

## GAME DEVELOPMENT AT FALMOUTH

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WELCOME TO BA(HONS) GAME DEVELOPMENT AT FALMOUTH.

### Your offer

If you have a conditional offer, your place is subject to meeting those conditions. This means we're waiting to receive your results or some more information before your place can be finalised. You can see these conditions using [UCAS Track](#)

If you need to ask us anything about your offer, get in touch with our Admissions team on 01326 213730, use Live Chat on our website or email [admissions@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@falmouth.ac.uk).

### First week of term

Your first day of attendance will be **Monday 18 September 2017**. Please report for your welcome talk at **Daphne Du Maurier Lecture Theatre A, Penryn Campus** at **10am**.

This is the week when you'll meet your course mates, course tutors and the university staff. 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 courses, the University and the Students Union, we have a full and exciting first week planned out for you all. 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.

You can download a copy of the [Penryn Campus map](#) or the [Falmouth Campus map](#) from the Contact page of our website [here](#).

### MyTimetable

<https://mytimetable.falmouth.ac.uk/> available from 14 September 2017

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 14 September 2017, 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 2017. Students have access to their individual student timetables, 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 in the first term 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.

#### **Additional Task – Artists Only:**

Go to a local museum, castle, National Trust or other old building with interesting objects within. Choose three interesting objects while you are there. Photograph them and sketch and draw them using any materials you feel comfortable with. Think about their shape, scale, texture, colour, material and how they interact with light. Draw them again when you get home. Then, when you feel you've a good understanding of the objects' properties, take elements of each to create a new hybrid object. Name it and write a short backstory about that new hybrid object. You can do this as a written paragraph or as a comic strip or storyboard. Put all these in a portfolio, alongside the original photographs (printouts or show us the photos on your phone) and bring them along to fresher's week.

#### **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, written by our route leaders:

**a) Animation** - Download Autodesk Maya for free, and while you wait for it to install, watch these videos on the principles of animation (the ideas that help bring life to animation) – <https://youtu.be/haa7n3UGyDc>.

Once Maya has installed, have a go at the animated ball test. Using this video as reference for different types of ball <https://youtu.be/KRVhtMxQWRs>, work on creating a bouncing ball animation to get used to how animation works in 3D. A beginners guide can be found here <https://youtu.be/axQZliUq68M>.

**b) Writing** - Delve into as many story-based games as you can. Try and read and play broadly. Try AAA games like *The Last of Us* (approximately £15 to £30), looking at the differences between the structural delivery of heavily authored linear and non-linear games; to narrative indie games like *Firewatch*, (approximately £7 to £14). Also look at *The Stanley Parable* (approximately £2 to £10) and the *Beginner's Guide* (£3 to £7), to understand how writing can be used to effect within smaller budgets. Play games that champion visual storytelling practices without using text, such as *Journey* (approximately £12 to £20). Play text-based games, like *A Dark Room* (approximately £0.79) to see how literary practices can inform games writing craft.

Do not neglect learning Unity. The 'Fungus' unity plugin can help you familiarise yourself with the engine while also allowing you to produce narrative games with little coding experience. Download text-based game engine 'Twine' (free) and experiment.

**c) Art** - Do lots of drawing of characters and landscapes and environment studies. It's important to start getting used to drawing and painting in art software like Photoshop (£16.22/mo educational licensing) or Sketchbook Pro (free). Also, it would be beneficial to download the free trial of Autodesk Maya and work through its tutorials.

**d) Programming** - We suggest 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](http://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** – We recommend 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

Good books for designers to take a look at are:

Fullerton, T., 2004. *Game design workshop: a playcentric approach to creating innovative games*. CRC Press. RRP £37.00.

Macklin & Sharp., 2016. *Games, design and play: A detailed approach to iterative game design*. Addison Wesley. RRP £25

We also highly recommend this website <http://gamedesigntools.blogspot.com/>

#### c) Programming

A good general Unity book which also includes some Game Design information:

Gibson, J., 2014. *Introduction to game design, prototyping, and development: from concept to playable game - with unity and C#*. Addison Wesley. RRP £35.19.

### **Tuition fees (per year)**

2017-18 full-time UK/EU: £9,250

2017-18 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.

#### **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**

<https://www.pcspecialist.co.uk/computers/intel-home-office-pc/>

Configured with the following add-ons:

- Graphics card: Nvidia Geforce 1050 Ti 4GB.
- RAM: 8GB DDR4
- Monitor: AOC 21.5" E2270SWDN Monitor 1920x1080.

Total Cost: £713inc vat.

#### **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 1070.
- Monitor 1: IIYAMA E228HS 22".
- Monitor 2: IIYAMA E228HS 22".

Total Cost: £1556 inc vat.

### **Basic-Spec gaming laptop**

MSI GL62 7QF Gaming Laptop: <http://www.ebuyer.com/770451-msi-gl62-7qf-gaming-laptop-9s7-16j562-1672>

Total Cost: £600 inc vat.

### **High-spec gaming laptop**

MSI GE72 7RE Gaming Laptop: <http://www.ebuyer.com/770994-msi-ge72-7re-apache-pro-gaming-laptop-9s7-179941-011>

Total Cost: £1250 inc vat.

## **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.

We recommend familiarising yourself with these websites often used in the wider game development world –

<http://www.gamasutra.com/>

<http://www.gamesindustry.biz/>

We also recommend the video series <https://www.youtube.com/user/ExtraCreditz> which is good preparation for both theory and development practice.

## **Enrolment and Student Terms & Conditions**

You'll get an email two weeks before the start of term telling you how to enrol online. You'll need to enrol before the first day of term to officially register as a student of Falmouth University and receive an undergraduate student loan.

When you enrol, you'll need 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, before enrolling. You can find them under 'Student Terms & Conditions' on our [website](#).

Over the next few weeks we'll email you more important information about your course and life at Falmouth. If you're going to be away or out of contact, make sure you ask someone to check your emails and reply on your behalf.

We know all of this can seem overwhelming and preparing for your course can involve a lot. So we're here to help. If you have any questions at all, just get in touch with Admissions on 01326 213730, use Live Chat on our website or email [admissions@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@falmouth.ac.uk).

Finally, if you've not done so yet, please feel free to add me on Facebook ([facebook.com/falmouthgames](https://www.facebook.com/falmouthgames)) and I can then add you to the Academy's Facebook group once your conditional offers are confirmed. We can then 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 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gamescoursesfalmouth17.20> 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](mailto:douglas.brown@falmouth.ac.uk).

Finally, we wish you an enjoyable and creative time before the course starts and we're looking forward to welcoming you to Falmouth in September.

Yours sincerely

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