FALMOUTH
UNIVERSITY

DIGITAL GAMES AT FALMOUTH

WELCOME TO BA(HONS) DIGITAL GAMES AT FALMOUTH.

Your offer
Please remember that if you have been made a conditional offer to study at Falmouth, your place is subject to meeting those conditions. Conditional means that we are waiting to receive your results, or some more information, before your place is finalised. You can see any conditions in UCAS Track. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Admissions team on 01326 213730 or admissions@falmouth.ac.uk.

First week of term
Your first day of attendance will be **Monday 12 September 2016.** Please report for your welcome talk at **2pm** in the **Lecture Theatre A** in the **Du Maurier building** on the **Penryn Campus**.

You can download a copy of the Penryn Campus map from the Contact page of our website here.

Your first week at Falmouth will be an induction and orientation week. There will be important inductions for both the course and the wider university, in addition to a number of social activities. You will also be given course outlines and timetables.

Between the Games course, the University and the Students Union, we have a full and exciting first week planned out for you all, which we will explain at this meeting. Induction week will include some fun activities, as well as some more important introductions to your new career as a Falmouth games student. This is the beginning of an exciting course and new approach to games at university, and we can't wait to start making games with you.

MyTimetable
https://mytimetable.falmouth.ac.uk/ available from 1 September 2016

This is the link to MyTimetable, your online academic calendar which shows all scheduled learning activities and your course timetable. It will be available from 1 September 2016, however, timetables can be subject to change. To keep up to date, we recommend that you export the feed to your chosen device (mobile, tablet, laptop or desktop). An induction will be offered on the use of MyTimetable during freshers' week. Students will have access to their individual student timetables, where appropriate, once they have completed their online enrolment and IT induction.

Pre-course preparation
Project
Essential
At this stage many students want to know what we'd recommend they do to be properly prepared for the course in September. The primary tool we will be using for game-making is

Unity. **Regardless of which route you are on in the course, you should download and begin to familiarise yourself with this software as soon as you can.** It's free and the tutorials are located at http://unity3d.com/learn/tutorials/modules.

We'll be expecting students to have undertaken several of the beginner level Unity tutorials, in order to hit the ground running with the software in September. The more familiar you are with this software, the easier you will find the course. Developing and keeping up-to-date with the software is something we never stop expecting students to do.

Optional

If you're wondering how else to best prepare for when you arrive, here are some tips divided up by the different routes through the course:

a) Animation - Download Autodesk Maya for free and work through its tutorials, with an emphasis on the animation section.

b) Writing - Play text-heavy games like the *Dragon Age* series (approximately £10 to £30), looking at how that text is structured to work in games. Play games with strong stories but no text at all, like Thatgamecompany's *Journey* (approximately £15 to £30), and consider how they tell their story. Play games which are made of text, like *A Dark Room* (approximately £0.79) or Porpentine's *Howling Dogs* (free) and see how they use text to create gameplay. Do not neglect learning to use Unity as well, as you will need it to put narrative into games when you can't use text.

c) Art - Studio creative director Professor Tanya Krzywinska suggests that you do lots of drawing of characters and landscapes/environment studies. It's important to start getting used to drawing/painting in art software like Painter (RRP £279, free trial available) or Sketchbook Pro (free). Also, it would be beneficial to download the free trial of Autodesk Maya and work through its tutorials.

d) Programming - The studio's technical director, Martin Cooke, suggests that in addition to the Unity tutorials recommended for all routes (see above), you check out the free scripting section at unity3d.com/learn/tutorials/modules/beginner/scripting. Getting a head start on C# scripting will be helpful, but don't worry if it's a bit too much; we will be covering it all from the ground up.

e) Design – Studio director of enterprise and design Rich Barham recommends you start playing games from genres which aren't within your normal interest. For example; if you're into fighting games, play FPS; if you love MMOs, try RPGs. You don't need to spend money to do this! Grab free mobile games, free to play games and trials on Steam. Broaden your horizons.

Board games are an excellent medium for exploring design too, so don't miss out on spending plenty of time with both physical and digital games to help prepare. Try to play some of the more modern board games; I personally recommend Fantasy Flight games as a supplier, but there are many of the new generation of board games which incorporate excellent design and interesting mechanics. Generally a new release game costs around £30.

Finally, remember you'll spend much of your first year learning to start thinking as a designer. Getting a broader base of experience will help you make that transition from player to designer far more easily.

Reading
Optional
a) Audio
The music department recommend that those of you planning on taking the more technical modules read the following:
Izhaki, R., 2008. *Mixing audio: concepts, practices and tools*. Focal Press. RRP £32.00.
Miller, P.D., 2008. *Sound unbound: sampling digital music and culture*. MIT Press. RRP £23.00.

While the more performance or composition focused students may want to read:
Taylor, E., 1989. *The AB guide to music theory.* Oxford University Press. RRP £7.00.
Harper-Scott, J.P.E., 2009. *An introduction to music studies.* Cambridge University Press. RRP £19.00.
Cook, N., 2000. *Music*: *a very short introduction*. Oxford University Press. RRP £5.00.

b) Design
A good book for designers to take a look at is:
Fullerton, T., 2004. *Game design workshop: a playcentric approach to creating innovative games*. CRC Press. RRP £37.00.

Tuition fees (per year)
2016-17 full-time UK/EU: £9,000
2016-17 full-time International: £15,000

During your course
Materials and equipment list and costs
Optional
You do not have to bring your own development-capable computer, since there are machines in the studio space. However, access to these is not guaranteed, especially at peak times of the year. Therefore **purchasing a machine of your own is highly recommended** and will make teamwork and team contribution substantially easier if it is a laptop.

Below you will find some guidance from our studio technician and some example computer specifications. We recommend PCs over Macs (though audio route students sometimes prefer Macs). The routes which have the most demanding computer requirements are art and animation, where Tanya has recommended that the higher spec Microsoft Surface Pro 4 laptops would be an effective choice for artists (RRP £850).

Computer buying advice
Firstly, a couple of caveats:
1   It is possible to develop games on most computer systems that have been made in the last ten years. Furthermore, high-spec game development workstations, electronic components and bread boards, and new technologies such as VR

Headsets, are already available within the Game Studios on an as-needed basis for your coursework tasks. Therefore there is no requirement for any student to bring an expensive computer system or specialist equipment with them when they join the course.

2   However, we anticipate that some students will want to purchase a new computer to see them through university and would appreciate some advice on this matter from a game developer's perspective.

3   Please note, that although every effort has been made to ensure the described computer systems are appropriately configured, these systems have not been tested by any member of the course team, and the University can accept no liability for the consequences of any actions taken on the basis of the information provided. If you are unsure about any aspect of your purchase, then please contact the retailer.

Now, on to the hardware...

Graphics card
Arguably, the most important hardware consideration for a game development system is the graphics card, especially if you intend to work with detailed 3D graphics that are rendered in real-time. For the sample computers listed below we have highlighted in *italics* the corresponding 'average G3D benchmark' scores as taken from http://videocardbenchmark.net/ at the time of writing. This website considers "high end video cards" to have a score of 930 or above.

Laptop or desktop?
Laptops obviously have the advantage of being portable. You will typically get a higher spec system when spending an equivalent amount on a desktop, instead of a laptop. Desktops also tend to have better air-flow and cooling, so less stress is put on the components when running for long periods, which can in turn help to improve the life span of the system.

Hard drive
Depending on whether your preference is for fast load times or extra storage space for digital downloads, films, music, and so on, you might want to consider either a SSD hard drive (speed) or a larger 'regular' hard drive (storage). Some developers like to use an internal SSD hard drive for system speed and also have a larger external/portable hard drive for storing or transferring other documents.

Many larger gaming laptops have space for an SSD for storing the operating system and installed applications, and a larger hard drive for storing other files. This is also a common configuration for desktops, and generally offers the best compromise between speed and affordability.

Display size
When working with game development tools you will often be running multiple programs which each have numerous smaller views and panels. You will quickly realise the benefit of having a lot of 'screen estate'; the more pixels the better. With laptops this can represent a trade-off between portability and weight, versus usable display area. Whether you use a

laptop or a desktop it's certainly worth considering a full HD display (1920 x 1080 resolution) and perhaps a secondary monitor also.

Example computers
We have tried to cover a range of options and budgets, but the list is by no means exhaustive; we advise that you shop around a little and pick something that you're comfortable with.

Basic-spec gaming PC
The Fusion 450 gaming PC: http://www.pcspecialist.co.uk/view/Fusion-450-gaming-pc/
Configured with the following add-ons:
- Graphics card: Nvidia Geforce GT 740.
- Keyboard: Logitech K120.
- Mouse: Logitech Optical USB Mouse.
- Monitor: AOC 21.5" E2270SWDN Monitor 1920x1080.

Videocard Benchmark: 1578.   **Total Cost: £583.**

High-spec gaming PC
The Vortex 1250 gaming PC: http://www.pcspecialist.co.uk/view/Vortex-1250-gaming-pc/
Configured with the following add-ons:
- Graphics card: Nvidia GTX 970.
- Monitor 1:   IIYAMA E2273HDS 22".
- Monitor 2:   IIYAMA E2273HDS 22".
- Keyboard & Mouse: CM Storm Devastator II Keyboard and Mouse.

Please note, at the time of writing, Nvidia have just announced the new GTX 1070 and 1080 cards which will be available in summer 2016, which may be worth waiting for.
Videocard Benchmark: 8663.   **Total Cost: £1571.**

Basic-Spec gaming laptop
PC Specialist Cosmos IV: http://www.pcspecialist.co.uk/notebooks/cosmosIV-15/
Configured with the following:
- Graphics card: Nvidia GT 940M.
- Processor: Intel Core i5 6300HQ.
- Memory: 8GB Kingston DDR3 1600mhz.
- Display   15.6" full HD display.

Videocard Benchmark: 904.   **Total Cost: £609.**

High-spec gaming laptop
Asus G751JT gaming laptop: http://www.ebuyer.com/735151-asus-g751jt-gaming-laptop-g751jt-t7250t
Configured with the following:
- Graphics card: Nvidia GT 970M.
- Processor: Intel i7.
- Memory: 16GB ram.
- Hard drive   128GB SSD + 1TB HDD.
- Display: 17.3" Full HD.

Videocard Benchmark: 3999.   **Total Cost: £1059.99.**

Reading list and costs
All Routes
Essential
Since we'll be studying games and the theory of games studies as well as making them, you need to read these two books:
King, G. and Krzywinska, T., 2005. *Tomb raiders and space invaders*. IB Taurus. RRP £19.00.
Suits, B., 1978. *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia.* Broadview Press. RRP £15. (Get the 2005 edition with the green cover if you can, it has lovely illustrations).

Optional
Also, this book is worth buying and dipping into (since there's a lot of material there!):
Salen, K. and Zimmerman, E., 2003. *Rules of play: game design fundamentals.* MIT Press. RRP £30.00.

Enrolment and Student Terms & Conditions
You will receive an email two weeks prior to the start of term with details of how to enrol online. All students must enrol online before the first day of term in order to be officially registered as a student of Falmouth University. If you plan to receive an undergraduate student loan, you must enrol to have your money released to you.

As part of your enrolment, you will be required to agree to and comply with the University's Student Terms & Conditions. These Terms & Conditions are important and we encourage you to read them carefully, prior to enrolling online. They can be found on our Regulations, Policies and Procedures web page under 'Student Terms & Conditions' here.

During the coming weeks, you will be emailed important information for new students. If you will be away, please ask someone else to check your emails regularly and reply on your behalf.

We know that there's a lot to do to prepare before the start of your course. If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to call our Admissions team for advice on 01326 213730 or email admissions@falmouth.ac.uk.

If you would like to download and print a copy of this email, please go to www.falmouth.ac.uk/new-students/welcome-letters.

Finally, if you've not done so yet, please feel free to add me on Facebook (facebook.com/falmouthgames) and I can then add you to the course's Facebook group where we can all start getting to know each other and you can also meet current students, as well as the other tutors.

The Digital Games mentors (current students who are looking to help new students get started and settled in) will also contact you about their dedicated Facebook group where you can read course FAQs and ask questions.

I look forward to seeing you soon; please do email me with any questions or queries at douglas.brown@falmouth.ac.uk.

Finally, we wish you an enjoyable and creative time before the course starts and we look forward to seeing you in September.

Yours sincerely

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