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CTEC3451 Development Project

**“Creating a control mapping program for game accessibility”**

First Deliverable

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Contents

[Abstract 2](#_Toc92848119)

[Literature Review 2](#_Toc92848120)

[Functional Requirements 7](#_Toc92848121)

[Indicative Test Plan 10](#_Toc92848122)

[System Design 11](#_Toc92848123)

[Back-end 11](#_Toc92848124)

[Front-end 11](#_Toc92848125)

[Implementation Report 11](#_Toc92848126)

[References 11](#_Toc92848127)

[Bibliography 11](#_Toc92848128)

[Figures 14](#_Toc92848129)

# Abstract

There are millions of video games out there in the world, but how many are truly accessible and have the right representation? The answer is less than you would hope, which is the reason for the creation of this project, that will show it is possible to do and can be used and adapted for future use.

This report details the research into creating a control mapping program, as well as the two prototype games created to test the control mapping program. For these games, it was important to include the right representation and accessibility options, to really deliver the importance and the ability to be able to include these in video games. Therefore, time was taken to research different disabilities, types of game accessibility in current games as well as looking at controllers and mapping solutions to create this project.

# Literature Review

Video games, “a game in which the player controls moving pictures on a screen by pressing buttons” (Cambridge Dictionary, (2020). VIDEO GAME), have become an everyday presence in today’s modern society. Being around since the 1950s, they have gone from military machines to arcade systems, to home consoles, to handheld consoles and mobile devices (History.com Editors, 2019), a brief timeline of video game history can be found in Mark J. P. Wolf’s book The Video Game Explosion: A history from PONG to PlayStation and Beyond (Wolf, M.J.P. (2008), pg. 17-21).

With the evolution of video games has also come the evolution of technology itself, with great improvement on new hardware, graphics, and performance. The number of people playing video games has also risen massively over the years, according to (Clement, J. 2021), the number of video game users in the UK is 44.32 million people, over 50% of the whole UK population. The game industry in the UK itself is the biggest in Europe and the sixth worldwide, with a market value of £5.3 billion, this makes it one the highest market in the entertainment industry, compared to music and film. And with more players come more different types of players and player styles. According to AbleGamers, a charity that aims to improve accessibility in video games, around 46million video game players in the United States have a disability (Valentine, R. 2020). Which is around 1 in 5 of video game players in the United States, and according to (Clarysse, 2021) 1.75 billion people are dealing with disabilities in their everyday life, which is not including their friends and family, however, as Pascal says “the representation ratio in media is abysmally low, and worse, it’s almost condescending and tear-based content“. Which is why there is a need to have awareness and for action. Many of these players are unable to play popular games due to the complexity and lack of accessibility options for them, and do not hold any disability representation or if they do, can be negative and inaccurate.

Accessibility is the level that a product is available according to the number of people. It's about treating everyone with respect and enabling them access to all possible cultural manifestations. It can be thought of as a system's or entity's "ability to access" and benefit from it. It's frequently linked to people with special needs and their rights to such organisations. (Carrera, S. (2016), pg. 23). Therefore, Adapting a game's hardware and software (such as game controllers, difficulty level, or feedback type) to individual needs, whether they have a disability, is what game accessibility is all about. (Westin et al, 2011)

Over the years, accessibility in gaming has grown in accordance with the new technological advances being made. (AbleGamers, n.d.) shows the history of adaptive tech, and how far it has come, starting from 1986 where Nintendo created first accessible technology with the hands-free controller for the NES, September 2009 the PlayStation 3 adding button mapping to their OS system, becoming the first console to add accessibility features at OS level. 2011 saw AbleGamers themselves creating the Adroit controller with Evil Controllers, a controller with switch inputs for the first time, 2014 had Borderlands 2 add a colourblind mode in their game. Finally, in 2018 the Microsoft Adaptive Controller (XAC) is released.

Silvio Carrera with their book, *Accessibility in Games: Including people with disabilities*, explains that with the evolution of technology, “there was an increase on the amount of attention and control input necessary in order to play” (Carrera, S. (2016), pg. intro). They also describe that one of the issues that disabled gamers come across within video games “They might not be able to use the default controller the platform suggests, which means they won’t be able to do input in the game.” (Carrera, S. (2016), pg. 13), which is a sharp reason for the purpose of this project, to allow players to use their own controllers and map their buttons to the game prototype games and allow them to be saved. Carrera also mentions how the lack of flexibility in the control options, such as the ability to reconfigure buttons, makes it more difficult and unlikely for someone with special needs to tailor the game to their demands. As (NLS, 2015) explains, playing video games can help you be more creative, increase your problem-solving abilities, and foster teamwork. People with disabilities, such as those with movement impairments may not be able to utilise a normal game controller and therefore have fewer options for enjoying video games.

This is a project to create a control mapping program for game accessibility, there are currently programs such as this out there, for example, Rewired (guavaman.com, n.d.) is a comprehensive input system for Unity that contains a configurable and saveable controller map as well as a control mapper system that uses the Unity GUI to allow players to rebind controllers in real time. Another example is, reWASD (rewasd, 2017), which can remap controller buttons on PC which can be used on different games just by loading and setting the mappings on the program, including saving profiles for different games. A similar example is a program called Input Mapper (Wobbles, 2020), It auto detects the device for the user and allows them to choose advanced macro and customisation settings, allowing them to adjust not only the device type, but also how inputs are translated and applied, Figure 3 shows the programs main page. Other examples are gaming console themselves, such as Xbox and PlayStation that include their own controller configurations and mappings, as can be navigated by (Hesse, B. 2021). This information can be considered when designing the control mapping program, as well as The Game Accessibility guidelines website, (Anon, n.d.) which includes a wide range of guidelines and accessibility design ideas for developers to include in their games, ranging from basic guidelines to advanced. This also includes guidelines on 5 different types of disabilities such as Motor, Cognitive, Vision, Hearing and Speech.

An important aspect of the two prototype games, that will be created for testing and use of the control mapping program, is the design and story of the game. To include the representation of disabilities in the characters and making sure they are as accessibly designed as possible for prototypes. Therefore, the first prototype game will be a 2D basketball shooter game, where the main character is in a wheelchair, to represent physical disability. This idea came about as I read through (Brody, 2020)’s article for the AbleGamers Charity called *The Need for More Disabilities in the Games We Play*. Where they discuss how there is little physical disability representation in games in our current society, and a good way to overcome this is to have a game such as Wheelchair Basketball, which could be like any other sport games out there. Another approach is to include disabled people in a wheelchair for basketball video games, which is the approach that was taken in this prototype game. Inspiration was taken from the android game Doodle Basketball, (Byril OOO, 2013) for gameplay and style. It is important to include physical disability representation even within a prototype game such as this to help convey how it is possible to include appropriate representation in the media, especially when in most mainstream video games, as (Ready Player, 2016)’s article explains, “a game protagonist is physically disabled in some manner, it’s usually immediately fixed through the use of cybernetics, prosthetics, or even cybernetic prosthetics.” This idea is shared with (TechTalk, n.d.) as disabled characters are the most likely to get “fixed”. "Fixed" is being deliberately utilised to emphasise the fact that these are game constructions, and not easy to come by in real life, a catch-all fix is frequently thrown into the mix in video games. Ian Hamilton, an accessibility expert, agrees as he explains that there is still a notion in video games that people with disabilities are broken and need to be fixed, with tropes of these fixes being superpowers or superhuman prosthetics. And “Moreover, games are often guilty of furthering the myth that a disability is rare, with all the impact that has on broader prejudice and discrimination.”

For the second game prototype that is being created for this project, the main premise is on mental health and representing that within a simple 3D shooter game. Where the main character will have a mental health issue such as depression or anxiety, and the aim of the game is to shoot away the negative thought bubbles. The reason why the second prototype game is about mental health instead of another physical disability is because it is not portrayed near enough in video games compared to physical disabilities. (TechTalk, n.d.) shows two diagrams that represent how mental health has been tackled in recent years, in figure 1, in video games and the distribution of different types of disabilities portrayed in games most often, in figure 2. Even then, the way that mental health is portrayed can be stereotyped and inaccurate. Or, as (Dunlap and Kowert, 2021, pg. 122) explored in their Mental Health in 3D article, mental illness is shown in video games in both traditional and novel ways, such as in-game mechanisms (e.g., sanity meters) and player-driven decision making. One example of this in a popular video game is (Grand Theft Auto, 2013) where the playable character has a mental state that can rise if the player causes too much violence. Few games truly look at mental health, which is the purpose of the representation in this second prototype.

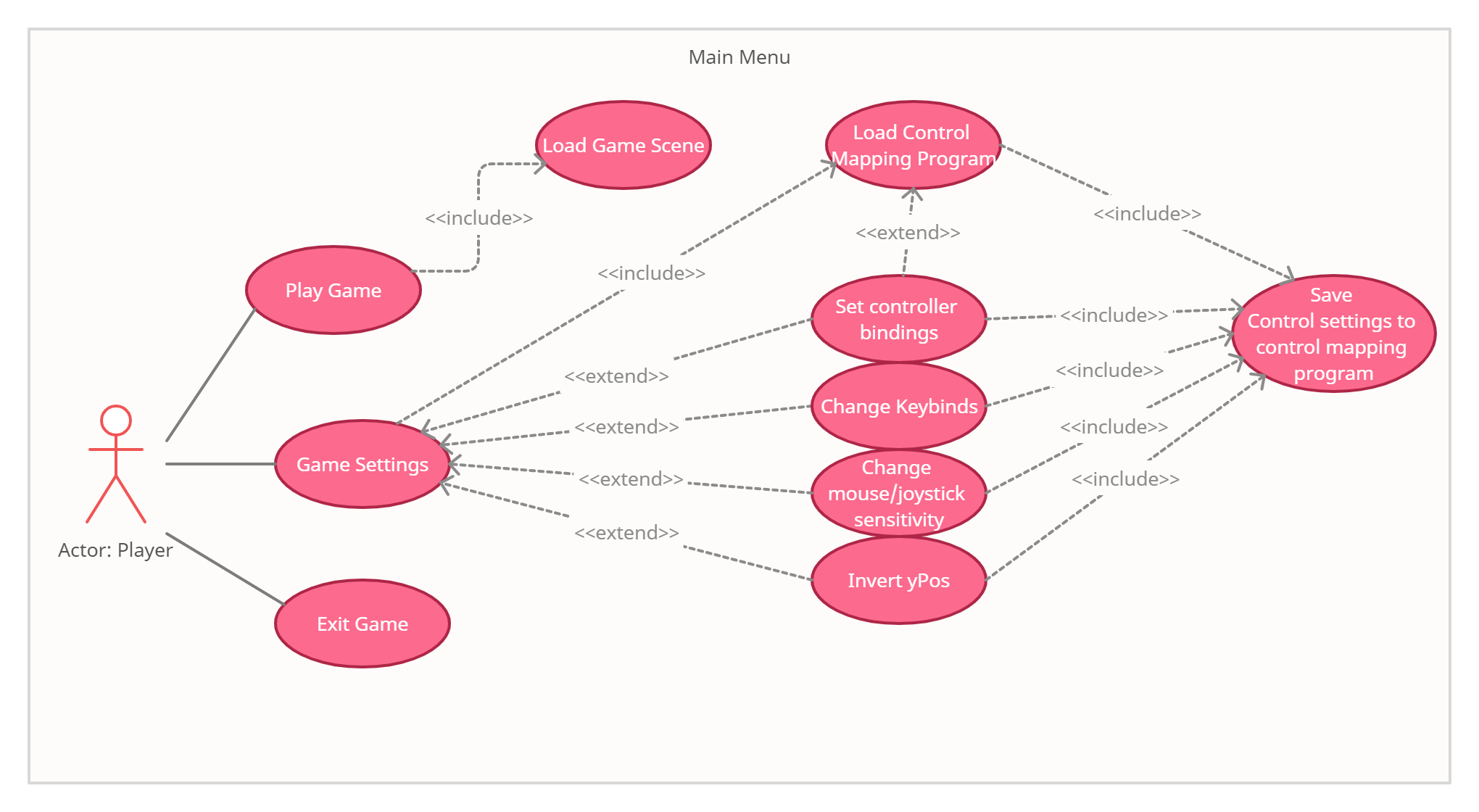
Overall, positive representation of disabilities in video games is very important as it can bring awareness to more disabilities (Valentine, R. 2020), especially with accurate representation of disabilities such as Symmetra and Ana from Overwatch with Autism and with the loss of an eye, which are seen as disabilities in the context “that is, impairments that diminish their ability in the context of Western Society” (Cullen, Ringland, & Wolf, 2018). As well as Joker from the Mass Effect series, who was born with Vrolik syndrome which causes extreme bone brittleness, using crutches and leg braces to get around. (Blockfort, n.d.) this has been seen as great representation, as the best thing is that his disability does not define him, he is still fiercely independent despite the challenges he might face, (TechTalk, n.d.). Within the same article, Ian Hamilton says; “Representation of characters with disabilities is still rare. It is often simply not on people's radars. And when it is, fear of handling it badly can put people off.” And that game accessibility is a more prevalent topic in today’s media. Which is why representation is being included within this literature review and the game prototypes.

In Conclusion to this literature review, Game technology has come a long way since the first electronic games in the 1950s. And with this evolution, has come rises in adaptive tech for disabled gamers, from the hands-free controller for the NES in 1986, to the Microsoft Adaptive Controller (XAC) in 2018 including the ability to button map and use switch inputs. On the other hand, with representations of disabilities in games, whilst there are some good examples, the amount is lacklustre. With the information gathered in this Literature Review, this project can begin to take shape with ideas of control mapping programs, representation of disabilities and game accessibility design.

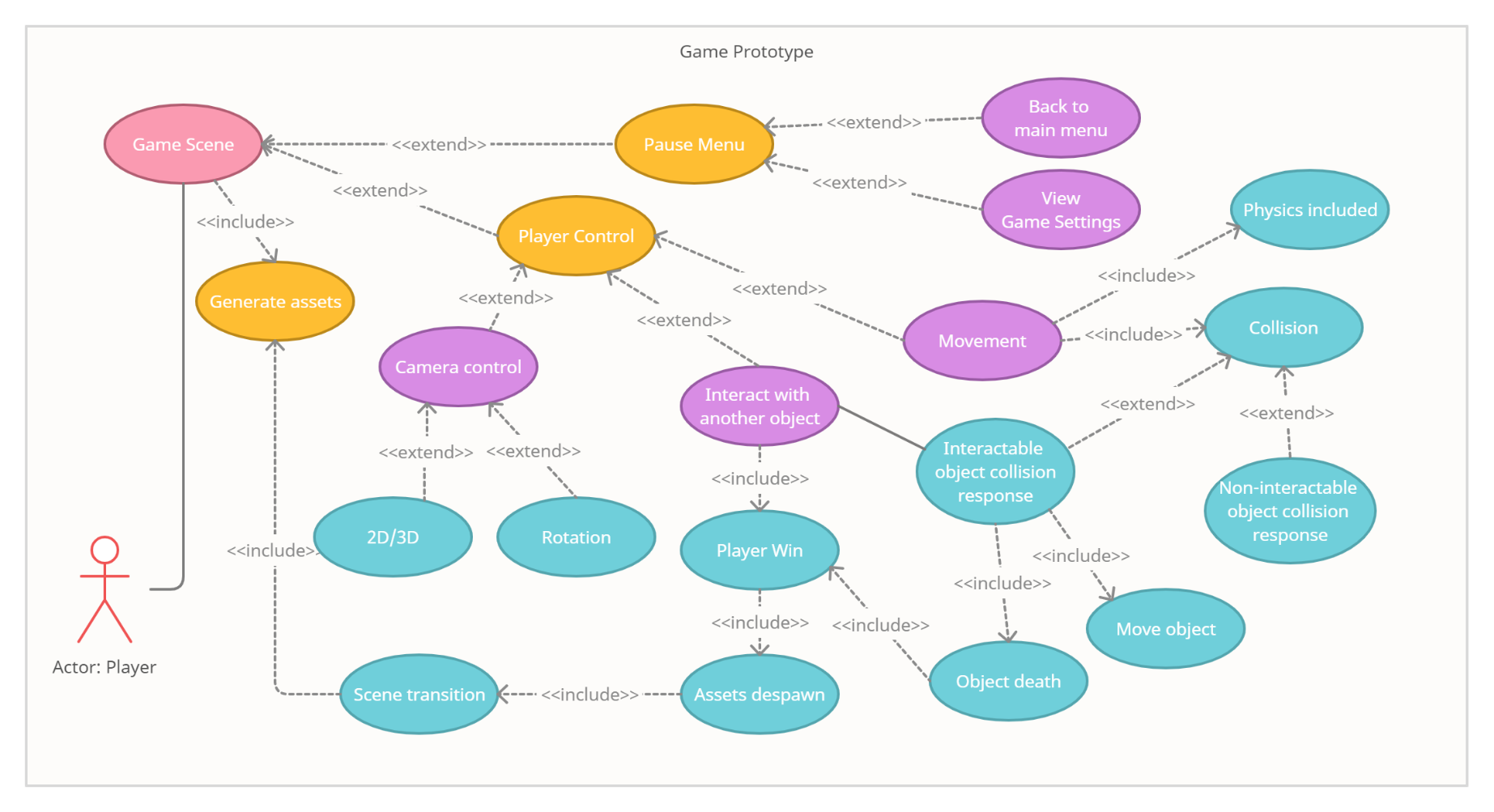
# Functional Requirements

A Functional Requirement, as described by (Martin, M. 2019), is a statement that describes the service that the software must provide. It refers to a software system or a component of one. A function is nothing more than the inputs, behaviours, and outputs of a software system. A calculation, data manipulation, business procedure, user interaction, or any other unique functionality that defines what function a system is likely to execute can all be considered. Functional Requirements are also known as Functional Specification in Software Engineering. For this project, it was necessary to identify the functional requirements by identifying who the users would be, construct a use case diagram, which depicts the user’s (also known as the actor’s) relationship with the application’s numerous use cases, and then define each of the use cases with a use case specification, provide specific details regarding each distinct use case.

**Use Case Diagrams (USD)**

In this project, there are multiple sections that require their own sets of functional requirements and use cases, as there is the main control mapping program and the two game prototypes. For each game prototype there is a main menu scene, which has its own use cases and functional requirements such as loading the game scene, changing game settings, and exiting the game. The menu’s game settings are the highlight of this project, as this is where the control mapping program takes place and is used.

**Figure 3:** Use Case Diagram for the Main Menu scene

Although there are two game prototypes in this project, they typically share the same functional requirements from the actor as they navigate through the games. These functional requirements being, game scene loaded, pausing game, player control, generating assets, loading game settings and more.

**Figure 4:** Use Case Diagram for the Game Prototypes

**Use Case Specification (USC)**

These following use cases are descriptions of the use cases in the USDs above, giving more detail and understanding to the project and its functional requirements.

Main Menu:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Use Case | Description |
| Play Game | Button from that takes actor from main menu to the game scene |
| Load Game Scene | Load the prototype game scene and all its levels |
| Exit Game | Exit the game prototype application |
| Game Settings | Change the game settings within the game, includes the load control mapping program which is the heart of the project |
| Load Control Mapping Program | Load’s the pre-set control settings that have been saved from one of the game prototypes. Any that have not been set will remain at default unless changed. This includes the saved mapped controls already on the program. |
| Set Controller bindings | If the actor is using a controller, set the controllers button bindings |
| Change Key-binds | Change the key binding for PC keyboard if actor is using it or change the bindings to another controller button or other equipment for controlling. |
| Change mouse/joystick sensitivity | Change the sensitivity for the mouse or joystick for the game prototypes. |
| Invert yPos | Invert the vertical position Y for inputs such as mouse or joystick to best suit actors’ preferences |
| Save control settings to control mapping program | Save changed game settings to the control mapping program so that it can be loaded onto other games and the data can be transferred. |

Game Prototypes:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Use Case | Description |
| Game Scene | The whole game scene, with included levels and information |
| Pause Menu | Button that makes the whole game pause, includes options such as returning to the main menu or looking at the game settings. |
| Back to main menu | Button in pause menu that takes actor back to main menu of game prototype. |
| View Game Settings | Button in pause menu that takes actor to the game settings to change or load settings. |
| Player Control | All cases that contribute to the controlling of the player |
| Movement | The movement of the player object in the game prototype, including physics that occur with movement and collisions that may occur. |
| Physics included | The physics that happen as the controlled player object is moving through the game space. |
| Collision | Collision that happens with the player object that is being controlled by the actor. This can be with an object that is interactable or an object that is not. |
| Non-interactable object collision response | The response that happens when the player object controlled collides with an object that is non-interactable. |
| Interactable object collision response | The response that happens when the player object controlled collides with an object that is interactable. This includes an object being moved or being deleted. |
| Move object | An object that has been collided with moves to a different position |
| Object death | An object that is dies after a collision due to game rules, this includes the rule that the player can win due to this object dying. |
| Interact with another object | Like *interactable object collision response,* it is associated with it, this includes move object and object death as well as player win. This also interacts with another object due to player control with other inputs instead of collision such as game rules or controllers. |
| Player Win | Player win can happen when an object dies and the game is over, when this happens it includes score counting and assets de-spawning and this transitions to a new scene which could be a new level scene or a menu scene |
| Assets despawn | When the player wins, despawn all the assets to load the new scene |
| Scene Transition | Load the next scene, which can be a new level, game over scene or the main menu, this includes Generate assets for the assets needed for the next scene. |
| Camera Control | The camera that is controlled by the player and follows it, this is primarily for 3D camera compared to 2D camera which will be stationary. |
| 2D/3D | Setting the camera for either 2D or 3D depending on the game prototype. |
| Rotation | The camera rotation that happens when the camera follows the player in a 3D environment. |

# Indicative Test Plan

# System Design

The purpose of the system design document is further the detail of the functional and non-functional requirements, as mentioned above, and implement them into a full system design of requirements, architecture, user interface, inputs, and outputs.

The Control Mapping program is designed to help with game accessibility, capturing the mapping of controllers/keyboards, how these mappings can move from two different playable prototype games and help benefits disabled players gaming experiences, making games more accessible and easier to play. The player is supplied with two playable prototype games that include their own menu and game settings section where they can load the control mapping program and set their own controller buttons/key bindings, which can then be saved to the program and that data is kept outside the games in the program which can be loaded to a different game. The program and prototype games will be made using Unity3D 2019.1.6f and will run on PC.

## Back-end

Code and mapping program stuff

## Front-end

Game and User Interface, menu, and stuff

The Front-end of the system design includes the game prototype games in Unity3D with their gameplay and menu UI.

To keep the control mapping program simple, easy to understand and accessible for all, the code of it is within the back end of the project, and the front-end which includes the two prototype games, and their menu/game settings UI is what controls and sets the program.

Firstly, prototype 1 which is titled “Wheelchair Basketball Shoot” is as simple as the name suggests, it is a 2D basketball shooter game where the player aims and releases a ball to a basketball net and gains points for each shot, there will be multiple levels that get more difficult as the game advances, with obstacles and moving nets. The player can be controlled default with A and D keys on a keyboard to move left and right on the screen, the ball following along with it, and then the ball can be aimed and released by using the mouse and holding down the left mouse button and dragging down on the screen to aim the ball into the basketball net with a line renderer that shows the path the ball will follow when the left mouse button is released and the ball is fired. The strength at which the ball is fired depends on the speed and duration of the mouse button being held down.

As this is a prototype there is only going to be 3 levels in this prototype, the first one being very simple, just aim and shoot to the basketball net, the second will have the basketball net move up and down the screen slowly, the third will have an obstacle in the way and the moving net.

The representation of disability in games, for this prototype, as explored within the Literature review, has come from (Brody, 2020) AbleGamers article about the need for more disabilities in the games we play, where they suggested that sports games can be adapted to include disabilities such as basketball games can have a wheelchair basketball player.

(images needed)

Assets made

Images of unity front end game stuff and menu

The second prototype game is titled “Bye-Bye Thoughts”, it is a simple 3D shooter which represents mental health.

# Implementation Report

Wait for meeting with Jethro

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## Figures

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| Figure No. | Image | Description |
| 1 | Chart  Description automatically generated | Graph that shows how mental health has been tackled in video games over the last few years. |
| 2 | Graphical user interface, text, application  Description automatically generated | Pie chart that shows how much different types of disabilities are portrayed when disability is included in games. |
| 3 |  | Main page of Input Mapper program, showing two different controllers (input devices) |