

# Game Concept competition - FXP

This track aims to teach students the main processes that games designers go through to create and pitch an idea for a game.

Firstly, let's just talk briefly about why students might want to get involved with this event.

## **Why is it good for the students?**

Many students dream of a career in the games industry. Whilst 10 years ago parents and careers advisors might have reacted badly to such aspirations, the reality is that these days the money involved in the games industry is bigger than the film, TV and music industries combined in the UK, and has been the fastest growing entertainment industry for the past 10 years. RuneScape, for example, has made over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a billion dollars over the last 15 years. Processes like these give students a better understanding of the efforts needed, the wide range of skills involved and the reality that they can achieve their aspirations, if they study and work hard.

## **Why it's good for the schools?**

Ultimately, there are many parts of this event that tick core value and curriculum requirements for each student at key stages 3 and 4, focussing on English reading, computing, art, design, spoken English and writing. This is just a few of those skills:

- Managing and leading discussions
- Setting and reaching deadlines
- Formal and spoken debate
- Exploring aspects of plot, characterisation, relationships, settings etc.
- Evaluating conceptual thinking
- Development of creative thinking through new mediums
- Development of analytical skills and problem solving
- Development of computational thinking
- Selecting and organising information
- Critically evaluating text
- Public speaking

## **Stage 1 – Creating an idea**

Before we start to talk about the creation of game concepts, there are a few early steps to be taken.

### **Forming a team:**

Firstly, I expect the students to form teams of around 3-5 people. It would be helpful for those teams to have been decided before the event. We can build smaller teams but I don't really advise it.

### **Create a team name:**

Each team needs a unique name. Simple!

### **Understanding the criteria:**

Within the industry game pitches often have to follow a set of criteria – for example, a specific platform (console, mobile, PC etc.), cost, geography, theme (wild west, film title, fishing) or genre (puzzle, shooter, strategy) of game. These criteria need to be met in order for a game pitch to be considered.

For our event, there will be a theme which makes up this criteria, plus an insistence that the game be targeted towards the mobile (phone/ tablet) market. Aside from that, the students are free to explore any game ideas. Example themes from previous games jams are "Cycle" (to celebrate the Tour De France year) and "Morph".

The criteria will not be announced before the event. This ensures that ideas are not developed before the event, or at least, ideas need to be changed dramatically to fit against the theme.

### **Coming up with ideas**

Teams are now encouraged to start coming up with ideas that fit with the theme and platform. Each team will be encouraged to brainstorm ideas initially, just coming up with random ideas, but not judging them. These could be ideas for entire games, characters, bits of gameplay, puzzles, anything.

When each team has a bunch of cool thoughts, each team will be encouraged to evaluate those ideas and start reducing the list to a handful of ideas. Teams should try to focus on interesting ideas that are different from other games – nobody wants “just another Call of Duty”.

The teams should then decide amongst the group which ideas they want to focus on for the rest of the event, and agree on what their game is like.

### **Dividing the labour**

The teams will now need to decide who will be primarily responsible for which parts of the pitch. Simplistically, this will involve assigning artists, gameplay designers, writers and a vision holder.

- Artists are responsible for creating the art assets for the project.
- Gameplay designers are responsible for deciding how the game plays, what the objectives the player has, how the game will make money etc.
- Narrative Writers are responsible for the story sections of the pitch.
- The vision holder is the main owner of the project, ensuring that the original idea the group agreed to is continued throughout the project, and resolves any disputes between team members. The vision holder will lead the pitch on the final presentation.

Anyone in the team can and should contribute to any of those areas, but those roles need to ensure that their responsibilities are met, and areas of the pitch are completed.

### **Establishing milestones**

In the games industry, we work to milestones. These are dates with set goals relating to the amount of work we should have produced. The teams should do the same, deciding what parts of the work should be ready, and when. When those milestones are reached, the team should review each other's work, offering constructive feedback and then agree on the next milestone.

### **Stage 2 - The pitch document**

The following sections are parts of the final pitch document. This can be put together as a digital document (using Microsoft office software like word or powerpoint), or stuck together on an A1 poster board to be displayed on an easel.

#### **The sell**

##### **Creating a game name**

The narrative writer is responsible for the name. Not too long, make it catchy!

##### **Creating the tag line**

A tag line is a catchphrase or slogan used to support the title of the game. Examples include “Because your worth it” by L’Oreal or “Just do it” by Nike, or “In space, no one can hear you scream” from the Alien film. Good examples from the game industry include “He’s got a few days to kill” or “Just one more turn”.

The narrative writer is responsible for the tag line.

##### **Creating the elevator pitch**

An elevator pitch is a short, 30 second statement about the coolest elements of the game. Why should someone play it? Why should I care about this idea? It should work in print as well as vocally. Often, in the games industry, people never get beyond the elevator pitch, so it is well regarded as the most important part of any game proposal.

The vision holder is responsible for the elevator pitch.

## **The look**

### **Creating art assets**

Art assets can be drawn by hand or using some of the digital art packages provided. Art created should aim to represent the look of the game, showing characters, enemies, HUD (the screen overlay) and even examples of what a screenshot may look like. You might also want to include some other visual references from other products that inspire your game; we call these “mood boards”.

The most important thing here is to communicate the vibe of the game – the tone, the humour, the style.

The artist is responsible for the art assets. Art assets are often the most time sensitive aspects of this process, so don't be afraid to give art work to other members of the team.

## **The story**

### **Creating a story synopsis**

All games can have a plotline – even puzzle games. Yes, Angry birds is a game all about killing pigs, but there is a narrative behind it, about how these pigs have stolen the eggs of the birds. The pigs have names and specific characterisation. They have a plan on how to steal more eggs... etc etc.

What is the story of the game? Who are the main characters and what are their motivations? Who are the bad guys (if any), where is the story set? What makes the world the game exists in so interesting? How does the plotline change throughout the game?

The writer is responsible for the story synopsis.

## **The feel**

### **Creating gameplay descriptions**

This section is dedicated to describing exactly what the player will be doing in the game. Describe the control scheme, the way the character moves, the actions the player performs to complete levels, the layout of levels, any aspect of the gameplay you feel is important to describe in order to sell the game. Will the game be multiplayer – if so, how do players interact with each other?

The gameplay designer is responsible for the gameplay descriptions.

### **Key USP's**

USP stands for “Unique selling point” – aspects of your game that help you stand out from the crowd. There should be around 5 USP's for each game. Make sure these are short and snappy.

The vision holder is responsible for the USP's.

## **The business**

### **Platform**

What platforms will your game run on? We are focussed around mobile handheld devices, but which ones? Iphone? Tablet? 3DS? Android devices? Your gameplay will dictate which platforms you can run on, or vice versa.

The gameplay designer is responsible for the platforms.

### **Audience**

Who is your game targeted at? Kids, adults, teens... does it have an age certificate? You'll need to make sure that your gameplay is appropriate for your audience.

The narrative designer is responsible for the audience section of the pitch.

### **Monetisation**

Of course, in any industry, things eventually boil down to cash. How are you expecting to drive revenue from your game? Is it free to download or does it have a price? If so, how much? Will you

offer any micro transactions – small one off purchases that give you cool cosmetics like costumes, or consumable items that give you an advantage in gameplay?  
The gameplay designer is responsible for the monetisation.

### **Market testing**

Market testing should occur throughout the event – you need to be able to test your ideas against your target audience if possible. There are several ways of market testing, but the easiest way is to test is by simply talking. During the event there will be break times, use this time to talk to others about your ideas and get their opinions, and an idea of how much they might be prepared to pay for it. If possible, reflect that market testing in your pitch.

The vision holder is responsible for market testing.

### **Stage 3 - The dragons pitch**

Towards the end of day 2, each group will be asked to pitch their idea to a group of industry veterans – this group will decide the winners of the competition.

The pitch should be a short presentation, no more than 5 minutes that highlights the best elements of the game – I'd suggest this incorporates the elevator pitch and USP's, but it's entirely up to the group how they best want to pitch the game. Some groups may well decide to act out parts of their game, for example. Make your pitch memorable 😊

The vision holder is responsible for the dragons pitch.

### **Stage 4 – The judging**

After the pitches, the judging panel will retire to decide on the winners. The judging panel will discuss each idea following these criteria:

- Use of the event theme.
- Originality of the idea.
- Strength of the written material.
- Strength and conviction of the dragons pitch.