National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Character Creation (SCQF level 5)

Unit code: FN8Y 11

Superclass:	CB
Publication date:	November 2011
Source:	Scottish Qualifications Authority
Version:	02

Summary

The purpose of the Unit is to provide candidates with the knowledge and skills to understand how characters are used within games and their importance in game narrative. Candidates will also create a character for a game including both visual and contextual details.

This is an Optional Unit in the National Certificate in Computer Games Development, but is also available for candidates wishing to study the Unit on its own.

Outcomes

1 Investigate the use of characters within games.
2 Investigate the importance of the character in relation to the game narrative.
3 Create a character for a game.

Recommended entry

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, it would be beneficial if candidates have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

F3GC 10 Information Technology (Intermediate 1)
D173 10 Computer Graphics (Intermediate 1)

Credit points and level

1 National Unit credit at SCQF level 5: (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5*)

SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.

National Unit specification: general information (cont)

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Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this Unit.

National Unit specification: statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

Outcome 1

Investigate the use of characters within games.

Performance Criteria

(a) Describe the use of playable characters within games.
(b) Describe the use of non-playable characters within games.
(c) Identify common character types used in games.

Outcome 2

Investigate the importance of the character in relation to the game narrative.

Performance Criteria

(a) Describe the role of a character within a game.
(b) Describe what is meant by a character's backstory.
(c) Present a character's story within a game using images.

Outcome 3

Create a character for a game.

Performance Criteria

(a) Draw a character in more than one pose.
(b) Create the same character in a digital format.
(c) Sketch or digitally create an environment for the character.
(d) Describe the character's role within the game.

National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Evidence Requirements for this Unit

The Evidence Requirements for this Unit will be the production of a portfolio containing the following items:

♦ a short report describing the use of playable and non-playable characters within a game
♦ an exemplar list of a minimum of six common character types used in computer games
♦ a short case study presentation describing:
  — the role of a character from a chosen game
  — the character's backstory
  — the character's story presented in images
♦ at least one drawing of a character in a minimum of two poses
♦ the designed character in a digital format
♦ illustration of an environment in which the character can be placed
♦ a short report describing the created character's role within a game

Evidence is required which demonstrates that candidates have achieved all three Outcomes to the standard specified in the Performance Criteria.

Evidence should be gathered under open-book conditions.

Centres must be satisfied that the evidence submitted is the work of individual candidates.

National Unit specification: support notes

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This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit is an optional Unit of the National Certificate in Computer Games Development at SCQF level 5. It can also be taken as a standalone Unit. It is particularly suitable for inclusion within computing, media and animation frameworks.

This Unit is aligned to the following Skillset National Occupational Standards (NOS):

♦   IM2 Obtain Assets for Use in Interactive Media Products
♦   IM3 Prepare Assets for Use in Interactive Media Products
♦   IM6 Use Authoring Tools to Create Interactive Media Products
♦   IM8 Determine the Implementation of Designs for Interactive Media Products

Outcome 1

Candidates will become familiar with various types of characters within computer games, both playable and non-playable.

♦   Player characters (PCs) are all the characters that can be controlled by the player. These may vary depending upon genre eg in a strategy game the player can control groups of characters, whereas in a first person shooting game, the player is only in control of one character. In some games the player can create one or more characters to play with. The creation of avatars within games can also be investigated.
♦   Non-player characters (NPCs) are usually controlled by the game's AI engine or programme code and respond to actions the player characters take. They are not controlled by the player.

Candidates will be able to identify several archetypical characters, examples may include:

♦   hero
♦   antihero
♦   protagonist
♦   antagonist
♦   helper
♦   shadow/villain
♦   mentor
♦   guardian
♦   trickster
♦   sidekick
♦   henchmen
♦   mole
♦   herald

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- pivotal characters
- ancillary characters
- any other recognised archetypes

Outcome 2

For any game of their choice, candidates will select a character on which to complete a short case study and present their findings. Candidates will:

- describe the chosen character's role within the game.
- give an outline of any backstory concerning the character, this can be ascertained from any media supplementary to the game, eg comics, films, or previous versions.
- present a story surrounding the character using images; these can be digital images, sketches, electronic materials or any other suitable presentational format. The candidate should be discouraged from writing a lot of text, an oral presentation in support of images will suffice.

Outcome 3

Candidates will create their own character in both digital and hand drawn formats. The character does not need to take the human form, it can be an object that is given a personality; it can be an alien, an animal or any other imaginative being. The character can be for any genre of game but should be a typical representation of that genre. The drawn character can be scanned to a digital format and manipulated or can be re-created digitally if preferred.

Drawings should cover more than one typical pose for the character and can include accessories such as guns, shields, extra items of clothing, carried objects and/or any other feature that enhances the player's knowledge of the character.

The character should be placed within the context of the game, therefore a sketch or digital representation of an environment that the character inhabits is a necessary part of the evidence collected.

Finally a short report describing the role that the created character has within a game should be submitted. Items to include in the report could be:

- a description of the type of character e.g. hero, mentor, trickster
- identification of the game genre appropriate for this character
- the physical attributes of the character and the influence these have on the character's role — if any
- an account of the backstory of the character, if appropriate, and how it affects the character's appearance
- an account of how the character's appearance may help develop the story or the gameplay
- aspects of the game that may influence the character's appearance

National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Guidance on learning and teaching approaches for this Unit

A variety of game genres should be explored for Outcome 1. Characters, both playable and non-playable, have differing appearances and functions in different genres. For example, a strategy game for the PC will have many playable characters, which tend to be small in size and fit into the theme of the game. They will generally be two dimensional and simpler in appearance; they may or may not be animated. There will also be non-player characters that are pivotal to the progress of the game. In comparison, a complex, three dimensional action game or third person shooter will have fully animated, detailed characters and environments. Candidates should be exposed to a variety to learn about the different genres and their character requirements.

Resources that can be used to explore characters in games include current magazines, websites, and games on a variety platforms ranging from those on the web, to consoles, handhelds, PC and mobile phones.

Candidates should be introduced to different types of characters and the role they may have within the game. As in literature and films there are many archetypical characters within games. An example of a mentor character would be someone who explains points and presents tutorials to the player during a game. An example of a hero character could be a superhero and villains could be typical 'supervillains' or other antagonists. The role of these types of character within the story could be explored. The appearances of heroes and villains could also be investigated. Characters fitting into certain themes and improved or greater choice of characters within higher levels of games could also be explored.

In Outcome 2 the importance of the backstory of the character and how it influences the appearance and behaviour of the character within the narrative of the game, should be explored. Tutors should provide some examples from well known game characters to illustrate this. For example, well known characters such as superheroes from popular culture have a backstory that players may already know before they play, because of other forms of media. Such characters may have physical alterations as a result of what has happened to them as part of their existing character history or backstory. Other characters' backstories are revealed as the play progresses, in cut-scenes or otherwise through gameplay.

This Outcome involves a case study where candidates can choose a character from any genre of game and describe and present their chosen character. Candidates should check with the tutor that they have chosen a character that will be neither too simple nor too complex. This should not be a lengthy exercise and ideally should be presented orally and visually, rather than as a text based exercise.

Having learned about characters in the previous outcomes, in Outcome 3 candidates can apply their knowledge to the creation of their own unique character. To arrive at the final character, tutors can encourage candidates to keep a sketchbook, develop a mood board or any other aid to the imagination if they wish, but these are not mandatory.

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The actual distribution of time between Outcomes is at the discretion of the centre. However, the following distribution and order is suggested:

Outcome 1   8 hours
Outcome 2   12 hours
Outcome 3   20 hours

Guidance on approaches to assessment for this Unit

Candidates are encouraged to use the internet in any research. However, any evidence produced must be in their own words. Tutors should assure themselves of the authenticity of candidates' evidence. In order do so, it is recommended that the evidence for all three Outcomes should be obtained under controlled, supervised conditions.

A portfolio approach to assessment should be taken. The portfolio may be paper or electronic (digital). The portfolio should be constructed over the period of the Unit, with candidates contributing material to the portfolio on an ongoing basis. The contents of the portfolio should be clearly labelled and related to specific Evidence Requirements. The inclusion of specific items in the portfolio should be negotiated between candidate and tutor with only the best examples of work being stored. The illustration of an environment in which the character can be placed can be a sketch or a digital creation.

A checklist could be used to confirm that each candidate has completed the above tasks, without undue assistance, to the standards defined in the performance criteria, and also to authenticate that the contents of the portfolio are the candidate's own work**.**

Opportunities for the use of e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or e-checklists. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all candidate evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. Further advice is available in *SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education (AA1641, March 2003), SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools (BD2625, June 2005).*

National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Opportunities for developing Core Skills

Candidates are required to use technology to create a digital character thus providing opportunities to gather evidence towards aspects of *Information and Communication Technology* and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 5.

Candidates are required to produce reports and a presentation thus providing opportunities to gather evidence towards aspects of *Communication* at SCQF level 5.

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website **www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements**

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Amended Support notes for clarity.	03/11/2011

Additional copies of this Unit specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Business Development and Customer Support team, telephone 0303 333 0330.