Course Specification

BA (HONS)

GAMES ART AND DESIGN



Arts University Bournemouth

About the Course Handbook

This Handbook provides you with basic information about your course. Through the approved course specification, it provides you with the aims and outcomes of your course and outlines the content and how this will be delivered.

The course is subject to a rigorous process of quality assurance and enhancement. This may result in changes to individual units as the course develops, to ensure that the relevance and quality of the course is upheld. You will be consulted by a member of the course team before any changes are made.

Information in this Handbook should be used in conjunction with the HE Assessment Regulations. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are aware of the regulations that apply to your course and you should refer to the regulations throughout your studies. If you have any questions, you should speak to your Course Leader, or member of the course team. The Assessment Regulations can be located on the Induction section of Canvas, or https://aub.ac.uk/regulations

Important information about key policies which apply to your academic studies is available on the Induction section of Canvas. Please view this material on the Induction section of Canvas.

If you would like a copy of this Handbook in an alternative format, please contact equalities@aub.ac.uk.

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

COURSE SPECIFICATION

The Course Specification provides a summary of the main features of the **BA (Hons) Games Art and Design** course and the learning outcomes that a 'typical' student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they pass the course.

Further detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching and learning methods of each unit may be found in the Unit Descriptors, which forms part of the Course Handbook.

Key Course Information	
Final Award	BA (Hons)
Course Title	Games Art and Design
Award Title	BA (Hons) Games Art and Design
Teaching institution	AUB (Arts University Bournemouth)
Awarding Institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Offered in the School of	Arts and Communication
Professional accreditation	None
Length of course / mode of study	3 years full-time 4 years with optional placement year
Level of final award (in FHEQ)	Level 6
Subject benchmark statement	Art and Design
UCAS code	I620
Language of study	English
External Examiner for course: *Please note that it is not appropriate for students to contact external examiners directly*	Details available on request
Date of Validation	July 2023
Date of most recent review	N/A
Date course specification written/revised	July 2023

Course Description

The BA (Hons) Games Art and Design degree is a course which enables students to create and develop innovative gaming perspectives through conceptualising and developing their own computer games.

Conceptually, the course focuses on creating 'meaningful' and fun games that showcase concepts with values driven design to gain critical perspectives on cultural and social significance, including issues such as power, identity, and ethics, as well as the role of games in education, health, and social change initiatives. The direction of the course is impactful games, meaning that students will graduate not only with the specialist knowledge required for a range of roles within the gaming industry, but also with informed perspectives on game creation that considers equality, diversity, and inclusion. This approach equips students with a unique set of skills and perspectives that can be valuable in the rapidly evolving and increasingly complex world of game development.

On completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the gaming industry in-depth.
- Create engaging, ethically, and socially conscious games.
- Generate original concept art.
- Create inclusive, innovative games which cater to a diverse audience and promote fair representation.
- Undertake experimental gameplay.
- Understand technologies such as AI (Artificial Intelligence) scripting.
- Produce their own games via software such as Unity and Unreal.

Throughout the course, students will collaborate and undertake different roles in the creation of games, preparing them for a career in the games industry or for postgraduate study.

Distinctive features of the course

Meaningful Impact: The course stresses designing purposeful games to promote societal awareness and enhance impact.

EDI and Gender Focus: The course stresses EDI principles and gender awareness in game design for diverse audience engagement.

Emphasis on Storytelling and Concept Art: The course prioritises narrative and thematic elements in game design.

Player Experience Focus: The course focuses on deep emotions and thought-provoking experiences beyond mere entertainment.

Course Industry Patron Scheme: All courses at AUB are connected formally with an industry Patron, an industry practitioner or business that acts as a critical friend to the course and course team. Many courses work with several industry partners, but the more formal Industry Patron connection offers the opportunity to collaborate and maintain close relations with industry / business. This is a unique concept that ensures AUB courses are industry relevant and maintain current practices while providing further opportunities for students to engage with industry practitioners.

AUB Strategic vision

The BA (Hons) Games Art and Design course fits with the university's strategic vision in several ways:

Innovation: The course responds to emerging trends and technologies which will support the university’s need to provide relevant and innovative courses within the creative education sector.

Collaboration: The course allows for interdisciplinary collaborations across different courses or schools within the university, including with Illustration, Graphics, VFX and Animation. This allows a culture of collaboration to develop among students.

Internationalisation: The course is attractive to international students, who are motivated to study in this field, thereby contributing to the university's internationalisation and diversification goals.

Optional Placement Year

The optional Placement Year offers students the opportunity to:

- Get under the skin of an **industry, organisation, and role** to assist them with making better-informed decisions about their future career prospects.

- Undertake a placement, which ensures students can take **personal responsibility** for tasks, duties, and projects within a real-world work setting.
- **Develop and recognise their own work ethic and powers of critical reflection**.
- Build **high-level transferable skills** and enhance professional competencies in the workplace.

The Placement Year will be recognised on the degree transcript. As students will remain a registered student for the duration of the Placement Year, they will retain access to all university support services. Students will be allocated a Placement Tutor who will maintain regular remote contact with them. Placements often lead to a permanent role on graduation, providing a greater chance of success for graduates of this course.

Course Aims

The BA (Hons) Games Art and Design degree aims to provide students with an immersive and dynamic learning experience, supporting their creative and conceptual growth in the field of game development.

Students will have the opportunity to conduct extensive research on games, explore their own ideas, and gain valuable insights into the gaming industry, equipping them with a deep understanding of the medium.

The course aims to develop students' skills in generating original games, concept art and mastering character animation techniques, enabling them to bring their game visions to life visually and aesthetically.

Students will engage in experimental gameplay, pushing the boundaries of traditional game design and exploring innovative approaches to interactive experiences.

Furthermore, the course aims to foster critical thinking by encouraging students to analyse games from various perspectives, including their cultural and social relevance. Topics such as power, identity, ethics, and the role of games in social change, health, and education will be explored, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the wider impact of games.

Course Outcomes

This course enables students to demonstrate the following subject knowledge and understanding, intellectual and academic skills, practical subject skills, key skills and attributes, and professional and transferable skills.

The outcomes that students will have demonstrated upon completion of the BA (Hons) Games Art and Design course, are as follows:

- Apply the specialist knowledge and skills acquired to contemporary practices in the field of games design.

- Create visually cohesive and meaningful artworks that integrate observation, analysis, interpretation, and speculative thinking.

- Develop and refine arguments by engaging with cultural, ethical, social, environmental, theoretical, and historical contexts relevant to games design.

- Be aware of the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion within global, ethical, cultural, and societal contexts.

- Critically evaluate discourses and practices within and beyond the realm of gaming and designing games, making informed judgments based on a range of relevant sources.

- Evidence transferable skills, take initiative, and take personal responsibility for work conducted as a game design practitioner.

- Extend academic learning by becoming an independent, self-reflective, and creative professional, fully prepared for professional environments or further postgraduate study in the field of game design.

Reference Points

UK Quality Code for higher education, including:

- Subject Benchmark Statement: Art and Design
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- AUB LTAF and Undergraduate Assessment Regulations

Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategies

The Games Art and Design course is taught through a blend of theoretical instruction, practical application and understanding the concept of 'Play.' It utilises a variety of methods, including lectures, workshops, and studio-based practice. Emphasis is placed initially on hands-on learning, developing concepts through to digital construction. Students will engage in individual and group projects which reflect their ideas and concepts.

Industry-standard software and hardware are used extensively to provide students with valuable, up-to-date technical skills. Regular feedback from tutors ensures continuous improvement, while guest lectures from industry professionals provide unique insights and specialist points of view. The course encourages self-directed study, fostering creativity and independent problem-solving skills.

Learning is through intellectual enquiry, research, and practice. The course outcomes are met by deploying a wide variety of teaching and learning methods supervised by members of the team, visiting academic and support staff, practitioners, and consultants from industry. In consultation with the Course Leader, the wider course team is responsible for co-ordinating individual units of study, and for selecting appropriate methods of delivery in accordance with the subject matter and to provide the best student learning experience.

Importance is placed upon students acquiring the skills to be able to learn independently and to develop a critical awareness. This is facilitated through a variety of learning and teaching methods such as tutorials, group critiques, discussion groups, peer learning activity, projects, lectures, workshops, seminars, study visits, demonstrations, skills-based workshops, educational visits, on-site learning, 'live industry projects,' learning agreements, exhibition, and group presentation.

The total study time allocated to each unit in the course incorporates a balance of formal teaching, tutorial support and independent learning. The course is structured progressively to provide increased opportunities for independent and scaffolded learning as students reach the later stages of the course. The promotion of independent learning reflects a student's anticipated maturity and allows them to direct their learning towards individual goals.

Theoretical, contextual, studio and professional practices are embedded within all units. This integration dissolves the artificial barriers between these forms of engagement, such as recognising theory in making, allowing students to fully realise their potential and truly understand the rich relationship between these elements of practice.

A proportion of summative and formative assessment takes place during group reviews of work whereby a small group of students and two members of the staff team critically engage the students during an open discussion. The staff write up their notes and agree upon a mark following this session. The use of a group review of work as a means of formative assessment allows students to develop their ability to verbally articulate their individual practice. It also offers an opportunity for them to see fellow students work and discuss it. This formative assessment approach is transparent and promotes assessment as part of the learning within the unit of study for the full range of learners. Students will learn not only from the assessment and discussion relating to their own work but also from that of their peers. This approach will enable students to understand more fully how their work is assessed against learning outcomes.

Student Engagement

Enhanced Learning through Collaboration: The course's use of group presentations and team collaboration fosters cooperative learning. Students engage with diverse perspectives, deepening their understanding and application of games concepts.

Co-design of Learning: Students are encouraged to actively participate in their education, such as drafting industry focussing report that align with their future careeer. This autonomy motivates them and ensures their learning is directly relevant to their career goals.

Building a Professional Portfolio: A progressive assessment approach, combined with practical skills and project work, enables students to develop a strong portfolio. This is particularly significant in later stages of the course, where major projects are aligned with personal and career interests.

Real-World Applications and Networking: Interaction with industry-set briefs, guest speakers, and design agencies offers real-world experiences, enhancing learning and helping to build vital industry connections.

Assessment

Each unit is assessed separately, and the assessment forms part of the unit. Assessment both provides a measure of student achievement, and also provides students with regular feedback on how their learning is developing.

For every unit of a course, we will inform students of what they are expected to learn; what they need to submit; how their work will be assessed; and the deadline for presenting work for assessment.

A minimum of one unit at Level 4 will be assessed on a pass/fail basis, with written feedback but no numerical grade. All other units will be given a percentage mark.

Students will receive a final mark for each unit in the form of a percentage, which will be recorded on a formal record of achievement (transcript). Each component of assessment is graded using a notched marking scale, whereby only certain marks are used within each grade. The only marks available within any ten-point band are *2, *5 and *8 (e.g. 62, 65, 68). These marks correspond to a low, mid, and high level of achievement within each grade band.

All learning outcomes must be passed to successfully complete the unit.

On successful completion of an Honours degree course, students will be awarded a degree classification based on their unit marks. The final classification is determined using all unit marks at Levels 5 and 6.

If a student has joined Level 6 through either the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) route or having completed a Foundation Degree (FdA), the final classification is determined using only unit marks at Level 6.

For further information on assessment, progression, awards, and classifications, please visit https://aub.ac.uk/regulations

Course Structure

All students are registered for the award of BA (Hons); however, exit awards are available if a student leaves the course early, having successfully completed one or two levels. If students successfully complete a level of the course, they will automatically be entitled to progress to the next level.

For the award of a Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE), students must have achieved a minimum of 120 credits at Level 4. This qualification may be awarded if a student leaves the University following successful completion of the first year of the course.

For the award of a Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE), students must have achieved a minimum of 240 credits of which a minimum of 120 must be at Level 5. This qualification may be awarded if a student leaves the University following successful completion of the second year of the course.

For the award of a BA (Hons) a student must have achieved a minimum of 360 credits of which a minimum of 240 must be at Level 5 or above, of which a minimum of 120 credits must be at Level 6. This qualification will be awarded upon successful completion of the course.

A BA without Honours may be awarded if a student achieves 300 credits, at least 180 of which are at Level 5 or above, and at least 60 of which are at Level 6.

Core Values and Skills

In developing courses, the University aims to create a curriculum that reflects its values and ethos. It should prepare students for the future not only in enabling them to have a successful career, but also empower students with the knowledge, skills and passion to have a positive impact on the world and be an agent for change. AUB has drawn from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (https://sdgs.un.org/goals) which have informed our values of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as well as our Graduate Attributes.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

“We are better for our diversity. We are enriched by the depth of respect we have for each other and the strength of our relationships with our people, our places and the planet. Through our commitment to working with those who are different to us, or challenge us, we grow stronger together, creating new synergies, global connections and sustainable futures.” (AUB Strategy 2030)

As an organisation we have moral, social and legal obligations to fulfil in terms of EDI, and in doing so our commitment is to put EDI at the heart of every area of activity. It is not covered as a separate, stand-alone section, rather it forms an integral part of the curriculum, throughout your study here.

Graduate Attributes (GA)

Over recent years, there has been an increasing pace of change, technological, social, environmental. This has been further impacted by the world-wide pandemic effecting significant change in the global economy and the employment market.

In this context, the University has recognised the importance of developing AUB graduates who have the attributes to be able to build their career, adapting to different circumstances and embracing changes. A suite of attributes have been defined that we feel are particularly appropriate to the creative courses that we deliver and to AUB's core values; during your course, both curricular and extra-curricular activities will give you the opportunity to prepare for your working career.

The course will introduce students to topics which are integrated with the curriculum at every stage of learning. This will allow the student to structure their career development journey through levels 4-6 of the degree course and consider the following stages: Self Awareness, Opportunity Awareness, Decision Making and Transitioning into Work. These align to the AUB Career Readiness stages: Explore, Focus, Engage and Achieve.

In practice, this means that each unit of the course, at each Level, will include elements of career development and these will be shown explicitly in unit descriptors and outline syllabuses. Whilst students engage with these as they go through each unit, they will all come together in the final unit at each Level. Such an approach is designed to support students in the next steps they take after graduation, in whatever direction those may be, and is fundamental to degree studies.

Students will also have the option, between Level 5 (Year 2) and Level 6 (Year 3) of undertaking an extended period of work experience. The course team will be able to discuss this at the appropriate time.

Maintaining Health and Wellbeing

Throughout the course students are encouraged to reflect on their own health and wellbeing, and to develop themselves as a healthy creative practitioner. Students will consider how to develop study and work strategies and habits which maintain and promote their own wellbeing, and to manage their professional activities in a way which safeguards their mental and physical health.

Course staff have designed the course in order that, as far as is reasonably possible, health and wellbeing are promoted. Therefore, it is vital students maintain constructive communication with their colleagues and their staff throughout their time on this course.

Course Content

Each level operates within three terms over a period of thirty weeks. Each unit has its own aims, learning outcomes, assessment components and assessment criteria. The positive nature of progressive assessment is made clear throughout the experience. Units are self-contained but build upon previously acquired knowledge and skills. The assessment process summarises what has been achieved previously within the unit and identifies developmental strategies, enabling students to build a portfolio of knowledge, an ability to articulate their practice verbally and specific skills appropriate to the subject and their practice.

The courses requires fluency in diverse software skills and packages, including those related to VR (Virtual Reality) and AI (Artificial Intelligence). Core software tools, such as Adobe Photoshop or Unity, form the bedrock of game development. Simultaneously, innovative tools and technologies frequently emerge and become critical components of the industry. The software ecosystem in game development is in constant flux, necessitating an ever-evolving list of packages. A comprehensive series of workshops for software skills and packages will run along side the units, this way we can adapt and update year on year. This

ongoing adaptation mirrors the dynamism of the gaming industry and prepares students to be versatile and responsive to technological advancements.

Level 4

The first year of the BA (Hons) Games Art and Design degree is an introduction to study at higher education and provides students with the principles of games creation. The course gives students an understanding of the concept of identity within gaming, including avatar and character development, which is crucial for creating engaging and immersive games. The first year also introduces concept art and aesthetics, game mechanics, and the basics of software, which are essential skills for game design and development.

In addition to technical skills, the course also emphasises research and understanding the history of gaming through its development, both digital and non-digital. Students will gain a thorough understanding of the concept of "play" and how it has evolved over time. The importance of storytelling will also be delivered, as it is an essential aspect of creating successful games.

Level 5

In the second year, students are challenged to consolidate their skills and knowledge by producing a skills audit. This helps students identify areas where they need to improve and where their strengths lie. They will then collaborate on a set project in distinct roles used in the games industry. This enables students to gain experience in various aspects of game design and development, preparing them for their future careers.

In addition to technical skills, the second year of the course emphasises the importance of gender, identity, and values in designing games. Students will explore how these factors influence the design of games and how they can be addressed in game development. This provides a deeper understanding of the role of games in society and how they can be used to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion.

The second year of the course also includes a wide range of creative challenges, including undertaking competition briefs, learning how to launch a games business, writing a self-initiated project, and producing a case study of companies or designers that relate to students' interests.

Level 6

The final year is designed to prepare students to enter the games industry or to undertake postgraduate study. The curriculum provides the opportunity to work on industry-set projects, allowing students to gain practical experience and evidence skills with a professional viewpoint.

In addition to industry projects, the third year of the course also allows students time to compile a portfolio of work. This includes the Final Major Project, which has significance from a technical and conceptual viewpoint. This project is written completely by the student and is the focal point of their portfolio, highlighting their skills and abilities to future employers or clients. To support this, they will also write an industry-focused report, helping them understand which aspect of the industry they want to progress into, or to see where their business enterprise will lead them.

Specialist resources:

- This course has a dedicated, accessible and well-resourced games studio.

- Hi-spec professional level hardware/software.
- Excellently resourced library
- Specialist arts institute campus

Course Units

Unit code	Unit title	Credit weighting
Level 4		
GAD401	Identity and Avatar	40 credits
GAD402	Gaming and Play	40 credits
GAD403	Storytelling Through Games	40 credits
Level 5		
GAD504	Character and Environment	40 credits
GAD502	Launchpad	40 credits
GAD503	Self-Initiated Project	40 credits
Level 6		
GAD601	Industry / Live Project	20 credits
GAD602	Industry In Focus Report	20 credits
GAD603	Final Major Project	60 credits
GAD604	Reflective Journal	20 credits

Course Diagram

This diagram shows the proposed start/end dates for each unit and shows teaching weeks only; holiday periods are not included.

	Level 4																											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	Autumn Term										**Spring Term**										**Summer Term**									
Induction week	**GAD401 Identity and Avatar** (40 credits) (weeks 1-10) Pass/fail unit										**GAD402 Gaming and Play** (40 credits) (weeks 11-20)										**GAD403 Storytelling Through Games** (40 credits) (weeks 21-30)									

	Level 5																											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	Autumn Term										**Spring Term**										**Summer Term**									
	GAD504 Character and Environment(40 credits) (weeks 1-12)												**GAD503 Self-Initiated Project** (40 credits) (weeks 13-24)																
	GAD502 Launchpad (40 credits) (weeks 1-28)																												

	Level 6																													
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	Autumn Term										**Spring Term**												**Summer Term**							
	GAD601 Industry / Live Project (20 credits) (weeks 1-10)										**GAD603 Final Major Project** (60 credits) (weeks 11-28)																			
	GAD602 Industry in Focus Report (20 credits) (weeks 1-10)										**GAD604 Reflective Journal** (20 credits) (weeks 11-28)																			

Image: Emeline Nevers-White | BA (Hons) Games Art And Design