**IMDCGD399   
FINAL PROJECT MODULE:   
BA HONS COMPUTER GAMES DESIGN**

**MODULE INFORMATION PACK**

FINAL PROJECT:-

The final project that you undertake this year should represent the culmination of a student’s undergraduate study. The work takes place across both academic terms and is valued at 40 credits.

As a graduate student it is absolutely crucial you have a significant piece of work that represents the specialist skills you have developed on the course that you can present in a portfolio to potential employers. This module offers you the opportunity to provide yourself with this.

The module has three assessment points:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Component Number** | **Form of assessment** | **Assessment size** | **Weighting (%)** |
| 1 | Project Proposal | 1000wds | 10% |
| 2 | Seminar Presentation |  | 10% |
| 3 | Final Artefact and Blog |  | 80% |

**ASSESSMENT 1**

**Project Proposal:   
1000 words: 10%  
Submission: Friday November 13th November 12:00 am 2015 (or before)**

The student will complete a formal project proposal to include an annotated bibliography of academic sources underpinning the work of no less than 10 items. In addition the work will include the Project title, the rationale, method and project timeline with milestones. The work will also contain a clear statement on how the project will assist the student with their employability skills at the end of the development, citing examples of specific organisations and or current jobs for which the work will prove valuable. There is a template for the submission of this piece of work provided in the handbook.

**Assessment 1 Project Proposal**

**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 or agencies for whom the work will prove valuable.
4. Academic conventions applied.
5. Identification of specific assessment criteria for final project

A note on the assessment criteria:-

The assessment criteria above should make it clear what we are looking for. As a BA undergraduate student you cannot simply make 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 that you are looking to make work in and this will be assessed in the annotated bibliography you must provide. As your dissertation progresses we expect to see that it is being informed by the ideas and debates in the area you have chosen. The annotated bibliography will be properly referenced in accordance with standard academic conventions.

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

You have had a great deal of teaching and gained a great deal of experience in scoping work over short, medium and extended periods of time. We expect your proposal to demonstrate your knowledge of this. Plans presented to us that are vague, unfocussed 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 that is suitable for your portfolio. So we need evidence you have investigated this and can identify organisations / roles within the industry for who this work is targeted at.

***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 complete games, to single artefacts, both digital and non-digital. This means that the criteria of assessment that we create for this module are highly generic. However if you wish to make a product that demonstrates your command over c# then we expect you to say so in your proposal so that we can direct some of our marking of your final product to that. If you are making a non digital game and it is demonstrating your command over asynchronous play, then, again, we will be directed by you to mark your work based on you successfully fulfilling that brief. As a final year undergraduate this is a key element of your learning, your ability to act autonomously and in a self directed manner.

**ASSESSMENT 2**

**Seminar Presentation:   
15 minutes : 10%   
Week Beginning 1st February 2016 times TBA**

The student will give a 10 minute presentation incorporating the use of an annotated Power point slide show and 5 minutes will be for questions. 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 they will show how theoretical issues they have been reading about have informed the choices that they are making.

**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 the assessment criteria:-

We need to see how the work you have been undertaking is being *guided and informed by the reading and research you are engaging in*. Your initial literature review is simply the starting point for your research, the team need convincing that this work is part of an ongoing dialog between yourself and the ideas you are exploring.

The powerpoint slideshow needs to takes us logically through the steps you have already taken, and provide evidence to us that you are on course to complete the dissertation as you intended. This is all part of your task of convincing us that the work you have been doing is fully on track. You need to convey your ideas clearly to us, speaking clearly and communicating clearly. You have been given plenty of opportunities to present your work to us through presentations and this should now be a familiar process to you.

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

**ASSESSMENT 3**

**Artefact and Blog: Semester 2 Friday 13th May 2016**

The student will present their artefact as agreed in the seminar presentation and in further negotiation with their specialist tutor. This might be 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 outlines the progress and research you have engaged in.

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 evidence that you point to that clearly demonstrates how the work has been informed by an understanding of the underlying theoretical and methodological issues in the development process and that 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:-

1 The product of negotiation.

2 Is theoretically informed.

3 Offers the student scope to develop skills in an area of their interest.

**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 they do point precisely *to the level of engagement* we expect to see from you in whatever it is that you finally wish to produce.

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.

We expect you to produce work with a clear understanding of what the industry standard is for that work and makes clear efforts to achieve this.

Finally that all written work meets the required academic standards in regards to bibliographies etc.

**Negotiation**

One of the key learning outcomes for those undertaking a degree is that students should 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 who they require assistance from by keeping tutors updated on progress in a regular and timely way. You will see how all of this is about your ability to act in a professional manner.

So central to the final project is the *negotiated* character of the work. 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 the extent to which you wish to be assessed on the coding rather than the modelling you might do, is something which is worked out in meetings between us.

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.

**How Is The Module Organised?**

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; Environmental 3D model, Unity Level etc, or the *subject* area they wish to work on; a particular genre of game prototype. Some students may have little idea of any aspects of work for the project. Whatever position *you* are in, the opening part of the module is directed towards the identification of suitable topics and projects. We would normally expect the first 3/4 weeks to be spent identifying the outlines of a suitable topic for the module and this is formalised through the submission of the ***Formal Project Proposal*** .

Clearly a project can change and mutate over the course of two semesters. You may encounter technical problems or issues, your readings may inform you of other methods and approaches. **You must keep track of these changes through your blog and your regular meetings with staff.**

Why might a project go off track?

* This may be because it is not possible to authenticate the work submitted as the students. You fail to identify adequately what elements of the project you have produced.
* The work ceases to be supported by necessary underpinning theoretical ideas drawn from the field. You simply decide to do something because you *feel* it is the right thing for you to do *without any underpinning research to back up your choices*. Last minute changes to your project with only a few weeks to go before submission.
* There is no indication of any evidence for the change that has taken place in the topic the student has chosen. No up to date blog entries are being kept to record the work that has taken place.

So, to clarify, 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 underpinning theoretical work. These are the timetabled sessions. Once the formal project proposal has been agreed, then a timetable of meetings between the student and an appropriate member of staff – the specialist tutor - will be drawn up. Students will then meet tutors as agreed.

At the start of semester two there will be a 15 minute seminar presentation (normally in powerpoint) where students will detail out the development of their project to staff. This work is formally assessed and should be built into your project milestones. See details above, Assessment No 2.

Once the formal project proposal has been approved, my weekly sessions will end and the module will revert to tutorials.

From the Outlined Schedule of work there are some critical points to note:

1. ***The central tutor sessions*** are in part there to deal with those aspects of work and research that are common to all projects. The content of discussion with the student will be governed by the stage at which the module has reached. The opening section is fairly rigidly organised in order to get students started, once this is over you will be asked to meet your central tutor on a tutorial basis. This is because by this time the help and support that you will need is of an individual rather than group nature.

My central role is not only in the delivery of the opening teaching sections of the module but in maintaining a regular contact with the other tutors on the route to monitor you progress between the various milestone stages.

If a tutor has not received any work from you, or has not been contacted by you in order to monitor your progress, or you blog is not being updated then, naturally, I will intervene. However, as a student, you must understand that if I do so, then this will inevitably begin to impact upon your final grade, because it will call into question your autonomous skills. Particularly in keeping staff informed of the ongoing progress of your work.

1. **There is no set reading that is associated with the central sessions,** the expectation will be that, from the start of the module, students themselves will actively engage with the research process as independent learners. This element is assessed in the learning outcomes for the module. Explicit reference is made to the gathering of independent sources of reading in order to demonstrate the final year graduate standard for academic work.
2. ***The specialist tutorial sessions*** are negotiated with your specialist tutor. It is your specialist tutors role to offer advice on resources for your research, to engage with you in critical dialogue at each stage of its development and to give informed feedback on drafts that you produce. There is, however, a limit beyond which a supervisor may not go in helping you with your work. ***The reasonable expectation made is that you will organise the production of your work in good time for changes and improvements to be made***
3. 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 Blogspot or something equivalent). 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 procedures. **The blog must be easy to navigate, it should be possible to review all posts in the blog by clicking on a sidebar or equivalent.**

I will be tracking these blogs on a weekly basis looking for updates. I then inform the specialist tutors which students have or have not updated their blogs. Specialist staff will look at these blogs to get a feel for where your proposal is and sometimes offer comments on them.

**Formal Project Proposal : Notes for guidance.**

The purpose of the form 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 is worked on and may well change and modify significantly in the course of dissertation but it is your starting point for the discussions and work that follows. Guidance for its completion is outlined below:

**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 you will be undertaking.

**Brief Outline of 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 you are interested in. This section is where you state the particular issue / concern that your project seeks to address.

Often the question / task can be framed very simply. An exploration of the differences between game play in destructible and non destructible levels. A level developed in Unity on the topic of the ‘Divided Self’

What ever the central task is, it must take us further than simply `A casual game in unity `. The outline has to demonstrate that your project will have, what is called in academic jargon, *a central problematic*. Further, that this central problematic arises out of some initial reading and research that you are undertaking into the issue.

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. This will be evidenced in the annotated bibliography that you produce with this submission.

*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 **personal, work related and academic**. It might 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 object that you are making may also be a requirement of an organisation in order to meet a perceived need (work related) and at the same time what you are doing might explore the relationship between a particular game mechanic and a genre of game (academic)

Providing a rationale for investigating the central tasks you are undertaking which meets all three of the above components is critical thing to do. *Remember if you cannot think of a good reason why you should be undertaking the project then others will not be able too 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 formal opening sessions 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’. We obviously do not expect you to have read everything in the text, but we do expect you to have the skills to identify what parts of the text you think will be useful in supporting your work and to say why and you will be marked accordingly on this component.

**Project Timeline and Milestone Deliverables:**

You will need to complete the schedule that is included in the assessment. The submission dates for the work are already in place and you need to detail out when the key deliverables of your project will be ready by. Remember that you will need to build in time for this 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 tells us whether you have begun to understand how much work is involved in the project you are proposing, the steps you need to take and the order the work should be progressed in. The timeline gives us a clear indication on the ability you have developed over the last two years to successfully scope a project.

Below is a template for the Final Project Proposal:- The overall word count, not including the project milestones should be approximately 1000 words.

**Student Name:**

**Proposed Final Project Title:**

**Brief Outline of Work:**

**Rationale For The Project.**

**Annotated Bibliography:**

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|  | TEXT | SUMMARY |
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PROJECT MILESTONES

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **2015-16** |  | **MILESTONE DELIVERABLES AND TASKS** |
| 28 Sept - 2 Oct | Week 1 |  |
| 5 - 9 Oct | Week 2 |  |
| 12 - 16 Oct | Week 3 |  |
| 19 - 23 Oct | Week 4 |  |
| 26 - 30 Oct | Week 5 |  |
| 2 - 6 Nov | Week 6 |  |
| 9 - 13 Nov | Week 7 | **FINAL SUBMISSION OF PROJECT PROPOSAL FRIDAY 13TH DECEMBER 12:00 AM** |
| 16 - 20 Nov | Week 8 |  |
| 23 - 27 Nov | Week 9 |  |
| 30 Nov - 4 Dec | Week 10 |  |
| 7 - 11 Dec | Week 11 |  |
| 14- 18 Dec | Week 12 |  |
| 21 - 25 Dec | Xmas Break |  |
| 28 Dec - 1 Jan |
| 4 - 8 Jan |
| 11 - 15 Jan |  |  |
| 18 - 22 Jan |  |  |
| 25 - 29 Jan | Week 13 |  |
| 1 - 5 Feb | Week 14 | **Seminar Presentation Week** |
| 8 - 12 Feb | Week 15 |  |
| 15 - 19 Feb | Week 16 |  |
| 22 - 26 Feb | Week 17 |  |
| 29 Feb - 4 Mar | Week 18 |  |
| 7 - 11 Mar | Week 19 |  |
| 14 - 18 Mar | Week 20 |  |
| 21 - 25 Mar | Easter Break |  |
| 28 Mar - 1 Apr | Easter Break |  |
| 4 - 8 Apr |  |  |
| 11 - 15 Apr | Week 21 |  |
| 18 - 22 Apr | Week 22 |  |
| 25 Apr - 29 Apr | Week 23 |  |
| 2 - 6 May | Week 24 |  |
| **FRIDAY 13TH MAY 12:00 AM SUBMISSION OF FINAL**  **PRODUCT AND BLOG** | | |

READINGS.

Although there are no set readings for this module the following are a suggested starting point.

For advice on how to complete extended projects you are advised to consult the following library texts:-

Baxter, l (2007) *How To Research,* Open University Press

Chambers, E (2008) *The Arts Good Study Guide,* Open University Press

Moore, S (2009) *The Ultimate Study Skills Handbook,*  Open University Press