HONOURS

RESEARCH

PROPOSAL

**NAME**

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| Shubh Ravishankar Gawhade |

**STUDENT NUMBER**

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| 2202875 |

**PROVISIONAL PROJECT TITLE**

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| One-Way Ride |

**IDENTIFY WHICH PROJECT BRIEF YOU THINK YOU WILL BE RESPONDING TO**

Artistic Research Project  Design Research Project  Technical Research Project

User Research Project  Critical Research Project

**VISION STATEMENT**

In no more than 200 words, outline your vision for your honours project. This should be a general overview of the research you plan to do, what you think the final work might be (e.g. game, film, animation, art portfolio etc.), and why you want to tackle this project. Note that the week 1 tutorial directly supports this section of the proposal.

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| I will be working on a puzzle game prototype with storytelling driving the main gameplay. This project will be inspired by the storytelling in the game “What remains of Edith Finch” and the gameplay will be inspired by other games such as “Disco Elysium”, “Return of the Obra Din" and “Firewatch”.  The game will be set around the 1900s - 2000s with an isometric art style. The story is about a mafia who must solve puzzles in his memory to figure out who ratted him out.  This project is a bit ambitious compared to the other work I’ve done before. The final product will be a fully playable game prototype which will help my portfolio by showcasing my design and development skills which will be supported by the research put into the interplay between narrative and game design. |

# 1. RESEARCH PREMISE

Please tell us what the premise of your research is. Write in full paragraphs to explain what you think the core research questions, problems, challenges, or provocations are for your study, linking this to your creative practice and field. How you choose to approach this will in part be shaped by the type of project you are proposing to tackle. Refer to the lecture series for guidance and note that the week 2 tutorial directly supports this section of the proposal.

It is recommended that this should be outlined in no more than two pages expanding the box below.

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| I would like to explore the interplay between narrative and game design. How game design shapes the narrative and narrative, the game design.  Narrative design is simple in movies as compared to games because it’s very linear and there is a story being told. Whereas in video games, the game must respond to the player's actions in a natural way to keep it immersive. Every player will play through the story at very different paces and the game should be able to still deliver the story consistently and must feel natural to the player. If the player isn’t given enough freedom or worse, some amount of freedom is taken away, the game becomes a very boring “hand-held” experience, especially while solving puzzles. In detective games, the player is told what clues are important and what aren’t, which isn’t letting the player use their mind to solve the puzzle and in turn, fails to have a “eureka” moment giving the player positive feedback to keep them going.  This would also mean increasing the difficulty for the more casual gamers. They might even feel stuck and lost without a clue of what they’re supposed to be doing. Finding the right balance between difficulty, pacing and fun are hard to come across. This could be solved by having difficulty modes which are the most basic and simple way of implementing this. Another way of making sure that the player doesn’t feel lost is by responding to the way the player interacts with the game. This is usually done by using natural prompts to give the player a nudge towards the objectives or help the player if they’re lost. These prompts include in-game characters, sound cues, and events happening to draw the player's attention to certain locations. Another way to have fun gameplay and eliminate the hand-help experience is by using invisible choices where the payer doesn’t know that his actions will affect certain elements of gameplay, but certain variables and player actions will be monitored and the game responds to it. This makes the game more dynamic and has a personalized feel.  Clara Fernández-Vara[1], an expert in adventure game analysis points out that puzzles in adventure games are frequently integrated into the narrative events, and the game story is advanced through puzzle solving, she further defines these types of puzzles as “Narrative puzzles”. Using invisible choices along with having natural prompts to moderate difficulty according to the play style and using them to solve and dictate Narrative Puzzles would make a fun and immersive experience.  The games that inspire me to take such an approach and the ones I will study more are What Remains of Edith Finch, Return of the Obra Dinn, Firewatch and Disco Elysium. |

# 2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

Please list and summarise the key sources of knowledge that you have read/will read as you develop your research. You should identify **a minimum of 10 sources**. These should be presented as a numbered or bulleted list, with a view to developing this reading into a full literature review for your Honours Project write up in semester two. Sources should be **authoritative sources** only, which can include relevant theory texts, practical textbooks, published research papers, R&D outputs disseminated by industry/practitioners, practitioner/professional talks, etc. Please refer to the lecture series for guidance on authoritative sources and literature review, and note that the week 3 tutorial directly supports this section of the proposal.

It is recommended that this should be outlined in approximately two to three pages expanding the box below. Full references for all sources are requested at the end of the proposal.

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| * Fernández-Vara, C. 2014a. Introduction to Game Analysis. New York, NY, USA: Routledge. * Exploring the Role of Narrative   Puzzles in Game Storytelling DiGRA '19 - Proceedings of the 2019 DiGRA International Conference: Game, Play and the Emerging Ludo-Mix.   * Technologies for Interactive Digital Storytelling and Entertainment   Göbel, S., Malkewitz, R. and Iurgel, I. (2006) Technologies for Interactive Digital Storytelling and Entertainment Third International Conference, TIDSE 2006, Darmstadt, Germany, December 4-6, 2006, Proceedings. 1st ed. 2006.   * Storytelling for Interactive Digital Media and Video Games   Zeman, N. B., & ProQuest. (2017). Storytelling for interactive digital media and video games. Taylor & Francis.   * Narrative Game Mechanics Teun Dubbelman   Badoni, Pankaj & Katal, Avita & Reddy, M. & Bhargava, Mudit. (2022). Graphics vs Gameplay: A Comparative Analysis in Gaming. 1-8. 10.1109/CONIT55038.2022.9847843.   * The Art of Game Design   Schell, J. (2019). The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses, Third Edition (3rd ed.). A K Peters/CRC Press.   * Game Maker’s Toolkit - The Power of Invisible Choices * GDC - Interactive Story Without Challenge Mechanics: The Design of Firewatch * GDC - Writing 'Nothing': Storytelling with Unsaid Words and Unreliable Narrators * GDC - Designing Radically Non-Linear Single Player Levels * GDC - Sparking Curiosity-Driven Exploration Through Narrative in 'Outer Wilds' |

# 3. AIM & OBJECTIVES

In this section you are asked to identify the provisional project aim and objectives, which you will have received guidance and support on through lecture series and in the week 4 tutorial. This is where you extend from your research premise and research context to define more clearly what your project will be about. Note that your aim and objectives can evolve in semester two under guidance from your supervisor. The week 4 tutorial directly supports your development of this section.

**AIM**

What is the aim of your research? This should be a general statement of what you hope your research will achieve.

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| To explore the interplay between narrative and game design and how to shape game design around a narrative by the creation of “narrative puzzles” for a game prototype. |

**OBJECTIVES**

List the main objectives of your research in order. The objectives should represent the major actions of your research, which will enable you to achieve the above aim. It is recommended that projects should have a maximum of five objectives.

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| 1 | Research about choices and narrative in games by reading books on game design and watching GDC talks of other games which have done it or tried to before and where they’ve failed/ succeeded. |
| 2 | Explore other games which are driven by narrative rather than by puzzles and identify how they have done it. |
| 3 | Identify the main events in the narrative of my game and whether the player can progress in the story without completing the puzzles or is forced to solve them before they can proceed and do more exploration. |
| 4 | Work on different gameplay elements in the engine such as dialogue system, movement, ai and more. |
| 5 | Prototype a game with all these elements of game design and narrative design to give the player a fun and immersive experience. |

# 4. RESEARCH METHODS

In this section you are asked to describe the research method or methods you will use to meet your objectives outlined in section 3. How you describe your research method(s) should clearly link back to the objectives you have listed in the previous section.

It is expected that your research methods(s) will be informed by the type of project you have identified, i.e. artistic research, design research, technical research, user research, or critical research. Please refer to the lecture series before completing this section. Note that the week 5 tutorial directly supports this section of the proposal.

It is recommended that this should be outlined in no more than two pages expanding the box below.

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| * Research about invisible choices and narrative in games by reading books on game design and watching GDC talks of other games which have done it or tried to before and where they’ve failed/ succeeded.   Games such as “What remains of Edith Finch”, “Disco Elysium”, “Firewatch” and “Return of the Obra Dinn” are the sources of inspiration for the game I’m trying to make. So going through the talks by these developers, game designers and narrative designers working on the game will give me some idea of what their thought process was when they were working on the game, the issues they’ve faced and ways they’ve solved it either technical or design based. Also going through various reviews by people who’ve played the game and critiques would help get another perspective on these games by seeing what the audience thinks was bad/ good.   * Explore other games which are driven by narrative rather than by puzzles and identify how they have done it.   Playing the games mentioned above or watching gameplay videos would give me more information about the core gameplay and functions which I can use to implement, make better or just understand what I could integrate with my project or work on.   * Identify the main events in the narrative of my game and whether the player can progress in the story without completing the puzzles or is forced to solve them before they can proceed and do more exploration.   Since our game is very linear and tries to tell a story, I will be looking more into linear experiences here like “What remains of Edith Finch” and how to make puzzles around crucial parts of the story such that the story moves ahead due to the puzzles being solved. It gives an illusion of the player overseeing the story by solving the puzzles leading to progression in the story.   * Work on different gameplay elements in the engine such as dialogue system, movement, ai and more.   This is one of the more technical objectives where I will be researching about the implementation of various systems such as the dialogue, interaction, and AI. I will be working on the reusability and better functionality of the code. I will also research by experimenting with these systems on other smaller projects/ game jams.   * Prototype a game with all these elements of game design and narrative design to give the player a fun and immersive experience.   This co-relates to the final submission, where I will compile all the objectives and research to produce a fully playable game prototype. |

# 5. ETHICS

In this section you are asked to explain what ethical issues your project may raise and what mitigations you may need to consider. You should briefly summarise the potential issues and mitigations and outline any involvement your project may have with participants. Tell us who the participants are, how they would be involved, and what they’d be asked to do. If your proposed research will involve collecting data from these participants, explain what this data will be and identify any ethical issues related to this data.

It is recommended that this should be outlined in no more than one page using the box below but expand to a 2nd page if your project is complex. Note that the week 6 tutorial directly supports this section of the proposal.

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| * intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content and/or strong language   PEGI 18   * Storylines or representations of traumatic experience * It will represent people of ethnicity and religion. * It will not depict real-world spaces even though it’s based in New York. * Working with a team of 3, a narrative designer, games designer, game developer, and level designer. Based on their role, work will be mentioned in the credits of the game. As well as there being a commit history for every change. * We are using free asset packs, sounds, and default packages and creating original assets. * We will be asking peers, family, or friends to playtest the game and collect verbal feedback which will be used to improve the game overall. * We will be working on our desktops/ laptops from our own homes with our own resources and on our own time. Regular meetups/ calls will be held to discuss and work on the game. Progress will be kept track of and assigned using project management tools. |

# 6. HONOURS PROJECT DELIVERY

In this final section you are asked to outline how you plan to manage and deliver the Honours Project. This will form the basis for your learning contract with your Honours Project supervisor in semester two and guide the final submission of the Honours Project. At the current stage this represents a draft delivery plan. You will revise and finalise this plan with your supervisor at the start of semester two.

Note that the week 8 tutorial will cover prompts on how to approach this section.

**DELIVERABLES**

List what you plan to submit as the final Honours Project. Your focus should be on the final artefact(s), e.g. an animation or film (giving approximate length), a game prototype (suggesting how it is presented, e.g. as Windows .exe), a concept artbook (size, approximate length, content), a showreel of VFX work, etc. Supplementary to this you may identify what other evidence you will submit in support, e.g. a full portfolio, design documentation, gameplay trailer etc.

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| Game Prototype(.exe) |

**PROJECT WRITE-UP FORMAT**

What form of project write up will you produce? This will be dictated by the type of research project you are tackling.

**Practitioner’s essay** (select if undertaking an artistic research project, 4,000 words)

**Project post-mortem** (select if undertaking a design research project, 4,000 words)

**Technical report** (select if undertaking a technical research project, 6,000 words)

**User research report** (select if undertaking a user research project, 6,000 words)

**Critical essay** (select if undertaking critical research project, 8,000 words)

Briefly summarise what you think the sections of your write up will be and what will be covered. Note that you will be supported on how to develop, structure, and present your write up in semester two, so please treat this as an early outline.

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| Post-mortem on the interplay between narrative and game design. |

**TIMELINE**

The Honours Project is developed over the course of one fifteen-week semester. You will have a 2-week holiday during this semester but are asked to discount this and plan based on fifteen weeks, where the submission is week fifteen.

Using the table below, briefly outline your anticipated week-to-week progress in developing your final Honours Project submission as described under Deliverables above.

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| Week | Activity |
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 | Chapter 3 Completion |
| 4 |  |
| 5 |  |
| 6 | Chapter 4 Completion |
| 7 | Start of Playtesting |
| 8 |  |
| 9 |  |
| 10 | Chapter 5 Completion |
| 11 |  |
| 12 |  |
| 13 |  |
| 14 |  |
| 15 | **SUBMISSION** |

**RESOURCES**

Use this box to identify any resources (e.g. software, licenses, equipment, physical materials) you believe you will need to secure to complete your project. Where these are non-standard (i.e. not provided by Abertay in labs), identify how you may acquire access.

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# 7. REFERENCES

Please provide full references for all the sources identified in section 2. Use the guidance provided by the Abertay University Library pages on how to reference different source types.

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| 1. Fernández-Vara, C. 2014a. Introduction to Game Analysis. New York, NY, USA: Routledge. 2. DiGRA '19 - Proceedings of the 2019 DiGRA International Conference: Game, Play and the Emerging Ludo-Mix. 3. Göbel, S., Malkewitz, R. and Iurgel, I. (2006) Technologies for Interactive Digital Storytelling and Entertainment Third International Conference, TIDSE 2006, Darmstadt, Germany, December 4-6, 2006, Proceedings. 1st ed. 2006. 4. Zeman, N. B., & ProQuest. (2017). Storytelling for interactive digital media and video games. Taylor & Francis. 5. Badoni, Pankaj & Katal, Avita & Reddy, M. & Bhargava, Mudit. (2022). Graphics vs Gameplay: A Comparative Analysis in Gaming. 1-8. 10.1109/CONIT55038.2022.9847843. 6. Schell, J. (2019). The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses, Third Edition (3rd ed.). A K Peters/CRC Press. 7. Game Maker’s Toolkit - The Power of Invisible Choices 8. GDC - Interactive Story Without Challenge Mechanics: The Design of Firewatch 9. GDC - Writing 'Nothing': Storytelling with Unsaid Words and Unreliable Narrators 10. GDC - Designing Radically Non-Linear Single Player Levels 11. GDC - Sparking Curiosity-Driven Exploration Through Narrative in 'Outer Wilds' |