Research methodology and the work breakdown (500 word limit).

Plan of work should contain a breakdown of the tasks to be undertaken, methodologies employed in stages or phases and include an indication of the associated time scales.

Phase 1 will begin with initial secondary research into the areas outlined in the literature review, before broadening the scope to incorporate theories surrounding motivation, covering not only what motivates students in their studies, but also what motivates them to study. In addition, examining data on Higher Education before the introduction of tuition fees, and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be important to examine as many contributing factors as possible, to ensure that the proposed project aligns to the contemporary student experience as closely as possible; whilst also factoring in the wider historical context.

Phase 2 will include quantitative and qualitative research, primarily through questionnaires, but may also include interviews, and surveys, conducted on the students studying Video Game Design and Development from level 4-6. The Games students will be the ones that the proposed system will be trialled on, and they may have valuable insights that will guide its direction. The questionnaire will enable the collection of data that can be anonymised. It is not foreseen that any sensitive information, or information that could be linked back to a particular student, although it is possible that during preliminary research this may change and factors such as age and socioeconomic background may become need to be considered in further questionnaires. In this case the appropriate discussions over ethical data storage and protection will take place. The questionnaires will require theming to align with the distinct research aims: Belonging and engagement for Phase 1, and attitudes to character customisation and relationship to game avatars to prepare for Phase 3.

Phase 3 will be taking the conclusions from Phase 1 and 2 and refining them towards the creation of the artifact. The artifact itself will require significant research and prototyping during this phase. The research will be focused on methods of avatar creation and customisation, looking at various styles from well-known games that range from cartoon to realistic. This, combined with information received during Phase 2, will help to determine whether the avatar creation follows a particular route or whether it is desirable or achievable to offer a variety of styles. The methodology for this phase will be a combination of secondary research and questionnaires. It is hoped that the research may indicate whether players historically become more invested in an avatar that is more realistic, or whether it is more the personal preference of the player. There may be an opportunity to tie the artifact into the new Learner Analytics system, but this would require discussions into how possible and secure this would be, and whether it gathers the sort of data that the project is examining. The other area of research will be the realisation of the artifact. This will include research into the most appropriate platform, taking into account if the students will monitor their avatar on PC, webpage, mobile app..), and creation of the assets for the avatar.