Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

Unit code: F6BX 35

Unit purpose: This Unit looks at the underlying concepts of the various types of game (Genre) and the different ways in which the story of the game can be told (Narrative). The Unit provides candidates with opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in the analysis, description and development of narrative sequences and knowledge and skills in identifying and analysing different genres in Computer Games. The Unit is designed to be of use in frameworks that address the construction of computer games, such as Computer Game courses and courses in Interactive Media.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

1   Describe the core concepts and defining features of narrative and genre in computer games.
2   Critically analyse and evaluate computer games in terms of narrative and genre.
3   Design a narrative sequence for a computer game in a specified genre.
4   Produce a prototype of a narrative sequence for a game in a specified genre.

Credit points and level: 2 HN credits at SCQF level 8: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8*)

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.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access to this Unit will be at the discretion of the centre. It is recommended that candidates have prior exposure to computer systems, and ideally some experience in using computer games. It is recommended that candidates have the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 5.

Core Skills: There are no opportunities to develop Core Skills in this Unit.

Context for delivery: If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes. It may be possible to deliver this Unit in conjunction with other Units.

Assessment: Evidence is required that candidates have achieved all Outcomes. Candidates are encouraged to use the Internet in any research. However, the evidence produced must be the candidate's own words. Assessors should ensure themselves of the authenticity of candidate's evidence.

General information for centres (cont)

Written and/or oral recorded evidence is required which demonstrates that the candidate has achieved the requirements of all of the Outcomes to show that the candidate has appropriate knowledge and understanding of the content of this Unit.

Outcome 1 is assessed by means of a 25 question multiple choice test, the pass mark for which is 60%. Outcome 2 is assessed by the candidate writing a review of a computer game, taking due account of the narrative structure of the game and the genre.

Outcomes 3 and 4 require the candidate to design and prototype a narrative sequence.

Outcome 1 should be presented as closed book. The remaining Outcomes should be presented as open book.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

Unit code: F6BX 35

The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Describe the core concepts and defining features of narrative and genre in computer games

Knowledge and/or Skills

♦   Core concepts and defining features of narrative in computer games
♦   Core concepts and defining features of genre in computer games

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can describe the core concepts and defining features of narrative and genre in computer games by means of a multiple choice test of 25 questions. Candidates must correctly answer 60% of these questions in order to achieve the Outcome. A balanced selection of questions should be used with 15 being drawn from the narrative concepts section and 10 from the defining features of game genres. No single topic may have a disproportionate number of questions assigned to it.

The question set presented must change on each assessment occasion. No more than 60% of questions may reappear in consecutive assessment occasions.

The questions must be drawn from the following narrative concepts:

♦   Narrative structure
♦   Narrative elements
♦   Interactivity
♦   Player viewpoint
♦   Character
♦   Multi-threaded plotting
♦   Synchronous/asynchronous narrative
♦   Characters
♦   Non-player characters
♦   Scripted sequences
♦   Back-story
♦   Re-playability
♦   Exploration
♦   Artificial intelligence
♦   Real-world physics

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

♦ Interface
♦ Single/multi-player conventions
♦ Setting
♦ Sound/music
♦ Viewpoint

The questions must drawn from the defining features of the following game genres

♦ Shooters
♦ Racing
♦ Platform
♦ Beat-'em-up
♦ God games
♦ Real-time strategy
♦ Management
♦ Sports
♦ Role playing game
♦ Puzzle

Assessment Guidelines

If a centre is presenting Outcome 1 on-line the following assessment methods, where appropriate, may be selected:

♦ Multiple-choice
♦ Drag and drop
♦ Multiple response
♦ Mix and match
♦ A combination of the above

It is expected that the questions will be of the multi-choice variety. Centres may consider the use of alternative questions types, particularly if using Computer Assisted Assessment approaches. However, care should be taken that the questions are valid and at an appropriate level. The use of simple true/false question responses is unlikely to achieve this.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

Outcome 2

Critically analyse and evaluate computer games in terms of narrative and genre

Knowledge and/or Skills

- Critical analysis and evaluation of computer games in terms of narrative
- Critical analysis and evaluation of computer games in terms of genre

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can critically analyse and evaluate the narrative and genre features of a computer game with respect to the core concepts and features identified in Outcome 1.

The assessment will be carried out by creating a review of the game in a form suitable for either publication in a magazine or on-line. A word count of approximately 300 words (+/- 5%) must be set for the on line version, and a target of 500 words must be set for print media. The review must critically analyse and evaluate the narrative and genre features of the game under review.

Assessment Guidelines

Assessment will be open book and should be completed individually. Assessors must assure themselves of the authenticity of each candidate's submission.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

Outcome 3

Design a narrative sequence for a computer game in a specified genre

Knowledge and/or Skills

♦ Create a brief for a narrative sequence in a specified genre
♦ Identify the narrative requirements for a sequence
♦ Identify the defining features of genre for a sequence

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills in designing a narrative sequence in a specified genre by submitting a brief for a sequence.

The candidate must produce a detailed brief in which the:

♦ defining features of the computer game genre are identified
♦ implementation of the defining features of the computer game genre is explained
♦ defining features of the narrative sequence are identified
♦ implementation of the defining features of the narrative sequence is explained

Evidence for the Knowledge and/or Skills in this Outcome must be presented in the form of a written brief or oral presentation of no less than 300 words to indicate how the candidate has considered appropriately the core concepts and defining features of narrative and genre when designing the computer game sequence. The brief must be for a sequence that is no less than 2 minutes in duration when completed.

Assessment Guidelines

Assessment will be open book and should be completed individually. Assessors must assure themselves of the authenticity of each candidate's submission.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

Outcome 4

Produce a prototype of a narrative sequence for a game in a specified genre

Knowledge and/or Skills

♦ Interpret a brief
♦ Plan a narrative sequence
♦ Use the features and conventions of the genre
♦ Create a portfolio of supporting documentation
♦ Evaluate the prototype

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills in producing a prototype of a narrative sequence in a specified genre from a given brief by creating a portfolio of work.

The candidate must:

♦ produce a paper or multimedia-based prototype of a narrative sequence for a game in a specified genre. The duration of the sequence must be at least two minutes.
♦ list an inventory of proposed media content for their sequence, identifying where and how each would be used.
♦ include supporting sketches and/or planning notes and diagrams.
♦ produce a detailed evaluation of no less than 300 words of how the completed prototype matches the requirements of the brief.
♦ collect this evidence into a portfolio for submission. This may take the form of an on-line portfolio (e-portfolio).

Assessment Guidelines

The prototype is not required to be a completed game sequence, but should at least show the outline of a narrative sequence in a particular genre. The candidate may be encouraged to present this information in the form of a flow chart, storyboard or multimedia presentation.

The portfolio should clearly show the candidate's development of the prototype, from interpretation of the brief through to evaluation of the prototype. Completed pro-formas may be used to supply the content inventory and the evaluation.

The assessment of this Outcome could be combined with Outcome 3 by using a project that covers both Outcomes.

Assessment will be open book and should be completed individually. Assessors must assure themselves of the authenticity of each candidate's submission.

Administrative Information

Unit code: F6BX 35

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

Superclass category: CE

Original date of publication: August 2008

Version: 01

History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date

Source: SQA

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

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 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit is primarily concerned with equipping candidates with an understanding of the core concepts and defining features of narrative and genre in computer games. The emphasis should be on analysing existing game sequences and creating a prototype game sequence.

The Unit is primarily intended for use in technically oriented courses such as Multimedia, Interactive Media, Software Development or Computer Games. There should be no barriers to the inclusion of the Unit into other frameworks.

It is perfectly possible to run this Unit in the company of other games oriented Units, such as Interactive Fiction.

Because of the length of some computer games, it is recommended that game sequences should be utilised rather than entire games.

It is suggested that delivery of this Unit is positioned in the delivery sequence in such a way that candidates have the maximum opportunity to develop the underpinning Core Skill of *Communication*. If delivering as part of a traditional two year HND then it is probably more appropriate to deliver this Unit in the second year of such a course.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit is designed to introduce candidates to ways of analysing and understanding computer games they may not have considered and, as such, candidates should have access to a wide range of computer game genres and narrative sequences.

Candidates are additionally required to provide evidence of the design and prototype of a computer game sequence in a particular genre. It is advised that the sequence should be approximately 2 minutes long, were it to be included in a computer game.

Outcome 1 aims to engage candidates in the analytical skills required to identify and classify games. A study of the early and classical computer games, such as 'pong', 'Half-Life', 'Colossal Caves', 'Civilisation' and 'Donkey Kong' may prove a foundation for the defining features of a genre.

A number of games, both classic and current should be explored to fully illustrate the range of narrative structures and defining features of computer games.

Outcome 2 requires the candidates to critically analyse and evaluate computer games in terms of narrative and genre. Candidates at this level will require careful preparation to allow them to perform these activities.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

One approach that may yield benefits is to lead candidates through a number of prepared reviews. These can be either centre devised reviews, or carefully selected magazine and on-line reviews. There is a wide range of resources that may be used to support this task.

It may be useful to make clear the difference between critical analysis and being overly critical of a piece. Note that the word count limits on the alternatives — the web page review is intended to be able to be accommodated on one page (avoiding scrolling) and the print alternative is set to the strict word count limit imposed by print magazine editors).

Outcome 3 requires the candidate to design a narrative sequence for a computer game in a specified genre. Centres will probably wish to allow candidates some scope for the exact genre that the sequence is to be prepared for with a corresponding range of features. Some genres may require significantly more effort to fully implement a two minute sequence, so centres may wish to advise on the choices that candidates make.

Outcome 4 requires that the candidate produce a narrative sequence for a game in a specified genre. This is to be in the form of either a low or high fidelity prototype showing the salient points of the came. This will either be in the form of developing the brief developed for Outcome 3 or developing to a brief provided by the centre.

Candidates should be able to complete the Unit using basic presentation tools. There is no requirement to produce a completed computer game sequence. The emphasis of the Unit should be on achieving a broad knowledge of the features of, and an understanding of a limited range of core concepts of narrative and genre in computer games.

A wide range of games are available, ranging from no cost (open source) to premium, recently released titles. At the time of writing there is also a thriving trade in pre-owned games at various price points. Although the primary focus of the Unit is Computer Games, the ability of later generation games consoles may well provide some titles worth including in those considered for this Unit.

It is anticipated that the candidate will produce the narrative sequence implementation based on one of the many games engines that are available. Candidates are not expected to write and develop their own game engine package.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There are no opportunities to develop Core Skills in this Unit.

Open learning

This Unit does not necessitate the candidates working within a group activity. Assessment is based on the accuracy of responses, and the appropriateness and coherence of the design pro formas and the prototype. As such this Unit can lend itself to delivery by open learning if delivered by means of a pre-defined set of game sequences and design brief.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

If this Unit is delivered by open or distance learning methods, additional planning and resources may be requires for candidate support, assessment and quality assurance. A combination of new and traditional authentication tools may have to be devised for assessment and re-assessment purposes.

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**

General information for candidates

Unit title: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games

This Unit is designed to enable you to understand the key ideas in the areas of narrative and genre of computer games and to design and create a prototype games sequence based on those ideas.

♦ You should learn about and be responsible for:
   — designing a short narrative sequence in a computer game genre.
   — creating a prototype of the sequence you design.
   — creating a portfolio of supporting documentation
   — evaluating the prototype

You will be assessed on:

♦ Your understanding of the core concepts and defining features of narrative and genre in computer games
♦ Your critical evaluation of 3 computer game sequences in terms of narrative and genre
♦ The standard of the narrative sequence you design.
♦ The standard of the prototype sequence.
♦ The standard of your supporting portfolio
♦ The standard of your evaluation of the prototype

On completion of the Unit you should be able to:

1   Describe the core concepts and defining features of narrative and genre in computer games.
2   Critically analyse computer games in terms of narrative and genre.
3   Design a narrative sequence for a computer game in a specified genre.
4   Produce a prototype of a narrative sequence for a game in a specified genre.