



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Games Development: Character Creation and Storytelling

Unit code: F8R5 34

Superclass: CB

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop candidates' ability to manufacture inspiration using vocational techniques commonly employed in the computer games development industry. The Unit provides candidates with opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in the development of narrative sequences and defining characters of an appropriate depth suitable for use in the construction of computer games and other interactive media that use storytelling as a core functional element.

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

- 1 Use standardised techniques to create and describe a story.
- 2 Create characters of various levels of complexity for inclusion in a narrative game.
- 3 Describe integration of character and story.

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 in using computer games. It is recommended that candidates have the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 5.

Credit points and level

1 HN credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**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.*

General information (cont)

Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

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.

Assessment

It is recommended that all Outcomes are integrated into one holistic assessment which takes the form of a case study. The case study brief must be sufficient to cover all Evidence Requirements for the Unit. The assessment should be completed on an individual basis under open-book supervised conditions.

Assessors should ensure themselves of the authenticity of the candidate's evidence.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Games Development: Character Creation and Storytelling

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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

Use standardised techniques to create and describe a story.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Elements that create and enrich a good story
- ◆ Storytelling arcs
- ◆ Interactive storytelling structures
- ◆ Story exposition techniques

Outcome 2

Create characters of various levels of complexity for inclusion in a narrative game.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Roles and the effect on characterisation
- ◆ Defining characteristics
- ◆ Character relationships and their impact
- ◆ How environment effects character

Outcome 3

Describe integration of character and story.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Character goals within a narrative
- ◆ Character growth and change

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Games Development: Character Creation and Storytelling

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can develop narrative sequences and creation of characters for use in computer games.

A candidate's response can be judged to be satisfactory where the evidence produced shows the candidate is able to:

- ◆ produce a detailed specification for a narrative that includes all of the Knowledge and Skills in Outcome 1
- ◆ produce two character designs relevant to the narrative produced in Outcome 1 that utilise all of the Knowledge and Skills in Outcome 2
- ◆ document a character development arc for one of the characters specified in Outcome 2 as they progress through the story utilising all of the knowledge and skills in Outcome 3

Assessors should ensure the authenticity of the candidate's work especially where evidence has been produced while unsupervised.

Assessment Guidelines

It is recommended that Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 are integrated into one holistic assessment which takes the form of a case study.

Outcome 1 requires the candidate to develop a detailed specification for a narrative to include the following elements:

- ◆ 30 second summary — otherwise known as the 'elevator pitch', this is the story boiled down to its essence.
- ◆ Back story and setting — what has happened, who the characters are before the action begins, what time period is the story set and what tone or style.
- ◆ Characters — the main character (player) and major allies, neutral and enemy characters and their primary goals and reasons for inclusion in the story.
- ◆ Player perspective — detail of how the player interacts with the plot and its purpose
- ◆ Story structure — Whether the story is entirely linear like a novel or film, branching or relies on more complex emergent or 'sandbox' systems to develop and how the story responds to these structures
- ◆ Time frame — over what period will the story play out, will flashbacks or foreshadowing be used to reach outside this timeframe.
- ◆ Conflict and change — conflict is introduced by a change in circumstances, often snowballing into dramatic change over the course of the story.
- ◆ Memorable moments — major plot twists, crescendos, dilemmas. climaxes and changes in tension
- ◆ Resolution — how the story reaches a resolution and catharsis

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Games Development: Character Creation and Storytelling

The narrative should be original but may be influenced by, or draw elements from, a narrative **from a different media** such as film, literature or television. Where such a derivative work is produced, the inspiration must be clearly noted in the case study and justified in terms of improvements and original content in the candidate's work as well as highlighting where permissions would be required to be sought relating to intellectual property or why they would not be required.

This description should be no less than 800 words and may be supplemented by diagrams (maps, story arcs, character relationships etc) where appropriate.

Outcome 2 requires the creation of two characters specified in the narrative in Outcome 1. One character should be a fully developed, central character to the narrative while the other should be a supporting character that may be defined by its role within the narrative supplemented a simple background and group of defining characteristics. Candidates should complete a character summary sheet for both characters.

Outcome 3 requires the definition character arcs for each character defined in Outcome 2. Candidates should describe their conscious and sub-conscious goals and how these goals are achieved, thwarted or ignored in the narrative and the changes that occur to the character as a result.

Candidates should be re-assessed on an outcome-by-outcome basis.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Games Development: Character Creation and Storytelling

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 within *G9NX 15: HNC Computer Games Development* and *G9NY 16: HND Computer Games Development*.

This Unit directly addresses the requirements of the Skillset National Occupational Standard IM23 'Create Narrative Scripts For Interactive Media Products' as well as the elements of IM20 'Design Electronic Games' that relate to the knowledge, understanding and ability of a candidate relating to producing a game that is 'engaging and compelling' through the application of story elements to an interactive product driven by a persistent narrative.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Outcome 1

Although video games can often be nonlinear in nature, it is strongly recommended that centres encourage candidates to limit themselves to linear or simple linear-branching narratives. More complex narrative types would increase the assessment burden on the candidate beyond the scope of the Unit.

Outcome 2

Character summary sheets should include the following elements:

- ◆ Role within the narrative
- ◆ Basic Characteristics — age, gender, ethnicity, status (marital, economic and social) and name
- ◆ Profession
- ◆ Personal back-story including family
- ◆ Goals
- ◆ Activities — hobbies (and the extent to which they define the character) and preferences (food, music, other entertainment)
- ◆ Traits — flaws, limitations, strengths, quirks and humour
- ◆ Sexuality
- ◆ Predominate emotional states
- ◆ Fears and stress response
- ◆ Relations to other characters in the narrative
- ◆ Physical description

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Games Development: Character Creation and Storytelling

Outcome 3

This Outcome relates to the concept of character arcs. This is the term used to describe how a character changes in the course of a story. This is particularly true of the main character(s). There are a lot of ways to think of a character arc, and many sort of canned or categorized approaches exist but many writers say that quite simply what you want to do is tell a story about people — what happens to them, what they do in response and how they change as a result.

Conscious goals are those goals that a character is actively seeking to fulfil whereas sub-conscious goals, which are frequently different, provide strong opportunities for growth or evolution. For example a character may be consciously seeking a love interest but really come to find independence and self-reliance.

Other units that exist within the SQA catalogue present opportunities for integration. The following non-exhaustive list highlights two such candidates:

- ◆ *F6BX 35: Narrative and Genre in Computer Games* is a double credit Unit from the Information Systems verification group that seeks to provide a wider analysis of video game narratives from an 'observer's perspective'. Games Development: Character Creation and Storytelling directly addresses the vocational skill-set of a working script writer within the video games industry. However the assessments required by Outcomes 3 and 4 of F6BX 35 could integrate well with the assessments required by F8R5 34.
- ◆ *F88D 34: Games Design: Pitch to Treatment* is a single credit Unit from the Computing verification group that seeks to provide candidates with the knowledge and skills to enable them to produce a professional pitch for a games concept to a prospective client and then develop a game treatment to allow future development of the Game Design. Outcome 2, where students must create the games design document could integrate well with the assessments required by F8R5 34.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute to the Core Skill of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6.

The general skill required by the Critical Thinking component is the ability to analyse a complex situation or issue and more specifically, to:

- ◆ identify the factors involved in the situation or issue
- ◆ assess the relevance of these factors to the situation or issue
- ◆ develop and justify an approach to deal with the situation or issue

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Games Development: Character Creation and Storytelling

The general skill for the Planning and Organising component is the ability to plan, organise and complete a complex task. More specifically, candidates are asked to:

- ◆ develop a plan
- ◆ identify and obtain resources to carry out the plan
- ◆ carry out the task

The general skill for the Reviewing and Evaluating component is the ability to:

- ◆ Evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy/strategies
- ◆ Identify and gather appropriate evidence
- ◆ Draw conclusions and make recommendations

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by flexible, open learning using a blended delivery method a VLE platform could provide some support to candidates. It would be helpful for the candidate to occasionally visit the course tutor to reflect on the technical, compositional and aesthetic elements of the character creation and storytelling, which are better communicated face-to-face.

If this Unit is delivered by open or distance learning methods, additional planning and resources may be required 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. For further information and advice, please see *Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning* (SQA, February 2001 — publication code A1030).

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

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General information for candidates

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This Unit is designed to teach you important techniques to help inspire you creatively. Using video game development or interactive media generally as a scenario, you will create a story for an appropriate project and produce characters who would exist as part of this story as primary and supplementary actors in much the same way as serialised television shows have main characters, guest stars and extras.

In order to achieve this Unit you must carefully document your story and the characters you have specified in sufficient detail to be used by script writers and character artists working on the project during production.

The underlying skills you will learn will further aid with any task that requires creativity and inspiration 'on demand'.