that week but once again, did not show a highly positive attitude that would be of someone who went beyond this week’s basic tutorial to learn UE3 faster. Therefore, the student should have developed their UE3 skills and understanding at twice the pace that had started to learn at (Two tutorials a week versus just one).

## Week 4

This is the fourth week in the unreal level development process and the fourth week overall. This week; the student had shown further development of their UE3 skills by developing a test level to display them and has started on basic room design and placing water volumes.

Once again, the student showed strength in being able to follow the tutorials yet showed weakness in going beyond this, their attitude was also adequate. To improve; the student should have once again, gone beyond what was taught to them in the tutorials and found out more about how UE3 worked and what it had to offer.

## Week 5

This is the fifth week in the unreal level development process and the fifth week overall. This week; the student has further developed their test level and now does voiceovers with their video recordings of the level.

The student has shown strength in understanding the tutorials as well as voicing over their video to better outline problems and how they fixed other such problems they previously had. They still show weakness in not going beyond the tutorials as well as now, as a result of putting voice into their videos, an amateur voiceover that shows emotion in places where it unnecessary as well as annoyance at aspects of their level that they themselves have caused problems for. Therefore, their attitude towards the creation of the videos was fairly poor at this point.

This results in the student requiring improvements once again in going beyond the tutorials but in addition; aiming to improve upon their voiceovers to give a more professional feel to them, to get their message across in a more concise and unbiased manner.

## Week 6

This is the sixth week in the unreal level development process and the sixth week overall. This week; the student has once more further developed their test level and has shown off more of it.

The student has shown strength in improving their voiceovers, doing more this week than in the previous weeks and better explanation of problems that they do not know how to solve. The have shown some weakness in solving problems as if they had gone further in the tutorials they would have found the solution to the problem they were having this week, but they do not find this out till later.

This results in the student better needing to look into their problems before seeking help as well as continuing to improve on their rate of learning.

## Week 7

This is the seventh week in the unreal level development process and the seventh week overall. This week; the student has once more developed their test level and shown off more of it.

The student has shown a lot of strength in getting through the tutorials at a faster pace as well as understanding some of the logic and technology behind the top most layer of abstraction that they work at (That is to say, they now understand that it takes longer to render higher quality shadows and that it takes longer to build the light map as a result). They have also shown the ability to change the map to different game modes (such as capture the flag or CTF) as well as starting to understand kismet (The system of animation and event driven scripting in UE3).

They still show a bit of weakness towards their pace of learning as well as showing little understanding in how kismet works at this point.

Therefore; the student should have attempted to learn kismet better before progressing through to more complex level designs that require it as in the later tutorials.

## Week 8

This is the eighth week in the unreal level development process and the eighth week overall. This week; the student has done more on developing their test level.

They have shown once again an increased pace of learning and good attitude towards the work, as well as now, an enhanced understanding of kismet. They also show a basic understanding of terrain as well as basic AI and bot pathing. They do still however show some weakness in the precision as well as conciseness of their voiceovers.

To improve; they should have taking more care in creating their voiceover and planning out what needs to be said and when.

## Week 9

This is the ninth week in the unreal level development process and the ninth week overall. This week; the student has made a start on creating their cave level that they plan to make as their final level.

The have now shown strength in taking more initiative towards their work and implementing what they have learned in their own level. They have shown weakness in not necessarily implementing it in the most dynamic way as possible as their level is fairly linear and simple at the moment, their attitude is otherwise very positive towards their work.

To improve; they should have tried creating a less linear template for their level and challenging the skills that they have learned more.

## Week 10

This is the tenth week in the unreal level development process and the tenth week overall. This week; the student has improved further upon their level by adding terrain, water and some other minor changes to the layout.

This shows strength in more dynamically designing their level and some weakness in not having the drive to develop their level further this week, their attitude towards their work is adequate but lacking in drive.

To improve; the student should spend more hours in the week on their work and less time doing other things.

## Week 11

This is the eleventh week in the unreal development process and the eleventh week overall. This week; the student has started to add more advanced elements to their level such as dynamic lighting and kismet related objects.

They show strength in adding these things but some weakness in not adding enough for the time they have spent, therefore their attitude towards the project is now one of doing work but not making the most of the time.

To improve; they should spend their time more efficiently.

## Week 12

This is the twelfth week in the unreal development process and the twelfth week overall. This week; the student has nearly finished their level and is now showing off what it can do in this video log.

They show strength in doing this as well as what they have done to finish it off to a greater degree but shown some weakness in not finishing off things that need to be finished, their attitude reflects this.

To improve; they should have aimed to do more before this final week of development on their level came to a close.

## Week 13

This is the first week in the XNA development process and the thirteenth week overall. This week; the student has started to go over the tutorials for learning XNA and aims to go over at least 2 a week.

They have shown a lot of strength from previous programming experience in understanding XNA and so they have gone right into it with little introduction, they have however, shown a less than adequate attitude and weakness towards the pace in which they move through the tutorials and this needs to be improved.

Therefore; to improve the student needs to show a faster pace of learning in regards to XNA in order to start work in their game sooner.

## Week 14

This is the second week in the XNA development process and the fourteenth week overall. This week; the student has now made the game playable at this point by implementing sprites as well as movement and collision.

They have shown strength towards doing this but once again a weakness and an adequate but not over ally sufficient attitude towards their work.

To improve they should make sure to up their rate of learning once again.

## Week 15

This is the third week in the XNA development process and the fifteenth week overall. This week; the student has now added the ability for the ship to fire bullets at the aliens.

They have shown strength in getting this done as this is one of the more advanced aspects of the game in getting each bullet to act independent of each other and collide as such.

They have shown little weakness this week as their pace has quickened to a good rate and their attitude reflects this.

To improve they could have done some more advanced bullet collision detection but are otherwise on the right path.

## Week 16

This week is the fourth week in the XNA development process and the sixteenth week overall. This week; they have now finished the tutorials and are starting work on their game.

They show strength in getting started but weakness in not doing a lot this week, their attitude reflects this.

To improve they should have implemented what was talked about in the video instead of just talking about it.

## Week 17

This week is the fifth week in the XNA development process and the seventeenth week overall. This week; the student goes over how they plan to put menu buttons in the game and then shows that they have.

They show strength in this and little weakness otherwise and their attitude is good towards this.

There are no improvements for this week beyond continuing to improve their pace of work.

## Week 18

This week is the sixth week in the XNA development process and the eighteenth week overall. This week; see the entry for week nineteen for more detail.

## Week 19

This week is the seventh week in the XNA development process and the nineteenth week overall. This week; the student has progress to a point where they have developed the game to allow a level in their game with friendly units and enemies.

They show strength in getting this far and their attitude reflects this. They do however show weakness in fixing bugs when they could and should otherwise fix them.

Therefore, they should aim to fix bugs as soon as possible after they are found in order to prevent them from piling up.

## Week 20

This week is the eighth week in the XNA development process and the twentieth week overall. This week; the student shows more development of the game and the problems they are having with making it turn based and so will make it real time soon.

They show strength in keeping with this decision and it would seem to overall impact the game for good but show weakness towards hesitating in making this decision and their attitude reflects this.

To improve they should therefore endeavour to read around XNA a bit more in order to gain a better understanding of how to implement what they are trying to implement.

## Week 21

This week is the ninth week in the XNA development process and the twenty-first week overall. This week; the student has successfully moved the game from turn based to real time.

They show strength in following this through and all the improvements this brings which generally incorporate into making a better and more enjoyable experience for the player, they show little weakness in this decision and their attitude reflects this.

To improve they should make sure to improve the time spend working and their use of time.

## Week 22

This week is the tenth week in the XNA development process and the twenty-second week overall. This week; the student shows more improvements they have made to the game and what they plan to do next.

They show strength explaining what they have done and what needs to be done but some weakness in actually doing some of what needs to be done, their attitude is otherwise good.

To improve, they should aim to make the suggested improvements to their game in more time.

## Week 23

This week is the eleventh week in the XNA development process and the twenty-third week overall. This week; the student shows great improvement to their game in both terms of quality and quantity implementing many things that they had sought to implement earlier.

They show great strength in doing this and their implementation of such features of the game such as being able to switch between windowed mode and back and proper tutorials for the game.

They show some weakness in the quality of what they have implemented but otherwise their attitude has greatly improved over the last few weeks in relation to how much time they spend developing the game.

## Week 24

This week is the twelfth week in the XNA development process and the twenty-fourth week overall. This week; the student has completed their game and it is ready to be presented.

The student has shown strength and resolve in getting the game finished but shows weakness in optimising the code so it runs as efficiently as possible but otherwise they have a good attitude towards their work.

They should aim to improve their quality of coding to make their game better.

# Action plan

With the above in mind the student should aim to take action on the following:

* Coding quality
* Time management
* Pace of learning
* Overall time spent working
* Taking the initiative where appropriate

They should aim to do the above by doing the following:

* Read more books on coding in regards to quality standards
* Learn how to manage time
* Take a faster pace of learning in taking up new subjects
* Spend more time working
* Aim to take the initiative where needed

# Conclusion

The student overall shows strength in learning new things, shows willingness to learn and understanding the technical side of things.

They show weakness in the above and their attitude needs to be reflective of this.

Overall, the student has progressed well this year but needs to enact the above action plan in order to maintain, or achieve even greater success.

# Sub-Documents

# A Review of this Critical Appraisal

Looking back at this Critical Appraisal, the manner of such, as detailed in the Introduction section of this document (that of analysing myself of a week by week basis, ultimately followed by a plan of action), would seem to be covered by this document (for each one of the 24 weeks logged here), even with differences in language, between me in my present state and my former self for that period of 2012, that being; of relatively non-specific language at certain points (e.g. ‘After this is done’ could be modified to: ‘After this component has been completed’), present, the Appraisal as a whole, provides sufficient detail for its purpose.

However, it would seem as though this is not the commonly accepted definition of a critical appraisal, as that is defined as:

Critical appraisal is the process of carefully and systematically examining research to judge its trustworthiness, and its value and relevance in a particular context.

(Hayward Medical Communications 2016)

Which would imply that this document is not a Critical Appraisal, as this is not its intended purpose, instead; its purpose is to evaluate research, not the performance of one’s self.

# References

1. Whatisseries, © 2016 Hayward Medical Communications, What is critical appraisal? [Viewed 28/04/2016]. Available From: http://www.medicine.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/painres/download/whatis/what\_is\_critical\_appraisal.pdf