Meeting SAT GAMES 30-01-2025

Present:

- Hanna Wirman
- Rune Kristian Lundedal Nielsen
- Enrico Giuseppe Aiello
- Kristóf Lénárd
- Hajo Backe
- Djordje Grbic
- Marc Kellaway

Absent:

Minutes:

1. Approval of agenda
The agenda was approved.

2. Course evaluation autumn semester 2024

- Overall good response rate for GAMES (and ITU in general) this time. Previously ok for GAMES, but in slightly low for ITU overall. Longer evaluation period and teacher encouragement to do the evaluation in class seems to work.
- Overall average for the GAMES courses is good, no general reason for concern, but very wide distribution in score between individual courses.
- General feedback for GAMES: Overall experience is good, but issues re. how things are structured and/or organized.
- Geneal process: Hanna and Rune will talk with the teachers on points for improvements and whether there is enough feedback for specific actions.
- **Advanced Topics in Game Studies**: Great to see such good feedback on a new course. Seems like good match between the teacher's area of research and course content lead to a great course.
- Problematic courses: **Artificial Intelligence for Games and Simulations**, **Play Lab** and **Programming for Designers** all scoring below 4.5
    - In general, for these courses the comments are constructive and non-personal, but it is clear the students are not happy.
    - Runne and Hanna will have a chat with the teachers on these courses to understand the issues and how to support the teachers to improve.
    - Sometimes the students do not like the course due to the fact that it doesn't match their interests, but sometimes it seems the core issue is bad planning from the teachers.

- **DADIU** is difficult, as most feedback is on how the DAIDU teachers run things, and this not is something we really can control at ITU. Reflections and feedback have been sent to the DADIU team.
- **Games & Culture** score is positive, but feedback confusing – everything from high praise to heavy criticism.
- **High-performance Game Programming** is doing well.

- Comments from the student representatives:
    - As a new student on a course, it is very nice to hear the teacher explain how the course has been changed from last year due to the feedback.
    - Great that the teachers are encouraging people to do the evaluations.
    - We should also use the SAT representatives for outreach – it helps justifying doing the evaluations if the push comes from fellow students too and not only teachers. In-person outreach works good for this.

Discussion on AI for Games and Simulations

Djordje: I am wondering about the low scores. Something seems not to make sense. The exercises seems to be the biggest issue – people do not like it when it is difficult.

Hanna: I strongly recommend having a TA from the GAMES programme next time. It seems a critical issue this time was that the TA was not from GAMES, and had a different context for things.

Kristóf: I think the issue was that the students were expected to do something different at the exercises than they were taught in class.

Enrico: I also heard about the issue with the TA. Another thing was that people expected the course to be more about game programming than classical AI. Maybe you could talk with Tiago to get the perspective from a student on the tech track.

Djordje: The issue is that it was very difficult to get a TA for the class this year at all.

Hanna: We should be announcing and promoting it this semester.

Djordje: Maybe he was too ambitious with the exercises. The TA got called in by me as a favor as we did have a bit of an emergency. But this has definitely also something to do with managing expectations.

Hajo: Perhaps it could be made more concrete? You could present an example of a game using deep simulation – like Dwarf Fortress – to frame, that to do something like this, you need to know these tools and approaches.

3. GAMES programme review autumn 2024 - discussion

Hanna: The key take-away is that the panel are very positive and shows we are doing the right thing by telling us the richness of the programme are its strength. But then they also point out that you can't do everything at the same time since that is confusing for the students and does not create good employability profiles.

Maybe we can find a bit more balance. We should definitely be more aware of what the industry are looking for these days. What are the roles? What are the name of these roles? What are they doing? How can we help the students preparing their portfolios for this?

I have asked everyone in the programme to reflect on the relevance of their teaching. Who are you as a teacher in relation to the programme? We did a workshop on the programme in December and will have a new workshop in February looking into this, so we can find out what we need to know when revising the programme.

Hajo: I have already made some changes to Game World Design based on this by breaking the roles down to a finer grid. I have also talked with the students on taking responsibility for a specific part of the process

rather than thinking about roles. Also, people are not allowed anymore to make the structures themselves, but instead forced to mirror the practice used in studios. Finally, we are now using the same templates as documentation as in the industry. I am also thinking about aligning the term paper in a similar way. All this should make the teaching in the course more directly relatable to the industry.

Hanna: There has also been a change in the industry. Things are more structured and ordered than previously, so the expectations of our graduates are different now also.

Hajo: The course is in general still the same, it is just a few changes of tools to match the industry tools.

Hanna: Hopefully it will also be easy to make small changes like this to other courses.

Enrico: The new structure for Game World Design work very well. I like how it also builds on Making Games, by giving an opportunity to go deeper into the roles you have tried there. It also sounds really good with using the industry reports. Another thing I like is, that a lot of GAMES graduates are very visible in the Danish games industry. Perhaps we could take advantage of this and having more guest lectures from previous graduates?

Hanna: This is a good idea. Perhaps you could talk with the StudyLab people on organizing alumni talks. You just need to make sure that enough students show up for it – when we invite people from outside, this is extra important.

Kristóf: From the report I noted that the panel says that DAIDU is being inaccessible to foreign students. That seems like a big issue…

Hanna: I think this is a misunderstanding - it has to do with the hours only. It is expected that you work full time in DADIU, which means that it can be difficult to work enough on the side to receive benefits from SU. This hits international students harder.

Kristóf: Perhaps we should communicate this clearer at the semester meeting? I also wanted to comment on Games Programming and Programming for Designers. They are the initial programming courses, and both seems not to be aligned properly with the student expectations. For Games Programming we were handing in a big project, so people expected to be examined on this, but after a short presentation of the project, the individual exam was focused on general topics in the curriculum. This was communicated once in class, so it is not an oversight from the teachers, but perhaps it could be communicated more clearly next time?

Enrico: For Programming for Designers, I heard the same feedback. People were expecting to be defending the project for the exams, but the exams was more about the curriculum. So, we could also look into managing expectations here. There also seems to be a bit of confusion about whether the course is about Unity or about programming.

Djordje: I think Unity is a bad platform to teach programming, but we need to teach people a general skill. It seems to be difficult to do both.

Hanna: The report say we should be focused on prototyping.

Enrico: Perhaps we visual scripting or similar for prototyping could be a possible direction?

4. Information

- HoSP & ProCoor
    - Hajo is now head of steering comity for DADIU.

- Events
    - Winter Games is today.
    - Copenhagen Gaming week is coming.
        - Lots of participants from GAMES at TAG.
        - "Speak to a researcher"-session with Hanna, Rune and Hajo.
        - Our rector will be participating in a warm up session for Spilprisen.

    - Playtesting coming in start March. Maybe we could invite people from Making Games to participate? Perhaps also students doing their master thesis projects right now?

5. AOB

- Incident on the Playable Media Discord last night. Someone's little sister got hold of account and invited two other people who were trolling and spamming.
    - Lessons learned:
        1. Make sure more people have admin rights to handle situations like this.
        2. Do not share invite links.
        3. Ask people to always use their first name.