

Record of Observation or Review of Teaching Practice

Session/artefact to be observed/reviewed: **Video and a PDF**

Size of student group: **In Live session 20 to 40 students**

Observer: **Darren Doherty**

Observee: **Zhan Gurskis**

Note: This record is solely for exchanging developmental feedback between colleagues. Its reflective aspect informs PgCert and Fellowship assessment, but it is not an official evaluation of teaching and is not intended for other internal or legal applications such as probation or disciplinary action.

Part One

to complete in brief and send to observer prior to the observation or review:

What is the context of this session/artefact within the curriculum?

This is part of the Games design Y2 session, where students are encouraged to explore and understand new programming techniques, in this case: learning and understanding how to generate/destroy "dynamic objects".

How long have you been working with this group and in what capacity?

Normally it is the second month of the first block and unit; as they come in to year 2 Game Design I teach them more concepts about programming video games.

What are the intended or expected learning outcomes?

Complete the exercise / with all additional tasks, which will show understanding of generating and deleting game objects, which then aids the students to create their own game with dynamic generation of game objects (which is part of the unit brief).

What are the anticipated outputs (anything students will make/do)?

The anticipated output is to take this logic shown in the tutorial and apply it to their game systems and produce a game with dynamic challenge. (Which usually implies generation and deletion of objects in run-time)

Are there potential difficulties or specific areas of concern?

There is a lot of switching between different menus and connecting different variables/objects together - this can be a bit confusing. But the final outcome does make a simple game, so it easy to gauge when the task is complete correctly.

If a student gets stuck, it's easy to help them in person. (not such much online, but a pdf and a video does help! Also if they get stuck offline, they can point at the particular page/ minute in the video – at it is easy for me to pick up the issue and explain in greater detail via email/ or later in person)

How will students be informed of the observation/review?

N/A – this is a version of offline content, that works as a support for the live sessions.

What would you particularly like feedback on?

Language, delivery (speed, conference), my goal is to explain complex structures in a simple and engaging way.

How will feedback be exchanged?

Via email

Part Two

Observer to note down observations, suggestions and questions:

Darren's Feedback

I viewed an online session given by Zhan for Year 2 Games students which was an exercise to create a simple prototype for a 3-lane game using Unity, and this was also supported by a plan in the form of a PDF. I felt that this was an excellent session. Zhan started by showing the game itself, the outcome of the exercise, and gave a simple demonstration of the game. He then stripped the game back, so the students were essentially starting from scratch, deleting all the menus and assets.

His session made use of hard and soft structure. As Zhan started to build the game, he made suggestions, an example being the choice of a particular colour and why, but he also left it up to students to make their own decision. This achieved the balance of giving the student autonomy to try things out (if they wish too), but also subtly imparts advice based on experience. Zhan's tone and style is very clear and gentle. He was very succinct as he went through the steps of creating the game, his tone of voice making it easy for a student to follow without overloading the students with information.

Not coming from a games or coding background, I found that I could follow along and understood what Zhan was teaching. An example would be when Zhan created a 'Start Button' for the game and used script to create the button, and again demonstrated a step-by-step approach, showing why the button wouldn't work until the next step of the process had been executed. What was good to see was when Zhan's tried to press the Start Button and it didn't work, and he remembered he had to apply the script. This gave the session a warm, human dimension, and something students could relate to and would also help them to remember when they came to this stage themselves.

What I also thought was particularly strong was when Zhan coded and wrote script to build the game step by step. He gave a hands-on demonstration as he wrote code for each stage, starting with enabling a player to control the Player Object. Zhan moved at pace, but I feel it was in a way that would be understandable for a Year 2 student with coding experience.

He constructed each part of the game and then showed the result. He would also go back and double check the code and explain why he was doing this. There was an element that relied on the student being familiar with Unity, which I would expect from a Year 2 student. Zhan used the same approach when applying the enemy sprites and spawners and used an excellent mix of show and tell, this enabling the student to understand what they're trying to do and why. This could have been confusing, but I feel Zhan managed to make this understandable by using a light touch.

Zhan summarised the session by also recapping on what had been covered, from switching scenes through to the game play itself and elaborated on how the student could build on this game logic and applying this further and more complex game play rules to their own projects (if they wished to). I feel that Zhan was able to show his expertise and experience but in a way that made this feel more like a collaboration where it would have been easy to fall into the trap of being too prescriptive.

With it being an online session, it would also be easy for the student to stop and scrub back if they missed anything. There was a lot of methodical approach needed to achieve the outcome, and I feel Zhan managed to strike the balance of making the session informative but fun and engaging for the students too.

Part Three

Observe to reflect on the observer's comments and describe how they will act on the feedback exchanged:

Based on Darren's comments, I'm glad that he found the session interesting – as it can be difficult to explain game design concepts to someone from a different background. His comment about soft and hard structures- gave me additional consideration – as usually I try to balance my teaching resources between- friendliness/ accessibility and concrete outcomes. I think this is a good way of looking at things which I will keep in mind for in the future.

Darren noted that I struck a good balance between giving students autonomy while guiding them through a particular process – I always find this balance hard to strike, as I want them to have a good understanding of programming paradigms while also making them feel like they can use it and apply it for their own projects.

In terms of language and pacing – I'm glad that Darren found it palatable and commended me on the use of my voice. As a lecturer I always think about my delivery and use of language – as I want to keep the content engaging and easy to process while keeping it educational and informative.

Darrent noted that at one point I made a mistake – which gave the session a human dimension. I completely agree with this point, I tend to make a few little mistakes on purpose- to give a chance for my students to correct me- which ensures that they are following the session, but also to give them an idea that programming is a complex subject and little mistakes happen all the time and students should not be afraid of that – but rather have an inquisitive mentality of problem solving and slowly but surely move to the next step. When I started recording my videos in Lockdown, I used to remove bits like that – but I came to the conclusion that little mistakes make it more engaging and human- I would always get a few laughs when my cats would start meowing or running around my room.

I think it's important to keep learning and adapting new techniques to make student experience more engaging.
