Personal Statement for PhD Proposal.

Ian Smith

sm22622/st20131102

Email: ismith@cardiffmet.ac.uk

I enrolled at Cardiff Metropolitan University in 2017 on the Foundation programme, and successfully completed my undergraduate degree in Computer Game Design and Development in 2021. Since then, I have been an Associate Tutor, and then I became a Lecturer in Game Design and Development in 2022. From my time as a student, I was, and am even more so as an academic, fascinated by the idea of belonging and engagement. I could see from my cohort that there were many factors that dictated when and if they showed up to lectures, and how much they engaged with others on campus and felt a sense of being a part of Cardiff Metropolitan. And then the Covid-19 pandemic caused a major shift during the last year of my Undergraduate degree, while I held the position of SU School Rep for the School of Technologies and it was interesting to me how that further altered perceptions of belonging when working remotely, given that I was responsible for talking to the students and relaying their concerns to the academic staff. Now I am part of the academic team, I am seeing how remote working and lockdowns have possibly affected the students I am teaching. My own teaching and module leadership has been guided by student engagement, with suggestions and amendments coming from regular feedback. This has led, in some case, to a shift away from more didactic style to an introduction of more gamified, practical sessions where appropriate.

My own enduring childhood love of video games, and my subsequent studies on the course, eventually led me to the idea of gamification and the work of Jane McGonigal, who has successfully incorporated some of those principles into real-life situations and made some intriguing discoveries in doing so. My reasons for wanting to pursue a PhD in this area are not only grounded in my interest in the subject area, but also my own career development. I am still very much an early-career lecturer, but I feel very strongly that this is where I want to be, and I want to advance towards becoming a senior lecturer. The research that I undertake on my PhD could be of enormous benefit to my own teaching practise and designing of course materials. It could also be of benefit to my colleagues in the university too, if I should happen to find a useful mechanism that enables students feel that sense of belonging to the university and their chosen programme.

Outside of my studies I have managed teams of people, both paid and voluntary and on committees, and I have also been a member of amateur dramatics groups. I feel that I have a rounded experience of working with people in different situations and observing their level of motivation to a project. There could be some interesting research into the degree that financial reward plays into feeling a sense of belonging.

On completion of my PhD, I would like to continue teaching and researching this area and ways it can be practically applied.