

Continuing Professional Development - Semester One

COMP230 - CPD Report

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Introduction

Unfortunately I am still undecided on a particular career route. I am aware that during this course I will learn programming skills that can also be applied outside of the games industry so have not ruled this out as a possibility. Having said that, my passion still lies with games and game design so I hopefully will be able to work in the games industry after the course is completed.

1 Affective - Stress and Procrastination

I have talked about stress management and anxiety in previous CPD reports but I think it is enough of a problem to mention it and its effects further here. I have noticed that I tend to procrastinate a lot rather than work on particularly difficult assignments in an vain attempt to take my mind off of the problem, which then leads even more mental stress nearer to the deadline. I noted this in particular whenever I had to do a presentation or pitch and before worksheet deadlines. This is a problem I've been

dealing with throughout my life so I don't expect it to disappear overnight but I do need to change my mindset in relation to difficult work.

There are a lot of things I need to do to help with this stress problem. The main thing I need to do is change how I think about stress. Watching a few TED talks about stress management has helped with this. One such talk suggests that, when viewed as a positive, stress can actually improve performance without negative impacts on health. Therefore I will try and think of stress as preparing me for the work I'm doing or presentation I'm about to give.

In terms of SMART goals, this is a difficult skill to monitor. One way would be to limit the number of hours I allow myself on social media or gaming or other forms of procrastination. I will therefore aim to do my work in the studio every day of the week, this should limit the temptation to procrastinate.

2 Interpersonal - Communicating Ideas

Communicating clearly has been an issue in multiple group game projects that I have been involved with. I feel like as with my stress problems, anxiety issues may be part of the problem I have with communicating with the rest of my team. I tend to sit in silence for most of our sprint reviews and PO meetings, which means any good ideas I may have don't get discussed. Conversely I tend to not criticise any potentially problem causing ideas other team members may have for fear of causing offence. This has lead to feedback in peer review meetings that suggest I communicate more. Although confrontation avoidance can be good in general life, I believe that it can also stifle a teams creativity and would be very harmful to my continuing professional development.

I believe the best way to measure my success in this will be to write down at least one idea, issue or comment I have with the group project before each meeting and make sure I speak about it during. Hopefully my peer review feedback will also start to reflect this improvement.

3 Dispositional - Planning My Work

This particular skill is something I highlighted last year as being an issue. I realise that my work suffers when I don't set myself clear goals and complete tasks well before the deadlines. This is a problem that I believe is the result of many factors, including anxiety over how difficult I find to understand some of the assignments, which deters me from wanting to work on them as often as I should. This just creates a cycle of despair that leads to me not learning as much as I could. If I can parse my assignments better, I believe this should help alleviate some of the anxiety I feel towards the work. Also starting earlier and working more often on tasks I find difficult.

I have purchased a physical calendar which I will be using from now on to mark all of my hard deadlines. I will also create soft deadlines for myself and mark those on the calendar. I believe a physical calendar that I can easily see at all times on my wall will be a good motivator and reminder to work.

4 Procedural - Learning AI Basics

One of my goals this year is to learn some basic AI principals. I haven't really dealt with AI in games before and since this is an important aspect in game design and I know that we have a module on AI next semester I would like to get a head start on it and try to make an AI enemy for our group project. Our group has discussed including an enemy that tracks the player and chases them throughout the level and so I believe this might be a worthwhile endeavour. Even if we ultimately don't use it in our game, I would still benefit greatly from the challenge.

There are several Unity tutorials online that I can use and I will set myself a target of creating AI pathfinding for an enemy in our group game using the Unity NavMesh components. I will aim to complete a basic example first and then implement one into the group project if the team still wants this aspect of the game included. I will set this

as a task for me on the task board.

5 Cognitive - Learning Design Patterns

I have very briefly taken a look at some different programming design patterns while I've been at university but am still not as familiar as I would like to be since the majority of my time so far has been developing an understanding of basic coding practices. In my Graphics portfolio, my lack of knowledge regarding design patterns hindered parts of the codebase design, leading to a lot of code duplication and other flaws. In order to develop as a programmer, I definitely need to look more closely at what kinds of design patterns would be useful in my own assignments. Doing this will help me to become a much more versatile programmer.

To this end, I will be reading through the book: Design Patterns: Elements of Reusable Object-Oriented Software. I aim to have finished this by the end of next semester. I also intend to have written an example in code of several patterns by the end of next semester and try and use the Factory Method in my comp220 portfolio to improve the code, specifically with how I create game objects.

Conclusion

The main problems I have with regards to my work tend to be psychological. I have talked in previous reports about impostor syndrome and how this may play a part in my anxiety issues with regards to my work ethic. This and a fear of failing leads to procrastination and stress. Although I don't feel I have done too badly during my time at university so far, with a more studious and positive mindset, my skills as a programmer and team member should hopefully continue to improve.