

COURSE SPECIFICATION - BA (Hons) Games Design



1. General information

Course Title	Games Design
UCAS code	W281
Course / Award Title	BA (Hons)
Awarding Institution	Leeds Arts University
Institution at which course is delivered	Leeds Arts University
Professional Accreditation (if applicable)	N/A
Relevant QAA Benchmark(s)	Art & Design (2019)

Awards	Credits	Duration	Mode of study
BA (Hons) Games Design	360 (180 ECTS)	3 years	FT
BA Games Design*	300 (150 ECTS)	3 years	FT
DipHE in Games Design*	240 (120 ECTS)	2 years	FT
CertHE in Games Design*	120 (60 ECTS)	1 year	FT
*Exit award only			

2. Course Aims

This course aims to provide you with:

- A dynamic and collaborative learning experience that encourages the creation of innovative and engaging game concepts
- A nuanced understanding of game design principles, encompassing gameplay, narrative, level design, and user experience
- The opportunity to develop practical and conceptual skills required in prototyping, game balancing, and user interface design
- Critical, analytical, and reflective approaches to game design, enabling you to evaluate and enhance your work
- A thorough understanding of the role of a game designer in the industry, emphasising the importance of teamwork, effective communication in a global context, and ethical considerations such as inclusivity and the societal impact of games
- Access to relevant tools, technology, and resources to foster creativity, innovation, and practical skill development
- The opportunity to develop the intellectual and practical skills needed for independent and professional video game design practice to support employability, preparing you to manage workloads, meet deadlines, and to be able to work effectively as part of a team.
- The opportunity to create individual and collaborative projects to develop a relevant game design practice

3. Distinctive Features

Distinctive features of the course:

The Leeds Arts University Games Design course's distinctiveness lies in its creative and academic balance, its location within a vibrant arts university, its collaborative opportunities with cognate courses, and a wide range of resources. This course prepares graduates to excel in the dynamic world of video game design.

Collaboration is an important aspect of the course design; students will have the opportunity to collaborate with their peers through structured briefs. This not only serves to simulate industry practices but also contributes significantly to enhancing the overall quality of the student's creative work through engaging with likeminded creatives with different insights and perspectives.

Students will have the opportunity to collaborate not only with game designers but also with peers from various disciplines within our institution, including animation, music production, and creative writing amongst others. This interdisciplinary synergy opens doors to a multitude of creative perspectives, enriching problem-solving abilities and broadening creative horizons.

This dynamic collaboration extends further, providing students with access to accomplished creatives and industry speakers from adjacent fields. They will gain valuable insights and inspiration from professionals working outside the traditional boundaries of game design education. There will be the opportunity to engage with writers, graphic designers, and 3D filmmakers, made possible by Leeds Arts University's inclusive ethos and diverse course offerings.

The result is a dynamic mix of ideas and techniques, fostering a unique and organically evolving student practice, a place where creativity and innovation thrive, and students are encouraged to push the boundaries of their creative endeavours.

In this course, students will be motivated to explore emerging ideas and techniques, ensuring they are well-equipped to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of the industry. Students not only gain practical skills but also cultivate a forward-thinking mindset.

The course has access to strong industry links, local and international video game studios, artists, designers, and other professionals involved in the video game development pipeline, including membership to relevant video game industry trade and employability organisations.

4. Course Structure

4a. Module Framework

Level 4	Credit Points	ECTS	Learning Hours
LAUGAMD401 - Blueprints	20	10	200
LAUGAMD402 - Fundamentals	40	20	400
LAUGAMD403 - Experiment	60	30	600
Level 5	Credit Points	ECTS	Learning Hours
LAUGAMD501 - Industry	60	30	600
LAUGAMD502 - Production	60	30	600
Level 6	Credit Points	ECTS	Learning Hours
LAUGAMD601 - Synergy	60	30	600
LAUGAMD602 - Specialisation	60	30	600

4b. Course Map / Structure

Level 4	
Semester One	Blueprints (LAUGAMD401) 20 credits
Semester One	Fundamentals (LAUGAMD402) 40 credits
Semester Two	Experiment (LAUGAMD403) 60 credits
120 credits (60 ECTS credits) Certificate of Higher Education (Exit Award)	

Level 5	
Semester One	Industry (LAUGAMD501) 60 credits
Semester Two	Production (LAUGAMD502) 60 credits
120 credits (60 ECTS credits) Diploma of Higher Education (Exit Award)	

Level 6	
Semester One	Synergy (LAUGAMD601) 60 credits
Semester Two	Specialisation (LAUGAMD602) 60 credits
120 credits (60 ECTS credits) BA (Hons) Games Design (Exit Award)	
*Students who fail to complete 360 credits but have accumulated no fewer than 300 credits will be awarded an Ordinary degree.	

5. Course Learning Outcomes

Learning is assessed at each level of the course. This develops from introductory work within the specialism of the course at level 4, through the development of skills and ideas at level 5, progressing to application and synthesis of skills, originality, and theory in practice at level 6 as indicated by the FHEQ qualification descriptors.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) comprise the Level Learning Outcomes, which define what you are expected to be able to do on completion of each level. Level Learning Outcomes are achieved through successfully completing all modules at that level. Expectations for your learning are expressed within each module.

Level 4 (CertHE)

Level Learning Outcomes	Modules
<i>By the end of Level 4, you will be expected to:</i>	
4.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles relevant to game design, and the ability to apply them within the context of the field.	LAUGAMD402 LAUGAMD403
4.2 Identify and communicate elements in the design of a game, relevant to the fulfilment of a brief.	LAUGAMD401 LAUGAMD402 LAUGAMD403

4.3 Discuss the relationship between the cultural, historical, technological, social, political, artistic and/or other contexts relevant to Games Design.	LAUGAMD402
4.4 Reflect on your experiences and learning journey and acknowledge actions to move your practice forward.	LAUGAMD401 LAUGAMD402 LAUGAMD403
4.5 Relate to various sources of technical and theoretical information within the realm of game design.	LAUGAMD401 LAUGAMD402
4.6 Demonstrate a practical and technical understanding of a range of approaches to the creation of game ideation, prototyping and game design document planning.	LAUGAMD402 LAUGAMD403
4.7 Employ communication techniques regarding your development and portfolio work.	LAUGAMD401 LAUGAMD403
4.8 Identify effective project management techniques to meet workloads and manage deadlines.	LAUGAMD403

Level 5 (DipHE)

Level Learning Outcomes	Modules
<i>By the end of Level 5, you will be expected to:</i>	
5.1 Compare and analyse techniques of game prototype creation and how they relate to the concepts and theories that underpin the subject area.	LAUGAMD501 LAUGAMD502
5.2 Demonstrate an understanding of effective collaboration in a group development setting.	LAUGAMD502
5.3 Generate ideas, concepts and solutions for game designs demonstrating a growing awareness of technological and market constraints.	LAUGAMD501 LAUGAMD502
5.4 Recognise the limits of your knowledge as you attempt to work with conceptual and technical challenges regarding the designing of games.	LAUGAMD501 LAUGAMD502
5.5 Advance your capacity for self-directed research regarding the cultivation of skills relevant to game design.	LAUGAMD501
5.6 Effectively communicate ideas, informed perspectives, solutions, and research findings in a systematic manner	LAUGAMD501 LAUGAMD502
5.7 Explore and apply methods of self-organisation and project planning that are commonplace in the video game industry.	LAUGAMD502

Level 6 (BA Hons)

Level Learning Outcomes	Modules
<i>By the end of Level 6, you will be expected to:</i>	
6.1 Demonstrate a systematic understanding of the field of game design, which includes acquiring coherent and detailed knowledge, informed by the current developments in the field.	LAUGAMD601 LAUGAMD602
6.2 Apply a critical understanding of game and gameplay concepts, contextually situated, enabling their evaluation concerning both novel and established ideas.	LAUGAMD602

6.3 Assess challenges and revise strategic thinking in the creation of game design ideas, in support of innovative and practical solutions when documenting and prototyping.	LAUGAMD601 LAUGAMD602
6.4 Generate creative, forward-looking strategies by employing lateral and conceptual thinking and appreciate the limits of knowledge and creative practice within the field.	LAUGAMD601 LAUGAMD602
6.5 Evaluate, select, and utilise a range of increasingly complex materials, processes, and technology in the field of game design, ensuring high-quality standards.	LAUGAMD602
6.6 Synthesise a range of game design ideas and requirements into a coherent vision, while managing and incorporating external input.	LAUGAMD602
6.7 Employ critical judgement and self-critique in your game design projects.	LAUGAMD601 LAUGAMD602
6.8 Anticipate and adapt to changes, while navigating through contexts of ambiguity, uncertainty, and unfamiliarity.	LAUGAMD602
6.9 Demonstrate evaluated and refined communication skills in both collaborative and individual contexts as you fulfil your roles and responsibilities.	LAUGAMD601 LAUGAMD602

6. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies

Our overall approach to engagement is outlined in our statement on [Higher Education teaching & learning at Leeds Arts University](#).

6a. Teaching and Learning

Level 4

Level 4 of the course provides a foundational exploration of game design, covering both practical and theoretical elements. As you transition into level 4 you will be introduced to foundational tools, processes, and theoretical aspects of game design. You will begin to develop a better understanding of your subject area ready for level 5

In LAUGAMD401 'Blueprints' you will be introduced to the tools you will need to be able to setup simple game mechanics in a game engine. You will be introduced to game engines and the utilization of simple ways to craft gameplay elements with the aim to explore the tools that game designers extensively use. You will be tasked with producing a primitive game mechanic based on a class case study.

In LAUGAMD402 'Fundamentals' you will be delving into the theoretical fundamentals of game design. This module encourages exploration into the design of distinct types of games, emphasizing deconstruction within various discussed topics in a lecture and seminar format. This focus extends to designing an experience, elements, themes, ideas, and narrative design. and the output aims to have you explore both design documents and prototyping for the first time.

You will be asked to discuss the relationship between the cultural, historical, technological, social, political, artistic and/or other contexts relevant to Games Design, through provided articles, and explore your thoughts via an essay.

Throughout this semester, you will produce a game design document and an accompanying written assignment, combining theoretical insights with practical understanding. Prototyping methods used in traditional board game design will be explored as part of this module.

A major aspect of level 4 is learning to respond to feedback in a variety of situations. This skill will be vital to student development at higher levels and is encouraged from the first semester through group critiques and playtesting ideas in groups, becoming increasingly relevant as you develop your autonomy throughout the course.

Moving into the second semester, LAUGAMD403 "Experiment" takes centre stage, introducing you to the crucial element of iteration in game development. The curriculum continues to develop your understanding of theoretical and practical topics related to game design. As a culmination of this module, you will build a portfolio, comprising a series of small game prototypes or screenshots, along with a Visual Development Document, highlighting their understanding of iterative processes and experimental game design.

You will start to develop your critical thinking skills further by exploring some of these theoretical elements presented to you in lectures via a written assignment. You will be able to explore an argument with support through seminars and workshops and demonstrate this through the assignment.

Level 5

Level 5 begins with LAUGAMD501 'Industry' where you will research the business aspects that encompass game development and that particularly affect game design. You will explore how narratives can be explored across multiple platforms, game pitches, and the crucial elements of dealing with external audiences. You will be tasked with developing a comprehensive game pitch presentations and prototypes, in response to the topics. A written assignment focuses on exploring the games market and how that influences various aspects of game design, drawing from topics explored such as ethical considerations such as sustainability, inclusivity, diversity, or the societal impact of video games from a game design perspective.

In Semester 2, LAUGAMD502 'Production' involves taking a step back and looking at game design in a wider production context. You will be encouraged to explore the production of a game prototype in a 'soft' production scenario. Collaboration will take the form of working as part of a team to resolve the provided brief. This will include discussion with the team on how to answer the brief and figure out your collective and individual responses. Briefs are structured to guide students in the creation of game prototypes within a simulated production environment, developing your readiness and autonomy as you transition into the level 6 modules. This module introduces students to project management processes and tools employed in the industry, providing practical insights into skills that support employability. The semester culminates in the creation of a presentation, a portfolio featuring renders and screenshots/working game files, and a Visual Development Document, reflecting and communicating your competence in game design production.

Level 6

In Level 6 you will be narrowing down your area of interest in two self-negotiated modules, to focus on areas that you wish to explore further and develop into a major aspect of your practice. You will begin to focus on your specialism through semester one in the context of a collaborative or external-facing project. Semester two places an emphasis on independent resolved outcomes. There will be an emphasis on you developing more autonomy at level 6, through both modules, with feedback and tutorials aimed at fostering independence and ownership of your learning.

Semester 1, LAUGAMD601 'Synergy' emphasises collaborative work among designers and artists in response to a group-negotiated brief. You may choose to work with your fellow course peers; however, this module is also open to you entering external briefs and competitions or coordinating your response with peers outside of the course, whether that be internal to the university or working in industry. The module aims to engage you with various aspects of production to enhance

your understanding of professional practice skills in relation to employability. Designers are encouraged to negotiate the brief based on personal preferences cultivated in previous modules, fostering the exploration of new ideas. You will be prompted to develop a visual identity regarding your response to the brief. Unlike the previous module, where students are encouraged to explore various aspects of production, you will be encouraged to focus and negotiate this project based on your own experience and interests. You are expected to produce a presentation along with a portfolio of renders and screenshots/working game files and a Visual Development Document.

You are also tasked with producing a written assignment on a topic relevant to your practice or chosen area within the industry, underpinning a theoretical dimension to your work. This may be exploring an emerging aspect of your workflow, or it could be further exploration into aspects of sustainability regarding video games.

Moving to Semester 2, you are encouraged to delve into self-negotiated briefs, allowing a focused exploration of a final pitch and prototype. Content related to employability and talks with industry professionals will take place in the form of lectures and seminars. The output for this semester comprises a portfolio, and a Visual Development Document, highlighting the culmination of students' independent exploration and mastery of game design. A major aspect of this module is about pushing your presentation skills in a range of ways, such as CV creation, cover letters, online presence, interview techniques, and pitch presentations with an aim for preparing you for employability.

6b. Assessment

Assessment aims to inform you of your individual progress as you work through the course. Feedback is an essential element of assessment and is explained in more detail in 6c. Assessment also ensures that you are meeting the required academic standards for the award.

Assessment reflects the teaching and learning content and is an integral part of the learning process. Specific assessment strategies and submission requirements are explained in the briefs that you will receive at the start of each module. Assessment is designed to reflect creative and academic practice and is aligned with the appropriate level of study. As far as assessment will be authentic in simulating professional practices.

Your creative output, therefore, is the application of your learning and will demonstrate the extent to which you have learned, developed, assimilated, and mediated your knowledge, understanding and skills into appropriate forms for submission requirements. You will evidence module expectations, as expressed as 'what you are expected to learn' in module specifications.

The assessment of the modules is holistic; all material presented for assessment in each module is taken as a whole and a single mark is arrived at. Most assessment is by portfolio submission, the exact nature and content of which is determined by the subject matter, content and learning expectations for each module and is specified in your module briefs.

Your work will be assessed holistically according to the undergraduate Assessment Criteria and Marking Scheme. These criteria are used to evaluate your learning against the learning expectations specified for each module. Levels are clearly differentiated by learning outcomes, module expectations, teaching and learning approaches and assessment design.

6c. Feedback

Tutors will provide feedback, both in support of your ongoing development, as well as in direct response to your work formally within assessment contexts.

The provision of ongoing feedback - defined as information communicated to students to improve learning - is a significant and distinctive strength of the course. It is demonstrated through frequent and ongoing discussions between staff and students.

Feedback is an essential element of the game design course. Throughout the course, students are expected to actively engage with and respond to feedback, which catalyses creative development.

In this course, formative progress reviews are conducted at key junctures, providing written feedback on various assessment criteria. Summative feedback at the end of each module assesses overall performance and engagement in the context of Game Design studies.

Formative

You will receive formative feedback on your progress throughout the module in a number of ways. You will partake in ongoing evaluation within the teaching and learning on the course, developing skills in reflection and dialogue and receiving ongoing formative feedback from the teaching staff and peers. All the modules on this course contain formal formative feedback sessions where you will receive feedback on your progress to meet this developmental aim.

Examples of formative feedback include (without being limited to):

- Peer Reviews
- Group Tutorials
- Individual Progress Tutorials

Summative

At the end of the module, you will receive summative feedback represented by a grade with tutor comments on your work. This feedback will help you to understand how you performed on the module, clarify your strengths and identify areas for further consideration.