CPD Report

Introduction

My career goal is to work as a computing professional. I would like to work in the computing industry making use of my programming skills and knowledge.

The course is helping me progress towards my career goal by providing insight into programming and workplace practices. Learning how to code in many different programming languages makes me a more desirable candidate for programming jobs, it also increases my overall understanding of general programming practices. During the course I have been learning how to use tools like GitHub and Slack this is a large step towards my future goal as they are essential for most modern day computing professional jobs. A challenge I feel that I will face will be switching from the university environment to a workplace environment.

The five main challenges I have faced are:

- Managing stress levels
- Prioritising work
- Understanding best programming practices
- Setting up playtesting sessions
- Javascript with HTML

I plan to combat these challenges using SMART targets found below.

Prioritising work

This year a problem for me has been prioritising work. My target will be to improve how I prioritise work. Last year this was also a problem but since then I have improved yet still a long way to go. The current problem with the way I work is not giving projects the correct amount of time. Projects that are not worth many marks I put too much work into and vice versa.

To combat this, I plan to schedule my weeks effectively making sure I put the right amount of time into each project. I will do this by looking in-depth at each module and the weightings of the assignments. On the first week back I shall make a plan using excel to make a work timetable for every week of the course. I am choosing the first week back since this is when we have the new module introductions and will provide more information on the assignments. I shall review how this is going fortnightly on the Friday of the second week. During these reviews I will evaluate whether I am getting the work done on time and if any changes need to be made to the schedule.

Javascript with HTML

My target is to learn how to use Javascript in conjunction with HTML. This year I had to make a javascript game that was hosted on a website. The javascript side was easy enough to understand but making it work with HTML I found to be much harder. Going back and gaining understanding regarding making these work together will help in future projects.

To improve my understanding of how these work together I plan on spending on week reworking my project to the desired effect. I will set some targets of things that I would like to change and keep track using trello. I shall do this throughout the week of 21st of January ending on the Friday since I will be mostly free during this week. I will measure the success of this on whether I managed to complete the tasks on the trello board.

Understanding best programming practices

My target is to gain better understanding of the best programming practices for each style of programming. During the NES game demake project I found that I wasn't sure what the best way to layout and separate my code would be. What should be its own function and what shouldn't. Once I finished implanting all the features, I went through my code to improve the maintainability but wasn't sure what parts I should change. Understanding this would improve the quality and maintainability of my programs.

I will focus on NES development for this target as I feel if I can do it for one project then I will know the process for others. I will find three examples of well written NES game code online and make notes on how they have kept the code maintainable. Using these notes I will make tasks on a trello board on how I could improve my NES code. I shall then complete these tasks making my code more maintainable. I shall give myself 3 days to do this from the 16th of January to the 19th.

Managing Stress levels

One of my targets is to deal with stress better. During this year there have been times when I have "burnt out" due to stress. This has impacted some of my work leading it to not being the best quality I could achieve. Often coming to points where I couldn't bring myself to do any more. My attendance after "burning out" was not the best with missing some lectures. Due to this I feel the way I manage my stress levels needs improving to prevent this from happening.

To deal with the stress levels I feel the best approach will be balancing my time effectively. The "burn outs" happen due to having too much work to do in short periods of time. Getting the work done earlier will lead to less work to do nearer the deadline. Splitting my work and leisure time will mean that hopefully stress levels will not build up too much. I will achieve this my using the same schedule in the "prioritising work" section but make sure to include leisure time in this. During the first week back, I shall be scheduling my hours that I will put into each project and timetabling them to a reasonable level. To understand if this is working I will have a retrospective review fortnightly to understand my stress levels.

Setting up playtesting sessions

This year for our group project game we have wanted to host play test session to get better feedback on our game. So far this has not been happening as we have planned. Taking a more leading role in the team with setting up these sessions will assure that that will happen. Having these playtests will provide useful feedback for our game project and my own research project.

I will do this by setting up playtest sessions fortnightly starting from week 2 to week 8 and will consider it a success if the playtest is carried out. I feel that doing this target will help me with my communication and organising skills.

Conclusion

In conclusion these SMART targets should help me with developing myself as an individual. With focusing on these skills I will improve each domain of my work. This me make me more desirable to employers and thus push me towards my overall goal.