# BA Hons Computer Games Design
# imdcgd399 Final Project

## Final Project: Module Information Pack

The final project that you undertake this year should represent the culmination your undergraduate study. The work takes place across both semesters and is valued at 40 credits.

As a graduating student it is essential you have a significant piece of work that demonstrates the specialist skills you have developed on the course that you can present to potential employers. This module offers you the opportunity to provide yourself with such a piece of work.

This module has three elements of assessment:

| Element | Form of assessment | Size/length | Weighting (%) |
|---------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|
| #1 | Project proposal | 1000 words | 10% |
| #2 | Seminar presentation | 15 minutes | 10% |
| #3 | Final artefact and blog | Of sufficient detail | 80% |

**Assessment Element 1:** Project Proposal
**Size/length:** 1000 words (excluding bibliography)
**Assessment weighting:** 10% of the overall module mark
**Submission deadline:** TBC (ca. end of Week 7)

Each student will complete a formal project proposal, including an annotated bibliography of academic sources (no fewer than **ten** items) that will inform and underpin the work. In addition, the proposal will include the project title, the rationale, the method(s) and project timeline with milestones. The proposal will also contain a clear employability statement of how the completed project will demonstrate the relevant specialist skills, together with examples of specific organisations and/or current jobs in the relevant industry sector in which the specialist skills will be of value. There is a template for the submission of the project proposal in the handbook.

## Assessment Criteria

1. Evidence of coherent understanding of underlying theories, concepts and issues
2. Sufficient clarity of proposal and suitability for delivery
3. Identification of organisations/agencies or jobs in which the work will be of value
4. Conform to standard academic conventions of presentation
5. Identification of specific assessment criteria for final project

## A Note on Assessment Criteria

The assessment criteria above should make it clear what we are looking for. As a student following a degree level programme of study, you cannot simply create an artefact of some sort. Your work must be informed by the debates in your specialist subject area. To begin with, you will need to conduct a literature search for the area in which you are looking to make work and this will form the basis of the annotated bibliography you must include in your proposal. As your dissertation progresses, staff will expect to see evidence that the work is being informed by the ideas and debates relevant to the particular area you have chosen. The annotated bibliography will be set out according to standard academic conventions.

## The work will be assessed on the basis of its suitability for delivery

You have had the opportunity to benefit from a good deal of teaching and will have gained a great deal of experience in scoping work over short, medium and extended periods of time. Your proposal should, therefore, build on your existing knowledge and experience. Proposals that are vague, un-focussed or over-scoped will be marked as such and may, ultimately, be rejected.

As stated, you need to make sure you are focussed on the production of an artefact appropriate to your chosen career pathway and suitable for inclusion in your portfolio. The proposal should provide evidence that you have undertaken suitable preparatory research and can identify organisations/roles within the industry sector to which the skills the work demonstrates are suited.

### *You* will be telling *us* what you wish to be marked on in the final project.

A final project can take numerous different forms from a complete game to a single artefact, digital or non-digital. This means that the assessment criteria for this module are highly generic. However, if you wish to make a product that demonstrates, for example, your ability to write a program in C#, the proposal should state that in order for some of the marking of the final product to be allocated to that element. Similarly, if you are proposing to make a non-digital game that demonstrates your ability to design asynchronous play, staff will be directed by you to mark the work based on your ability to successfully satisfy that brief. As a final year undergraduate, the ability to set and meet project requirements is a key element of your learning and will provide you with evidence of your ability to act autonomously and in a self-directed manner.

**Assessment Element 2:** Seminar Presentation
**Size/length:** 15 minutes (10 minute presentation + 5 minutes for panel questions/discussion)
**Assessment weighting:** 10% of the overall module mark
**Presentation schedule:** TBC (ca. Week 15, first half of February; specific times to follow)

The student will give a 10 minute presentation using PowerPoint or similar presentation software, followed by 5 minutes of discussion/questions from the panel. The student will introduce the stock of materials they have either found, originated or intend to make in order to complete the project brief. This will provide the basis on which the final artefact is marked. In addition, the student will show how specific theoretical, technical and/or methodological issues identified in preparatory and subsequent reading and research inform the ongoing work.

**Assessment Criteria**

1. Ability to communicate your ongoing project development

2. Coherent development of the project

3. Incorporation and application of appropriate theory and method

4. Ability to reflect accurately on identified project milestones

**A Note on Assessment Criteria**

Staff will need to see how your ongoing work is being *guided and informed by the reading and research you are engaging in*. Your initial literature review is simply the starting point for further research; the presentation is an opportunity to demonstrate to the course team how the ongoing work forms a dialogue between yourself and the ideas you are exploring.

The presentation needs to progress logically through the steps you have already taken, and provide evidence that you are on course to complete the dissertation as intended. This is all part of your task of communicating to staff that the work you have been doing is fully on-track. Clarity is all: the presentation should convey your ideas clearly to us while you will also speak clearly and communicate clearly using appropriate terminology and citing appropriate sources as necessary. You have already developed a substantial amount of experience of showing your work in presentations and the process will by now be very familiar to you.

**The Final Project Blog**, is the evidence that you will be drawing on for you ongoing regular engagement with your project. More will be said about this in the tutor-led sessions at the start of the module.

**Assessment Element 3:** Artefact and Development Blog
**Size/length:** The development blog should have a sufficient number of entries, each of which should be of sufficient length and sufficiently detailed to outline the development of the work and to demonstrate how the work has been informed by the relevant theoretical and methodological issues identified in the related reading.
**Assessment weighting:** 80% of the overall module mark
**Submission deadline:** TBC (Typically, before noon on the first Friday after the Easter holiday).

The student will present their artefact as agreed in the seminar presentation and in further negotiation with their specialist tutor. Thie artefact might take the form of a single object, a board game, a digital game, a written document(s), a mod or it may be a range of objects. This work will be accompanied by your ongoing development blog (see below) that clearly delineates the progress of the project and the related research.

The blog will typically include mood boards, paper prototypes, reflections on your iterations, analysis of readings, reflections on tutor or audience feedback on the work, early models and so on. The blog is absolutely critical to the final product. The blog is the supporting evidence that clearly demonstrates how the work has been informed by an understanding of the underlying theoretical and methodological issues in the development process and of how you have worked methodically on the project across the academic year. Whatever the final artefact and blog, the key characteristics of the work should be that it is:

- The product of negotiation

- Theoretically informed

- Offers scope to develop skills in a particular area

**Assessment Criteria:**

1. Evidence of understanding of appropriate theories and methods informing the work

2. Evidence of creativity and originality in the artefact

3. Evidence of autonomous skills in project planning, development and delivery

4. Evidence of the use of appropriate technical skills

5. Expressive potential of the medium exploited to a basic standard

6. Evidence of ongoing reflection on the project

**A note on the assessment criteria:**

You can see from the above that the criteria are *generic.* In a final project we cannot know in advance what type of object you may wish to produce. Generic assessment criteria are developed precisely so that you are not limited in what you may choose to propose. However, the criteria do indicate *the level of engagement* expected in the final project.

We expect you to have demonstrated an on-going problem solving approach to your work. This means you have not simply settled for what you already know but you have pushed yourself to make new discoveries and that this has been done not simply in tandem with help from tutors but through your own research and initiative.

You will be expected to produce work with a clear understanding of what the industry standard is for that work and make clear efforts to achieve that standard. All the supporting documentation (blog entries and any other written material) should conform to standard academic conventions in terms of presentation, referencing and bibliographies.

**Negotiation**

One of the key learning outcomes for students undertaking degree-level study is that they become *autonomous learners*. This means that students should be able to set their own targets for the things they wish to do, provide a realistic timeframe for completing what they set out to do and liaise effectively with those from whom they may require assistance by keeping tutors updated on progress in a regular and timely way. These autonomous skills will contribute toward your ability to operate in a professional manner.

The *negotiated* character of the work is central to the final project. This pack contains the broad outlines of the kinds of work that can be considered for a project as well as the learning outcomes and the criteria for the assessment for the work. However, the actual project that you undertake, the balance of the components (for example, the extent to which you wish to be assessed on the coding rather than the modelling) is something which is worked out in meetings between the student and the specialist tutor.

Thus the module requires a co-operative and pro-active attitude to be taken between students and staff across a number of important areas:

- In the student *making* and *keeping* meetings with staff.
- In the student coming to those meetings *prepared* with the necessary materials.
- In the student showing a willingness *to negotiate* and *agree* details of the project.
- In the student understanding what assistance can be *reasonably* given by staff to the development of the project within the timeframe of the module.

**Module Organisation**

Some people may come to the Final Project module with quite a clear outline of the type of work they want to undertake: this may involve either the *form* of the work, for example, an environmental 3D model, a Unity level, etc., or the *subject area* they wish to work on, such as a game prototype in a particular genre. Some students may have little idea of any aspect of the project. Whatever position you may be in, the first few module sessions will be directed towards the identification of suitable topics and projects. We anticipate the first three or four weeks will be spent identifying the outlines of a suitable topic for the module which is formalised through the submission of the Project Proposal (Assessment Element 1). The Project Proposal is the first element of assessment (10% of the module weighting).

A project can evolve or mutate over the course of two semesters. You may encounter technical problems or issues to circumnavigate, or your research may inform you of other methods and approaches. **You must document any such changes in your development blog and in your regular meetings with the specialist supervisor.**

A project might also "go off-track" for a number of other reasons. For example:

- In exceptional cases, it may not be possible to authenticate the work submitted as the student's own work. This can happen if the student neglects to adequately identify what elements of the project have been produced as original work.

- The work ceases to be supported by necessary underpinning of theoretical ideas drawn from your research: the students simply decides to do something because he *feels* it is the right thing to do *without any underpinning research to support or inform* the work.

- Substantial last-minute changes to a project with only a few weeks to go before submission; there is no indication of any evidence for the changes that have been made; no up-to-date blog entries are being kept to document the development of the project.

The opening section of the module will help direct students towards suitable and achievable projects and will emphasise that any practical work that is undertaken needs to be supported by appropriate theoretical and/or methodological approaches derived your reading and research. Discussion will take place during the scheduled sessions. Once the formal project proposal has been agreed, a timetable of meetings between the student and an appropriate member of staff – the specialist tutor – will be drawn up. The student will meet the tutor as agreed.

Early in the second semester, typically around week 15, students will give a presentation, setting out the detail of the development of their project to staff. The presentation is formally assessed (10% of the module weighting) and should be built into your project milestones.

Once the formal project proposal has been submitted, the weekly sessions will end; students will be expected to pro-actively arrange meetings with the specialist tutor for individual tutorial meetings.

The following points should be noted:

- The group sessions are intended to deal with aspects of work and research that are common to all projects. The opening section is fairly rigidly organised in order to get students started on the Project Proposal. Once this is over, students will be expected to arrange to meet with the specialist tutor for individual tutorial sessions.

- The module tutor's role is to not only facilitate the scheduled group sessions, but also to maintain contact with specialist tutors to monitor progress with project milestones.

- If a specialist tutor receives no work from a student, or receives no contact or irregular contact from a student to arrange tutorial meetings, or a student's development blog is not being updated, the module tutor will contact the student to check on progress. However, it should be understood that inactivity requiring tutor intervention may have an effect on the final grade, because it will call into question the student's ability to function as an autonomous learner.

- There is no set text associated with the scheduled group sessions. The expectation is that, from the start of the module, students will actively engage with the research process as independent learners. This is assessed in the learning outcomes for the module. Explicit reference is made to the proper use of appropriate sources to inform and support the work in order to ensure a suitable academic standard for degree-level work.

- Students arrange specialist tutorial support in negotiation with the specialist tutor. It is the specialist tutor's role to offer advice on resources for individual research projects, engage with students in critical dialogue at each stage of development and to give informed feedback on drafts that the student produces. There is, however, a limit beyond which a supervisor may not go in helping a student. It is expected that students will organise the production of their work in good time for changes and improvements to be made

- The specialist taught sessions are there to offer further teaching in areas we think will help support you in both your dissertation and your group project module.

**The Development Blog**

The practical artefact that you make on the dissertation will be something that you have produced as a response to a particular question or issue. The artefact will be accompanied by a blog (hosted on Blogger or a similar platform). The blog should be started immediately you begin to develop ideas for the dissertation. It will include regular (ideally weekly) updates on the progress of the work, mood boards, design documentation, asset lists, iterations, discursive pieces etc. Where you draw on theoretical or other sources for the work you are developing you will be expected to reference these in the normal way following standard academic conventions.

- The development blog should be separate from your other work so that the specialist tutor or any other interested party can access blog entries without having to navigate any other extraneous material.
- The blog should be easy to navigate: select a simple layout/template without gimmicks, visual effects or fussy transitions.
- It should be possible to review all posts in the blog by clicking on a sidebar or navigation pane.
- The blog should be made publicly accessible and comments enabled (with a spam filter if required – which will probably be a good idea to prevent blog-spam)

A selection of Final Project blogs will be sampled on a weekly basis looking for updates. The module tutor will inform specialist tutors in cases where there is no apparent progress. Specialist tutors will use the development blogs to get a feel for where your proposal is and *may* sometimes leave comments (don't expect the module tutor or the specialist tutor to make comments or engage in a dialogue via the blog: this level of discussion will take place in scheduled module sessions and specialist tutorials).

**Final Project Proposal: Notes for Guidance**

The purpose of the Project Proposal form (Appendix A) is for you to undertake some initial research into the topic of your choice and to provide us with a reasonable outline of a proposal. The proposal is something that will be worked on and may well change, perhaps significantly, over the course of the project, but the initial proposal is the starting point for the work and related discussion. Guidance for the completion of the Project Proposal form follows:

**Proposed Project Title**

The title may well be something snappy, but it does not have to be. It should, however, refer explicitly to the central question, issue or task that will be addressed or undertaken.

**Brief Outline of the Work**

The single most important thing in the whole opening part of the module is to consider the central tasks you will be undertaking with reference to the topic in which you are interested. This section of the proposal is where you state the particular problematic, issue or concern that your project seeks to address.

Often the question or the task can be framed very simply; for example:

- "An exploration and analysis of the differences between game play in destructible and non-destructible levels"

- " A level developed in Unity on the topic of the 'Divided Self'"

Whatever the central task is, it must go beyond a simple "A casual game in unity". The outline has to demonstrate that your project will have, what is called in academic jargon, *a central problematic*. This central problematic should arise from the initial reading and research that you have undertaken related to the topic of interest.

Whatever your creative piece of work is, it must demonstrate that it has been informed by some of the disciplinary aspects of games design that you have studied. Evidence of this will be provided in the annotated bibliography included with the Project Proposal.

*Note on originality:*

You are not required to invent an approach to a question that has not been thought of before. When we talk of originality at undergraduate level we mean original to *you*. In other words we expect you to use the dissertation to push the boundaries of the knowledge that you currently have and do something new. This is precisely what will demonstrate that you are an autonomous learner.

**Rationale**

Here you state your reasons for investigating the question. A rationale can be derived from a personal interest, or be work-related or purely academic, ideally a combination of all three. For example, it may well be that a project will draw on some strengths in terms of previous modules you have taken and skills that you wish to further develop (a personal rationale). The artefact that you are proposing to make may also be suited to the perceived needs of a particular organisation or job-role (work related) and at the same time, might also explore the relationship between a particular game mechanic and a genre of game (academic).

A rationale for investigating the central tasks you are undertaking which meets *all* the above elements components is likely to provide a sound basis for the project. Remember: if you cannot set out a good reason why you should be undertaking the proposed project, others are unlikely to be able to find a rationale for it either.

**Annotated Bibliography**

A final year project is a synthesis of both your practical skills and your academic skills. The annotated bibliography is your chance to demonstrate that you can search for and comment on a range of texts that can be used to support the practical work that you wish to make. The scheduled groups sessions in the early part of the module will offer some practical help in this regard.

Once you think you have found a suitable reading, you will be asked to comment on it in the "summary" field. You are not expected to provide a full critique or summary of every text, but you will be expected to identify aspects of each text you think will be useful in supporting your work and to comment on this; the assessment of the proposal will take account of this initial research.

**Project Timeline and Milestone Deliverables**

You will need to use your project management skills to identify tasks and schedule your work for the Final Project. A calendar with milestones to help with this can be found in Appendix B. Key dates are already in place: you will need to give some thought to the dates by which the key milestones for your project can be or will be achieved. Remember that you will need to build in time for the work to be negotiated with your specialist tutor and for you to make adjustments to the work based on their feedback. This is a critical component of the proposal: it shows you have an understanding of how much work is involved in the project you are proposing, the steps you need to take, and the order in which the various sub-tasks should be undertaken. The timeline also gives a good indication on the ability you have developed over the last two years to successfully scope a project.

**Recommended reading**

Although there is no set text for this module, the following are suggested as a starting point for advice on how to complete extended projects:

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., and Tight M. (2010) *How To Research.* Fourth edition. Maidenhead. Open University Press.

Chambers, E. and Northedge, A. (2008) *The Arts Good Study Guide.* Second edition. Milton Keynes. Open University Press.

Moore, S. (2010) *The Ultimate Study Skills Handbook.* Maidenhead. Open University Press.

[END]

APPENDIX A

## Final Project Proposal: Proposal Template

The overall word count, excluding the annotated bibliography and project milestones, should be approximately 1000 words.

**Student Name**

|  |
|--|
|  |

**Blog URL**

|  |
|--|
|  |

**Proposed Final Project Title**

|  |
|--|
|  |

**Brief Outline of Work**

|  |
|--|
|  |

**Rationale For The Project**

|  |
|--|
|  |

**Annotated Bibliography**

(Please arrange the items in the bibliography in alphabetical order and use a Harvard-style form of presentation)

|  | Bibliographical item | Summary |
|--|----------------------|---------|
| 1. |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |
| 4. |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |
| 6. |  |  |
| 7. |  |  |
| 8. |  |  |
| 9. |  |  |
| 10. |  |  |

APPENDIX B

| Use this grid to plan your project milestones | | |
|---|---|---|
| **2017 – 18** | **Week #** | **Milestone Deliverables and Tasks** |
| 25 – 29 Sept | Week 1 | |
| 2 – 6 Oct | Week 2 | |
| 9 – 13 Oct | Week 3 | |
| 16 – 20 Oct | Week 4 | |
| 23 – 27 Oct | Week 5 | |
| 30 Oct – 3 Nov | Week 6 | |
| 6 – 10 Nov | Week 7 | Submission of Final Project Proposal: by noon, Friday 10 Nov 2018 |
| 13 – 17 Nov | Week 8 | |
| 20 – 24 Nov | Week 9 | |
| 27 Nov – 1 Dec | Week 10 | |
| 4 – 8 Dec | Week 11 | |
| 11 – 15 Dec | Week 12 | |
| 18 – 22 Dec | | **Mid-Winter Festival** |
| 25 – 29 Dec | | |
| 1 – 5 Jan | | |
| 8 – 12 Jan | | |
| 15 – 19 Jan | | |
| 22 – 26 Jan | Week 13 | |
| 29 Jan –2 Feb | Week 14 | |
| 5 – 9 Feb | Week 15 | **Seminar Presentations TBC** |
| 12 – 16 Feb | Week 16 | **Seminar Presentations TBC** |
| 19 – 23 Feb | Week 17 | |
| 26 Feb – 2 Mar | Week 18 | |
| 5 – 9 Mar | Week 19 | |
| 12 – 16 Mar | Week 20 | |
| 19 – 23 Mar | Week 21 | |
| 26 – 30 Mar | | **Spring Fertility Festival** |
| 2 – 6 Apr | | |
| 9 – 13 Apr | Week 22 | Submission of Final Product and Blog: by noon, Friday 13 Apr 2018 |
| 16 – 20 Apr | Week 23 | |
| 23 – 27 Apr | Week 24 | |