Individual reflection

Combined Games Project 3

# How the group functioned

The group that we chose was based upon our ability to work together and the ways in which we can communicate rather than on the skillsets of the individuals because of this we were able to work together effectively as a unit. To do this we were in close contact using instant messaging and voice chats to keep in contact as we worked and came up with ideas. We also made use of source control via GitHub so that the team could keep each other up to date on the ways in which the project was changed. The efforts of the team however were not without issues, personal issues with various members along with bad time management meant that work was put off for other things throughout the year with a good start being made then a massive lull in the amount of work being done towards the middle of the project then more being achieved towards the end. This issue was unavoidable for the group and was only solved due to an extension for some of the problems with individuals.

Some issues were also had due to the choosing of people based on the ability to work together and friendship rather than the skillsets of the person as this meant that there was some gaps in the knowledge of the team that could be better sorted in future projects by bringing in people we may not be as close with but that could bring some unique skills to the table, as a team with all programmers it could have been beneficial to enlist the help of designers to better communicate the ideas that were planned and design the features that we were to implement.

Overall I believe the team worked well as a group despite the slow speed of work being done throughout the year, as always the group were able to show that they could work well under pressure at the end of the project and pull it together.

# Game Development process

## Initial Design

The initial design process for the group was to have meetings together and discuss what we would like to do, this aided greatly in coming up with the game concept in the beginning with us able to bounce ideas off one another. The initial plan for the game came together very quickly.

## Feature design

This again had a few face to face meetings in order to bounce ideas for features off each other, then throughout the project as we met up less for the purposes of work we would use group chats in order to discuss any changes to the design with the rest of the group. With this system elements of the game were changed as we progressed possibly more than they should have with the openness of the way we build however this had the benefit that if something was going we could approach the game design with a lot of flexibility.

## Creation

The most valuable system we had when working on the project as a group was the use of professional source control software, this allowed us to keep the rest of the group up to date with the progress along with creation of an ongoing changelog as and when we made changes.

This was of great help to me personally for the group as I was heavily involved in the creation of assets it allowed me to get messages from the rest of the group about what assets were needed to be created and disseminate them through the group easily by adding them to the project and pushing to the master efficiently so that they could be used.

For my personal missions in the development of the game I designed a pipeline (a set of steps I would follow for the creation of each asset) which I would follow through each time. This process was refined as time went on and more small tricks were learned in the programs I was using.

### Asset creation pipeline

1. Receive request from other team members (usually environment designer)
2. Model asset in external program
3. Layout UVS
4. Create Textures
5. Import Model
6. Create Material
7. Create Normal Map and add to material
8. Create Other maps and masks as needed and add
9. Push project with assets

Following this process allowed me to work efficiently in producing the models however not having a set plan other than the basic models needed for the environment and taking requests to be made led to some scheduling conflicts as I was creating assets for use by other team members, sometime the order of priority was messed up and others were waiting on assets to complete goals where more of a plan in the order I was making assets could have been beneficial as well as not constantly adding to the workload and completing important tasks as needed.

# Usefulness of documentation

The creation of documents in the middle of the was only helpful to the team as a formal way to create a framework to work from, many things were changed as the project progressed and I believe as the creator of the initial design document that a running document that could have been added to and changed throughout the development would have been more beneficial to the group.

While the basic framework to the game was laid out in the document changes to the core mechanics and the games function were unavoidable and the document now is only loosely relevant to the game as a whole as team would still come up with ideas and changes as a project progressed ending in a much better product as their skills grew and they found new things 5taht were available to them for creation. One example of this is how as we progressed the focus of the development shifted more to a multiplayer game with some of the single player elements of the original design being removed to make way for internet support and steam integration, this focus change meant that the game became more focused and plays better but does mean some of the designed features would be ditched entirely. A document like this that could have been updated to reflect those changes and include designs for the new features that could have been followed would have been better in the organisation for the team during these shifts.

# Individual missions

For my personal missions I took the game design and asset creation missions. This put me more into a designer role within the team and meant that I was working very closely with the other members.

Another member of our team took the environment and interactive environment missions meaning that I would work very closely with them taking requests of assets that were needed and creating them as they would want them as well as discussing the ways in which the maps would be laid out for the design process. Working with someone with this combination of sets meant that the maps were largely only being updated by one person stopping conflicts with the source control from multiple people working on the same area of the project and meant only one point of contact for me with the majority of assets.

Another member took the AI and gameplay programming missions making them our lead programmer this meant that the majority of large scale changes that were needed to be made within the player and game classes were made by one person again stopping conflicts that could arise by multiple people needing full access to assets within the game.

Finally we had a member that would take the UI and special effects, these would mostly again be working in separate areas of the engine with only some crossover when it came to adding the effects in the end.

With a structure like this it meant that for the most parts while in constant discussion over how they link together most people were working on separate areas with few issues other than merging of documents at times causing trouble which could be resolved via GitHub.

While I would at times be needed to create assets for use by all members most of my contact was with the environment designer, this meant that contact was easily achieved by the use of messaging services on an informal basis.

# Skills learned

Over the course of the project I believe while the design mission did not go well I have learned that a free approach to design benefits my way of working, while structure to the design process is important sticking to a ridged design would lose some of the more innovative features from the game.

I have acquired a lot of skills from the modelling side of the game with many improvements being made to the way that I handle the use of the programs involved. From the first model I made which took days to create and texture I have refined my process of working and been able to speed up the creation of assets significantly.

I have also learned that it would be more efficient to choose some members of the team based on the skills that they have but working with people that you know well also has some major benefits.