Co-funded by
the European Union

VIDEO GAMES FOR GOOD

Game development, conception phase

https://www.videogames4good.eu

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. Project number: 2023-2-CZ1-KA220-YOU-000183158

YuzuPulse LogoPsyCom materahub VISAS IESPĒJAS Eppas

Duration:	3 weeks (2h per week, extendable)
Age:	20 – 30 years
Group size:	Groups of 4 to 6
Aim:	To equip learners with the skills to develop game concepts that inspire social change, fostering creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.
Objectives:	• Identify a transformational goal and integrate it into a game concept. • Define the target audience and address potential barriers. • Develop a game prototype and gather constructive feedback.
Material needed:	• Game Design Worksheet • Game design document • Paper and sketching materials • Presentation tools (optional) • AI tools for placeholder visuals, sounds, music, code

This activity aims to guide learners through the process of brainstorming and developing a game concept with transformational goals. Participants will work in groups to simulate a game studio team, define their audience, and create a game concept that addresses a specific social issue. They will then present their ideas, gather feedback, and iterate on their idea.

Workshop Structure

Week 1: Ideation and pitch

Participants will brainstorm and develop a game concept with transformational goals, simulating a game studio team with roles such as designer, artist, writer, marketer, and producer. Using a Game Design Worksheet and game design document, teams will begin by setting their intention and identifying the transformation they wish to inspire in players, such as fostering empathy for climate refugees or educating them about the consequences of resource overuse. They will then define their target audience, considering potential barriers like misconceptions or apathy. The game's core experience will be brainstormed, integrating game mechanics that align with learning goals, such as building a renewable energy grid to teach systems thinking within a narrative of a future society facing energy crises. Participants will sketch out their game ideas on paper, including visuals of characters, environments, and interfaces, and may use AI tools to generate placeholder visuals, sounds, or music.

Following the brainstorming session, each team will present their game concept to the other groups in a 2-minute elevator pitch, showcasing visuals or sketches. The audience and facilitator will provide constructive feedback on whether the game's intention aligns with its mechanics and whether the transformational goal is clear and achievable. This process encourages critical thinking and helps refine the game concepts through collaborative feedback.

Participants should agree on game design pillars. Game Design Pillars are the foundational principles that guide the development and design of a game, ensuring coherence and focus throughout the project. They represent the core values and experiences a game aims to deliver, helping teams make consistent decisions and maintain a unified vision.

https://orioldedios.github.io/Game-Design-Pillars/

Week 2: Prototyping

Teams will spend two hours creating a digital or paper prototype of their game, focusing on a single core mechanic. This session allows participants to delve deeper into the hands-on process of developing their game concepts. For example, a team might develop a board game that simulates managing a city's water supply, requiring players to make strategic decisions about resource allocation and infrastructure development. Alternatively, another group could design a card game that represents the delicate balance of ecosystems, where players must manage various environmental factors to maintain ecological harmony. By dedicating more time to this phase, teams can iterate more effectively, refining their designs based on initial feedback and exploring different creative solutions. This session emphasizes collaboration and problem-solving, which are essential for creating impactful games with transformational goals.

Week 3: Playtesting

Participants prepare questionnaires using Likert scales to gather structured feedback. Before playtesting, teams will set clear objectives, defining what they want to test, such as specific mechanics, emotional responses, or pacing. They will ensure their prototype is ready, even if in a rough form, using paper or digital mockups. During playtesting, participants will intervene as little as possible, allowing players to engage with the game naturally. They will encourage honest feedback and ask open-ended questions to gather detailed insights. Questions can focus on appreciation, such as enjoyment of game features, or usability, like the functionality of game elements.
Before playtesting, participants can take the Quantic Foundry player motivation model questionnaire: this way, creators will know if feedback is relevant depending on the testers' player type.
https://apps.quanticfoundry.com/surveys/answer/gamerprofile/

After playtesting, teams will document the feedback, recording key insights and specific suggestions. They will identify patterns, look for recurring issues or themes across multiple testers, and prioritize fixes that align with the game's core goals. To gain diverse perspectives, groups will test their prototypes with participants from other teams, fostering a collaborative environment that enhances the iterative design process. This extended session allows for a more thorough analysis and refinement of the game prototypes, ensuring that the transformational goals are effectively integrated into the final designs.

Week 4 and 5: Iteration & Refinement
Week 2 and week 3 can be repeated as many times as desirable and/or needed to improve the game.

ANNEX

What are Design Templates?
Design templates are like a recipe or a worksheet that helps you create your own video game idea. They guide you step by step to make sure all your ideas come together perfectly. Here's how they work:

Game name:
Story of the Game:

- Who are the characters?
- Where does the game happen?
- What is the goal? (e.g., save someone, win a race, find hidden treasure).
- Who can play it?

Think about the **people who will play your game**. What special features might they need? For example:

- Subtitles for players who can't hear.
- Colourblind options for players who see colours differently.

What makes it fun?

- Solve puzzles?
- Build things?
- Explore new worlds?

Write all the exciting parts of your game here.

Inclusive features:
For example:

- Easy-to-read instructions.
- Characters from different cultures and backgrounds.
- Draw your idea:
- Draw a level, a character, or even the game's logo.

Feedback section:
Feedback helps you improve your idea!

References

- GAME PILLARS. (n.d.). Game-Design-Pillars. Retrieved 20 February 2025, from https://orioldedios.github.io/Game-Design-Pillars/

- RocketBrush. (n.d.). The game development process: A comprehensive guide. Retrieved from Erinmwingbovo, O. (2024). Finding Identities: Identities in Video Games from a Gender, Race, and Identity Representation. Introduction to games studies. Retrieved from references

- Transformational Framework. (n.d.). The transformational framework. Retrieved from Lendzhova, V. (2024). Inclusive education and game-based learning for learners with disabilities: Perspectives from teachers in Bulgaria. Environment and social psychology, 9 (10). doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i10.3073

- Schell, J. (2008). The art of game design: A book of lenses. Morgan Kaufmann.

- Quantic Foundry Apps. (n.d.). Quantic Foundry. Retrieved 20 February 2025, from https://apps.quanticfoundry.com/