Assignment 1: Concept, Planning and Pitch

Game Design course 2017-2018, Utrecht University.

Overview

The first practical assignment is about coming up with ideas, forming a solid concept and vision and pitching this to an audience. You will learn about brainstorming, communicating and cooperating with your team, making your concept more concrete and presenting it to others. It is very important for a game designer to successfully convey ideas about the game. Knowing how to bring a concept back to the essence and structuring it in such a way that it is very understandable. Do this well and you have an excellent start for assignment two where you will create a prototype of this game experience concept.

Tasks

First your team will generate a game concept and write it down in a short *concept document*. You will make this more concrete in a *sprint planning* where you check the feasibility of creating this concept into a prototype. Then your team will *pitch* the concept to the other students in a short presentation. After this, your team will evaluate how the other students have interpreted your pitch and write this down in an *evaluation report*. To facilitate the evaluation for other teams, you must individually write *feedback* down about the other pitches.

In total, this creates six subtasks in this assignment. You can write the documents in Dutch.

- P1.1 - Report team
- P1.2 - Game concept
- P1.3 - Sprint planning
- P1.4 - Pitch presentation
- P1.5 - Feedback (individual assignment)
- P1.6 - Evaluation report

Deadlines

This assignment contains several small short term deadlines. This requires an active participation. Keep track of these deadlines!

- Thursday February 8th before 23.59: Submit subtask P1.1 (report team)
- Thursday February 15th before **17:00:** Submit subtask P1.2 (concept)
- Friday February 16th before 23.59: Submit subtask P1.3 (sprint planning)
- Thursday February 22nd before **17:00:**: Submit your presentation slides **pdf**
- Friday February 23rd 11:00 - 15:00: Pitch presentations.
- Friday February 23rd before **17.00**: Submit subtask P1.5 (feedback)
- Monday February 26th before 23.59: Submit subtask P1.6 (evaluation report)

Submit all subtasks using Blackboard, unless another method is indicated.

Grading

Subtasks 2, 3, 4 and 6 contribute equally to the grading. Grading is done per team, but individual changes can be made. Subtask 5 (feedback) is handled differently because it is an individual task. For each team you didn't give feedback, 0.2 points are deducted from your individual grade of the entire assignment. Note that an effortless write-up counts as missing.

- Subtask 2 - 25%
- Subtask 3 - 25%
- Subtask 4 - 25%
- Subtask 6 - 25%

Subtask 1: Report team

Important: the same team for assignment 2

This team will also do the second practical assignment together (creating the game prototype). Be aware of this and choose your team accordingly. There will be 24 teams. Your team must consist of 6 (or 5) students, with a minimum of three students who are comfortable with creating the game prototype in Unity.

Note that with basic programming skills, the crash course Unity (lecture 2) and a bit of self study this shouldn't be a problem. If you do not have any programming experience, you are encouraged to join a team with mostly programmers. As a non-programming member, you can focus on creating content such as visuals, sound and levels. Keep in mind that the general game design should be done by all team members. Ideally, teams should consist of 4 programmers and 1 or 2 non-programmers. More than 2 non-programmer in a team is discouraged. You are allowed to be in a team with students you know well, but it is encouraged to find a team with students you haven't worked with (much). You will learn much more about cooperation if you move outside your comfort zone.

Tutor teaching assistant

Your team will have one TA as tutor. This TA will be appointed and can help you with all sorts of things such as technical issues, teamwork difficulties, and game design questions. You can also ask your TA for feedback on how you are progressing and the quality of your work.

To make the tutoring work, you need regular contact with your tutor TA. You will have weekly meetings during the practicum sessions on Friday with your TA, where you will demonstrate your progress and keep him/her updated about the project and ask your questions.

Submit your team

After you have formed your team, first think of a team name. Then you submit this team name and the student details of the students in the team on a Google Form. You can find the link on the course website under "Assignments".   On this form every student will fill out their programming skill level and their main interest area within games. **Please note: when the group is not well balanced there is a change your team will be shuffled.**

Problems finding a team

If you cannot find a team or if your team is incomplete e-mail game-ontwerp@doornena.nl before the deadline on Thursday February 8th before 23.59. Start the e-mail subject with **[TEAM-PROBLEM]**, and mention in the email your name and student number, your level of programming experience and the issue. The TA's will arrange the completion of the teams as soon as possible.

Deadline: Thursday February 8th before 23.59

Before this deadline you must have reported your team with the Google Form. If you fail to find a team quickly, you cannot participate in Assignment 1.

Teams will be announced on the website on Friday 9th.

Subtask 2: Concept document

Create a game design concept with your team. Be creative. An original concept benefits your grade, however note that your concept should also be feasible. It is the base for assignment 2 and your team should be able to create a prototype for this concept in the coming weeks.

Concept requirements

A game concept describes the vision you have of the game experience. It helps to have a concrete goal, a client and target audience. For whom are you making this experience and what is the goal you want to achieve with your concept? This can be 'applied' or more about entertainment. *For example:* A zoo wants you to create a promotional game for their new nightlife animal house. Or a popstar wants you to create a game for a new music album that deepens the music experience. Or a gamestudio wants you to create a small mobile teaser game to promote their bigger game. Etc.

So make sure that you:

- think of a **client** and clear **goal** for this concept *(also when your team is the client!)*
- choose a **target audience** that is easy to find *(you will conduct playtest research preferably with this audience)*
- determine a **vision statement** for your concept (the main game experience)
- can **create a prototype, the essence of the experience,** of this concept in Unity, in the limited time

Think of what you want to achieve with your target audience, what experience will match your goal? The first step is to identify what your intended game experience is, and then to formulate how this experience can be achieved.

Concepting

Don't be afraid to share your ideas, ideas are never stupid! The creative process requires a lot of input, and through team interactions any idea can turn into a great idea. Make sure to be open to ideas of others. Listen carefully, let each other finish and provide constructive feedback. Build upon ideas, it may not be great at first but how can you improve it?

It's also important that you're not very attached to your own ideas. It's likely that your idea will not be chosen (or will be modified) and you should be okay with that. Even though it was a great idea, that doesn't mean that it's the best idea for this team. If teamwork is troublesome, go to your teaching assistant.

Concept document

You are free to choose the structure of your concept document, but make sure there is a structure and that it makes sense. A concept document gives a general overview of the game, with the idea that anyone can read and understand what the game is like. It is recommended to use clarifying sketches (note: images from other games can not be used!)

The following aspects must be part of your concept document:

- **Target audience** *(Do not focus only on age and gender. Try to be more specific, for example: "hardcore games who like number-crunching strategy" or "people who want to play something relaxing in the evening" or "music fans of a specific genre")*
- The **goal** of your game, what is the game solving or achieving for the target audience (or client)
- The **game experience**, explaining what the intended experience is and why. Why will this experience be interesting and/or solving your goal? And how will this game achieve this experience.

Requirements
- All aspects mentioned above are present.
- Deliver a pdf
- Name the pdf "P1.2-team-#" *(where # is your team number)*
- The concept document should be at least 1 and at most 2 pages (not counting images)
- The document should contain the team name & number and the names of all members.

Deadline: Thursday February 15th before 17:00

Criterion	Poor	Fair	Good
Originality (important)	The concept is in a well-known genre but has a small twist.	The concept is in a well-known genre but has a large change, which truly changes the nature of the game.	The game is so different that a link with a well-known genre is hard to see.
Concreteness (important)	Some aspects of the game are explained clearly, but others are kept vague: their exact implementation is unclear.	Most aspects are explained clearly, but some important aspects remain vague or don't have enough detail.	All important aspects of the game are clearly discussed, even though the lists may not be complete due to lack of space. A mockup screenshot is included.
Formatting (less important)	The document has a title and a few sections, but no more formatting.	The document is divided in logical sections and paragraphs, lists are used where applicable. Correct font use.	In addition to "fair", the document is well polished and contains several images and colors to aid in the explanation.
Language (less important)	There are some weird sentences.	Most sentences are nice and clear.	It is very easy to read.

Subtask 3: Sprint planning

In the second assignment you will create a prototype of your concept in 4 sprints of 1 week (where the first sprint is a start-up). To make sure you can create a prototype that conveys your game experience concept you will create a planning and a backlog.

Tasks

First you need to break down your concept. What are the essential elements of your concept that create the game experience? This is what you want to build in your first release: your prototype. Discuss the chunks of work together so you can roughly estimate the amount of work. Order this work in a logical way and make sure that you can finish the work in 4 sprints of 1 week. Take into account that you will have insights and add tasks on the way, so make sure your final sprint has plenty room for this!

To create an overview of all the things you will need to do, you will create a backlog. You will write the work that needs to be done in <u>user stories</u> (or playerstories). This will help you to focus on the game experience for the player and is an excellent exercise in starting with game design.

A user story describes the WHY (goal), WHO (user) and WHAT (functionality). For example: To <achieve goal> as a <user/player/designer etc> I want to <functionality>.

Checking feasibility and planning

In your meeting with the TA on February 16th you will discuss your concept and the feasibility and suitability of your idea. Note that you are allowed to make changes to the concept that you handed in for assignment P1.2

Initial backlog and planning

For this assignment you will create an *initial backlog* with the rough outline of the game in user stories. Discuss these on a high level, just enough to give an estimation on the amount of work needed. Note that you can (and will) add, remove and change stories on your backlog during development. There is no need to go to much in detail and small subtasks at this point.

List and number your user stories and estimate the amount of work per story. Also note important decisions, acceptance criteria or comments you don't want to forget. You can use this table list as a format:

#1 - User Story - Estimate - Additional notes
#2 - User Story - Estimate - Additional notes
#3 - User Story - Estimate - Additional notes
etc.

For the overall planning, estimate the amount of work you can do in the initial 'set up' sprint and in the following 3 sprints. You are free to choose the format of your planning, just make sure that you mention the 4 sprints and the main deliverable per sprint. The goal is not to be precise but to make sure your planning is feasible and gives you a good overview.

Requirements

- The sprint planning as described above, containing the initial backlog
- Deliver a pdf
- Name the pdf "P1.3- team[number of your group]" *(e.g. P1.3-team-3)*
- The document should contain the name of the team and the names of all members.

Deadline: Friday February 16<u>th</u> before 23.59

Criterion	Poor	Fair	Good
Feasibility (important)	Lacking planning / not feasible or not at all ambitious.	There is a feasible planning, dividing the work in 4 sprints.	The sprint planning is well balanced, leaving room for additional work.
Clearness & format (important)	The backlog lacks obvious parts, is not prioritized and/or structured.	The backlog consist of user stories and these represents the amount of work needed for the prototype.	The backlog shows a good overview of the amount of work with well written user stories. Making it clear what needs to be done to create the prototype.

Subtask 4: Pitch presentation

You will present the concept in a elevator pitch-style presentation. There are two goals you must achieve using your presentation. The first goal is to clearly and concretely communicate your game concept. The audience should be able to create the game experience after hearing the presentation. (Obviously the technical part is not relevant, only the game design.) The second goal is that you must show your enthusiasm and transfer it to the audience. Try to be creative in accomplishing these two goals in your presentation.

Your pitch has to take **at most 5 minutes** (aim for 4 minutes!), so your presentation must be very brief and concise. The 5 minutes is a hard limit, you must stop when the time is over. Practice the presentation multiple times in advance to make sure it fits in the timeslot. It is recommended that one student does the talking, although this is not a strict requirement.

Requirements
- The slides must be in **pdf** format. They cannot contain movies or animations.
- The pdf must be smaller than 50 MB (to be able to submit on blackboard)
- Name the pdf "P1.4-team-#" *(where # is your team number)*
- First slide contains team name and student names.
- Submit your slides a day in advance. See the deadlines.
- Your pitch is at most 5 minutes, aim for 4.

A presentation slot will be assigned to your team. Check the course website under "Assignments" to see in which slot your team must present.

Your slides must be submitted in advance. Be aware of the requirements for the slides. The TA will combine all slides into a single presentation, this enables fast switching between pitches.

Deadline: Thursday February 22nd before 17:00 mail your presentation slides PDF

Presentation: Friday February 23rd, somewhere between 11.00 and 15.00

Criterion	Poor	Fair	Good
Transmission of enthusiasm (important)	The presenter is talking with little enthusiasm. The slides contain some graphics, but nothing special.	The presenter is talking with some enthusiasm and seems to like their idea. The slides contain some applicable imagery.	The presenter uses an original way to grab the attention of the public and makes people enthusiastic.
Concreteness and completeness (important)	Some aspects of the game are explained clearly, but others are not mentioned or kept vague.	Most aspects are explained clearly, but some important aspects remain vague or don't have enough detail.	The pitch shows all important aspects in a clear way. The audience has a very good idea what the game experience will be like

Subtask 5: Feedback

To provide all teams with information on how their pitch is understood, each student must individually write down something about the other pitches. **You're required to do this for all other pitches, except for the pitches in the same session as yours.** There are four sessions which are separated by 15 or 30 minute breaks. Use these breaks to work on your feedback notes.

For each pitch you must answer the following questions:

- What did you like about the presentation? (at least 1 genuinely positive remark required.)
- What did you find unclear about the design or what did you miss about the design in the pitch? (at least 1 concrete remark required.)
- What tips would you give the team to improve their pitch? (at least 1 concrete remark required.)

Note that this feedback does not influence the grade of the pitching team.

The answers must be submitted through a Google Form. You can find the link on the course website under "Assignments".

Make sure you have a copy of your answers in case something goes wrong with the submission of the form!

For each pitch you did not provide feedback on (or too late) you get 0.2 points deducted from your total assignment 1 grade. Note that effortless or otherwise non-serious submissions do not count as a submission. If something goes wrong or you are not able to create the feedback, contact your TA with the teacher in cc <game-ontwerp@doornena.nl>. Do not let someone else provide feedback for you, that is fraud.

Deadline: Friday February 23rd before 17.00

This tight deadline is required to give the other teams the possibility to start evaluating on Friday.

Subtask 6: Evaluation report

It is expected that there will be things unclear after the pitch presentation. This is almost unavoidable after such a pitch. For this subtask you will evaluate which things were not understood well, and which things were understood correctly. The main goal of this task is to evaluate your own presentation, i.e. **self-reflection**, based on the feedback from other students from subtask 5. This requires you to be honest, be critical to your own presentation but also see the good parts of it.

The feedback from the other students will be available on the course website on Friday February 23rd shortly after 20:00.

Create a short document of about 1 page and discuss the general tone in the feedback from other students. Which aspects of the game concept were not clear to them, and which parts were clear? How could your pitch be improved to convey the concept more clearly? Note that there are always individuals with strange opinions, focus on general trends instead.

Requirements
- The evaluation report should be about 1 page.
- Deliver a pdf
- Name the pdf "P1.6-team[number of your group]" *(e.g. P1.6-team-3)*
- The document should contain the name of the team and the names of all members.

The quality of the evaluation itself influences the grade. The evaluation is not used for the grading of the pitch. A good and honest evaluation report after an unclear presentation improves the grade!

Deadline: Monday February 26rd before 23.59

Criterion	Poor	Fair	Good
Self-reflection (very important)	The evaluation focuses mainly on the poor or good aspects. There are no interesting remarks.	There is a good balance between positive and negative remarks. There are some interesting insightful statements.	Good balance and there are several very insightful remarks, resulting from careful analysis of the feedback.
Improvements (important)	The suggestions for pitch improvement are simple or not very helpful.	Some fair suggestions for pitch improvement are given.	Some suggestions for pitch improvement are clearly a major addition.
Language (less important)	There are some weird sentences.	Most sentences are nice and clear.	It is very easy to read.