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### 1 - Preamble

### **IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE:**

- This is NOT a discussion about removing EoC, or which combat system is better.
- This is NOT meant to be a "bash EoC" document.
- You will not agree with everything here that is the point! An open discussion will help ensure the next combat update is a welcomed one.
- Do not be afraid of change; if we work with Jagex, all combat updates will be welcomed improvements.
- We can have fun, engaging, mechanical, decision-based combat within the limits of the tile and tick system.
- Focus on healthy discussions; try to understand various perspectives before rejecting an idea.
- EVOLUTION OF COMBAT IS UNFINISHED BUSINESS!

### 1.1 - Personal Background:

I have played Runescape since 2005, mostly participating in PvP, but I also thoroughly enjoyed skilling, questing, and PvM. Throughout Pre-EoC I played on a 1 defence account, and pushed the combat system to its limits - challenging myself to participate in the highest levels of PvM with self-imposed limitations.

My greatest achievements were:

- (Not leeching) 120 dungeoneering
- First to obtain Kiln Cape with 1 def/52 prayer/1 summoning
- Clearing QBD with some insane first kill luck

After EoC hit the game, I tried to enjoy it. I did my best to participate in the beta - playing it for dozens of hours and <u>clearing fight kiln in the EoC Beta</u> at 1 defence, as well as <u>QBD</u>.

I provided pages and pages of feedback on EoC, its flaws, and areas for improvement. The majority of it was ignored unfortunately, and it took years before EoC entered a workable state. I quit a few months into EoC because the combat system just wasn't fun anymore.

When OSRS came out, I was excited to go back to the old combat system. OSRS is a great game, and I'm very happy it was released - but it's just too far back for me. I've invested so

much time into my RS3 account, and there were dozens of updates that I really enjoy (dungeoneering, summoning etc.). OSRS is great fun, and I still play today, but I think its potential is very limited by the game's core value - not changing too much.

<u>I have criticized OSRS's combat system as well.</u> It isn't without flaws, but we have to admit that OSRS PvP is far more active than RS3.

When Legacy came out, I was excited. Unfortunately, I also quickly realized it was just EoC without abilities. I personally don't think abilities were the core issue of EoC. Legacy fixed nothing, but it did bring with it some positive EoC changes (like armour life point bonuses change).

When Darkscape was announced, it was a PvP-centric RS3 essentially. Again, I was excited, but I quickly remembered why I don't PvP on RS3 - it fucking sucks. <u>I outlined some of the core issues of PvP</u>, and it resulted in a very positive community response, as well as a <u>positive response from Jagex</u>.

Unfortunately, the game had already suffered. Combat had to be addressed before the game was released - PvP content is not fun if PvP itself is flawed.

I moved on to League of Legends and played competitively - I hit the top ends of the challenger ladder (rank 69 xd). I understand what it means to be "good" at a video game. I no longer play league competitively, but I have retained the knowledge from my experiences.

After the unfinished business announcement, I've decided this is the perfect time to hype up the RS community on the idea of huge combat improvements. Combat is a core of any MMORPG today - it has to be fun and exciting if we want to grow our player base.

This personal background is here to show that I am a knowledgeable member of this community - I care a lot about this game's success. My goal is a healthy, fun combat system that new players will be charmed by.

I am currently working really hard to master the top-end PvM in the game so I can approach these concepts with an up-to-date (currently working to get comfortable enough to clear 300% enrage Araxxor consistently).

Feel free to shoot me a PM in-game if you would ever like to chat or show me the ropes on some high-end PvM!

#### 1.2 - Outline:

This document intends to identify core areas of Runescape 3's combat system whose potential far exceeds current implementations. I will first outline all of the problems within the RS3 combat system. Then, I will list a set of goals that all solutions should contribute towards. After that, I will have a series of suggestions that attempt to address issues and work towards each outlined goal.

This document intends to open communications between the community and Jagex regarding combat. Ideas, thoughts, and concepts within this document are extremely malleable. Your thoughts, whether you are a community member or a developer, are relevant - please contribute.

This document will evolve as our discussions evolve. This update will take time and resources from both the community and Jagex, but I firmly believe this is an important step towards enhancing this game's potential.

Many topics and issues compound with each other, so you may notice me talk about the same issue in different sections. This is a good thing - it means we can address the majority of combat concerns by tackling the root issue!

EoC is in a "good" state right now; we should not be complacent. Let's make this game's combat system amazing!

# 1 - Combat Areas Needing Improvements

### 2.1 - Combat Styles:

The three combat styles are far too similar. With EoC, the three combat styles were normalized for balance purposes. Equality/perfect balance is not necessarily fun. Imbalance can be fun provided that all possible styles have viable use cases and one particular style does not overshadow the others in all scenarios.

As it stands now, Magic is the preferred style in end-game PvM because, by legacy, it has access to additional spells like vulnerability. EoC dictates that it must have the exact same damage and tankiness as Range/Magic, so it becomes objectively superior given that Magic just has more utility. This is a problem that stems from a core (problematic) concept of EoC - all combat styles must be equivalent.

### **Armour/Weapon statistics:**

A large portion of criticism on current armour/weapon statistics stems from the tier system. With respect to combat styles, armours and weapons are identical across all three combat styles.

Whether you're wearing a level 90 melee, range, or magic top, you have the exact same armour value, and the same item sets. They are carbon copies of each other. This extends to weapons, with the only difference in damage output stemming from available ability rotations - and even then, the difference has to be minimal. If not, players will always opt for the objectively better combat style.

#### **Abilities:**

Each combat class has far too many parallel abilities. Range and magic are near-carbon copies ability-wise (corruption shot/blast, wild magic/snapshot, asphyxiate/rapid fire, death's swiftness/sunshine). When the combat classes are already so similar, having thresholds and ultimates which literally do the exact same thing make selecting a combat style even more pointless.

Each combat class also has access to the exact same set of defence abilities, further pushing the three styles into carbon-copies of each other.

### **Combat Triangle:**

This is an outdated concept, it simply doesn't work. This facilitates a rock / paper / scissors game. Rock/paper/scissors is a balanced game, but it isn't a fun game. The combat triangle punishes players for playing the game how they would like to play it. It also completely shits on PvP. A boss fight doesn't become interesting because it's arbitrarily weak to magic and arbitrarily resistant to range.

The concept of weaknesses, however, can work well within the game - we can reward players for exploiting weaknesses instead of punishing players who choose not to.

## 2.2 - Tier System:

Currently, RS3 worships tiers like a religion. If a weapon is level 70, it has 1486 accuracy, and ability damage is static (because the actual damage listed in the tool tip means almost nothing). When calculating ability damage, tier is used. This should not be the case.

There are a few exceptions to the tier system, like the dragon rider lance (T90 accuracy with T80 damage), but it shouldn't be described that way. The dragon rider lance should just be "A weapon that sacrifices damage for accuracy", and it should not be described in terms of other tiers. The tier system restricts the potential diversity within weapons.

This extends to armours: tiers are explicitly defined, with power armour strength bonuses defined within the context of their tiers.

Tiers should be guidelines, not a spreadsheet of damage and accuracy. Allow wiggle room within the tiers to encourage different weapons and armour values.

### 2.3 - Abilities :

Abilities are a great concept, and some are really well done. There exists a lot of abilities which boil down to just "deal damage" with minimal thought process behind the ability. Many thresholds and basics are strictly just damage outputs. Healthy, fun combat systems have complex decision making as a core mechanic; one where a player can feel really good when they execute something well.

EoC does have combos that feel really good to pull off (Snipe -> Resonance on Araxxor webshield feels great!), but also has many abilities that require extremely minimal thought process other than "I want to DPS right now". Once a player masters a DPS rotation, executing the majority of abilities is second nature and requires little decision making.

On top of that, a lot of ultimates have weird caveats to encourage their use. Adding 10% bonus adrenaline per crit, 50% adrenaline if it kills the target etc. should not be necessary. Ultimates and thresholds can be overall designed better.

Special attacks also have a ton of potential, but need to be woven in more naturally into EoC.

There is room for improvement in how abilities, rotations, DPSing, ultimates, and thresholds work.

The current iteration of abilities has also made the concept of weapon speed irrelevant - I would like to see weapon speed return as a prominent point when determining which weapon to use.

### 2.4 - Combat Skills:

Common Misconception - "Pures abused the poorly designed combat system, and EoC killed them. Pures were abusive and should not have existed in the game".

Before discussing combat skills, this needs to be addressed. Bluntly, there are far more abusive pures in EoC than there ever were Pre-EoC.

By abusing the way damage is calculated, tier system, and abilities etc. there exist extreme optimizations of EoC account builds. The downside is they are very normalized - meaning within a particular combat bracket, you will encounter the exact same build; there is only one optimization.

One particular example is 1 attack, 60 strength, X defence. In EoC, 1 Attack/60 Strength is equivalent to 30 Range or 30 Magic, and X defence. The 1 attack/60 Strength account hits as hard as someone with 60 Range/Magic. Players can also formulate their accounts around tiers, as levels mean less for overall DPS. A player has no reason to level their Magic beyond 90 if their goal is PvP - as those combat levels do not translate into DPS which justifies them.

In OSRS, pures actually weave into their combat system very well. You see pures who limit particular levels (1/20/40/50/60/70/75 Attack, 1/5/10/20/30/40/42/45/50/60/70/75 Defence, 1/13/25/31/44/52/70/77 Prayer) in unique combinations. There is no one particular account build that overshadows the rest (Void range was once guilty of this but has since been brought in line).

Within the context of a balanced, healthy, well-designed combat system, unique account builds should be encouraged provided that there is no one account build which overshadows the rest.

### Melee vs. Range/Magic:

Melee consists of two skills by legacy. The existence of strength has been a pain point for developers since EoC was in development. The skill was largely left in the dust, and ultimately discourages any real possible balance between the combat skills.

In the past, Strength was the core determinant in max hits. It allowed weaker weapons to be used to decent effect, and noticeably different max hits to someone of lower combat level. Strength needs to once again reward players with a noticeable change in DPS. Someone with 70 attack/strength using a dharok's greataxe should be hitting significantly less than someone with 99 strength and the same weapon.

Combat skills needs to be dealt with in a way that encourages healthy account builds - the more unique, fun account builds exist, the more exciting PvP becomes, and the more likely it is people will want to create alts!

## 2.5 - Weapon/Armour Diversity:

Weapons have a "damage" statistic - but it actually holds very little meaning, and this is incredibly misleading for new players. Outside of a few exceptions, all weapons of the same tier have the same damage output, with the same accuracy. This is boring, and generates a number of issues:

- Side-grades are either redundant, or objectively better.
  - Ex. 1 Attuned crystal bow is objectively better than zaryte bow because it has the same stats, with a passive effect.
  - Ex. 2 Royal crossbow and Zaryte Bow are literally the same weapon (style is almost irrelevant, will discuss this later on).
  - It makes most sense to opt for the cheapest option within a tier, invalidating other options. This is especially noticeable for lower levels.
    - Why would I ever use any other T70 range weapon when black salamander exists?
- Weapons within a tier have almost identical damage outputs in every single scenario, not enough diversity with weapon choice.
  - A crossbow/bow/2h crossbow/knives all accomplish the same thing.

This issue folds into the tier system. There needs to be a differentiation between different weapons within the same tier. A longsword should have some functionality that separates it from a rapier, or mace. Addressing this would allow for tons more end-game PvM content that drops weapons/armours we would need.

We already have T92 dual-wielding melee weapons, so if a new boss drops T92 dual-wielding melee weapons, it means very little. With weapon diversity, we can introduce another set of T92

dual-wielding melee weapons with very different statistics and potential! The same applies for T90 2h weapons etc.

Armour falls into the same issue, but does have a bit more diversity than weaponry. We at least can choose between power/tank, and armours within the same tier can be different (Anima Zaros vs. Torag, choose between degrading and life point bonus) but there is so much potential for more here.

# 2.6 - Weaknesses/Combat Triangle

Weapons were given sub-categories within each class (stab/slash/crush etc.) for use with the weakness system. The combat triangle, as it works now, punishes players for not using the correct style. Punishing players for not conforming to arbitrary weaknesses is poor design. Players should be able to approach Slayer/PvM with a style that they prefer.

A healthy way of approaching weaknesses is to reward players with slight damage/accuracy bonuses for abusing them. This keeps well-rounded players happy by rewarding them with improved DPS, and does not greatly penalize players with preferences.

Example: If a monster is weak to water spells:

- -A player using Magic would receive a 2% damage/accuracy bonus.
- -A player using water spells would receive a 4% damage/accuracy bonus.

Incentive still exists to abuse weaknesses, but players are not completely screwed if they choose not to.

With respect to PvP, the combat triangle just should not be a thing. It boils down to rock/paper/scissors which does not make for fun PvP.

# 2.7 - Summary of Areas with Improvement Potential:

- Magic/Melee/Range are too similar Give each class its own unique identity.
- Tier System It's too strict, very rarely do exceptions appear.
- More decision-based abilities, less mindless DPS rotations. More exciting thresholds/ultimates; make special attacks relevant.
- Combat Skills Do something with Strength. Acknowledge unique account builds and ensure they are healthy for the game.
- Weapon/Armour Diversity Differentiate different types of weapons and armour, give us lots of options within the same tier.

• Combat Triangle/Weaknesses - Remove it. Reward players who exploit weaknesses instead of punishing those who don't.

# 3 - Goals of a Combat Overhaul

- Ensure that the majority of the community is very happy with proposed changes (polls, beta, livestreams can help guarantee this).
- Lay the groundwork for exciting, unique, fun end-game PvM for the next 5 years this includes the fight itself and potential rewards.
- Enhance the diversity within each combat class, their weapons, and armour.
- Enhance the identity of each unique combat class.
- Maintain the relevancy of each combat class with respect to each other in end-game PvM.
- Enhance the mechanics and decision making for intense, high-level combat.
- Ensure combat still feels like Runescape as we know it now.
- Ensure that changes enter the game slowly to give players a chance to adjust and appreciate each update.

These are my preliminary discussion starting points. You may agree or disagree with these, or you may have other areas which should be mentioned. Let me know what else should be on this list!

This is an expanding list - please include your thoughts regarding goals of a combat overhaul.

# 4 - Solution Proposals/Ideas/Discussions

These are preliminary brainstorms on various ways each issue can be solved. They are meant to get a discussion going, to provide developers a base from which they expand and design a solution that the community supports.

### 4.1 - Combat Skills

### Range & Magic Split:

Both Range and Magic would be split into two skills, similar to Attack/Strength. Each skill would come with a few new abilities to round out the selection Range/Magic have compared to melee.

There are multiple ways to handle the split. Here is one example:

Upon logging in, players will receive an XP lamp, and will have their two split skills set to 1. The XP lamp will contain XP equivalent to their pre-split XP + 75%. They can not place more than their old skill's XP into one skill. They can then allocate their given XP into those skills as needed. This process would be a bit messy (particularly regarding highscores placements) - but it's only one time, and it's necessary to clean up combat skills. It would also smooth out the new player experience, and the combat skills would overall make more sense.

Example: Player has 10M Range experience. Upon logging in, the range skill is deleted and they receive a Ranged XP lamp containing 17.5m XP for use on Precision or Dexterity. The player can, at most, put 10M of that XP into either the accuracy or damage skill. They can also choose to evenly distribute the XP. The same would apply for Magic.

Potions can be handled in the simple way of making any range or magic potion boost both skills. There may be confusion as to why melee requires two separate potions. If we try to split range and magic potions as well, overloads would need two more potions to make. Leaving melee to require two separate potions may be a necessary evil moving forward.

### Ranged:

Split into two skills (placeholder names: Precision & Dexterity). Precision would affect the accuracy and ability to wield higher tier range weapons and act similar to Attack. Dexterity would increase damage and act similar to Strength.

### Magic:

Split into two skills (placeholder names: Magic & Focus). Magic would affect the accuracy and ability to wield higher tier magic weapons, as well as being used to unlock most spells. Focus would affect damage with Magic, and may unlock a few unique offensive spells as well (vengeance?).

### **Strength Changes:**

Weapon damage would now scale off Strength/Dexterity/Focus - where strength is used as a multiplier. This way, Strength allows players to utilize weaker weapons to a much greater extent compared to someone with lower strength instead of a flat damage increase as it is currently handled.

Example: Currently, a dragon 2h sword has 1341 damage.

With scaling strength, it's damage might be something like (700 + 10.7 \* Strength). At level 60 Strength, this weapon would have 1341 damage - same as now. At 99 Strength, this weapon would have 1759 damage. This is just an example to show how calculations work, the numbers are not relevant. Jagex would have to work out an appropriately balanced formula to make strength relevant when over-levelling weapons while also keeping higher tier weapons stronger.

The goal is to have a noticeable difference between someone who has 99 strength and someone who has much lower strength using the same weapon.

This would also address the forced damage boost from Overloads, which currently apply a flat final damage boost as a result of strength levels meaning far less. Strength potions would now more naturally

This would lay the groundwork required to allow for unique account builds, diversify the combat classes, make strength great again, and maintain consistency among the three combat styles.

# 4.2 - Combat Styles

We first have to define a unique identity for each combat class. This acts as a baseline. From here, various weapons and armour can modify that identity. Additionally, each ability that class has focuses on enhancing that particular identity. This way, we create three unique combat styles independent of each other that also complement each other in high-level PvM.

Range, Magic, and Melee should all be capable of different things, and excel in unique ways that is not arbitrarily enforced by weaknesses and the combat triangle.

The following are possible ideas for unique identities. **Note that this is a baseline identity for** the class. Each player is allowed to modify what they want from that class based on their choice of armour and weapons - DIVERSITY!

#### Melee:

The tankiest class. Heavy armour and weapons gives Melee high damage and survivability, but they have to close the gap to deal heavy burst damage. Using melee means you want to get up in someone's face, smash them in, and tank all of their damage. In high-level PvM encounters, melee users are tasked with fronting the majority of incoming damage and protecting their allies.

### Range:

The glass-cannon DPS class. Light-weight armour gives rangers mobility and high DPS. Rangers are fragile, but perfect for dishing out tons of damage. Using Range means you want to deal consistent DPS to a target - staying safe by DPSing well enough to survive. In high-level PvM, rangers are tasked with sustaining as much DPS as possible for their allies.

### Magic:

A unique utility class - Magic is extremely versatile. Mages use various spells to buff their allies, debuff their opponents, and deal varied amounts of DPS. Mages have access to multiple spellbooks to bolster a specific part of their identity. Magic acts different based on the spellbook - allowing for multiple mages to fulfill different roles; sacrifice utility for DPS, sacrifice DPS for utility, or go for an even mix. While mages have weaker armour, their spells allow them to protect themselves in PvM or PvP encounters.

In high-level PvM, mages focus on boosting the damage of their allies, protecting their allies and themselves, or just smashing down their opponents with destructive spells.

The identities outlined above create a combat triangle by nature of gameplay mechanics - not arbitrarily forced weaknesses!

A Melee user will be able to tank out the DPS of a ranger, run into their face and smash them through their flimsy armour.

A ranger will be able to keep up with a mage's spells, DPSing them down before they can set up their debuffs.

A mage will use their utility to reduce the effectiveness of a melee user, and kite the shit out of them.

This is a combat triangle designed through gameplay - one that allows us to create unique combat opportunities to really improve diversity in PvM, and PvP.

## 4.3 - Weapon/Armours

For each combat class, and within each tier, different weapons exist to fulfill particular niches. A player's choice of weapons and armour can forfeit various aspects of their class's main identity in exchange for other benefits.

Example: When a full set of high level melee tank armour is worn, they will receive a huge lifepoint and damage reduction bonus. Another set of melee armour might make a melee user more susceptible to damage (less armour bonus, no life point bonus), but gives them significantly increased damage. A third set of melee armour might be a healthy balance between standard DPS and tankiness. This kind of exists already within power/tank armour splits, but the differences need to be made more dramatic. Give more unique item set effects!

Range and Magic can experience the same thing, although in different ways.

For example, a set of "tank" range gear would not provide the same defensive bonuses as melee gear, but might offer a set effect that offers some % lifesteal - effectively mitigating damage by DPSing (the identity of range). A set of "power" range gear might provide unique effects that boost damage in different ways, for example one set might provide a huge burst of damage on the first attack towards a new target - triggering once every five seconds, useful for quickly ripping through slayer tasks. Another set of armour might stack a bleed as long as you remain in combat, useful for long boss fights.

A set of "tank" magic gear might heal the user once every ten seconds when they cast a support spell. A set of "power" magic gear could be focused on utility, boosting the effectiveness of buffs and debuffs by 15%, or just straight up provide bonus damage.

All of these ideas expand to weapons. Allow the identity of each combat class to guide the niches of various weapons and armours to give players options. Focus on enhancing the identity of each class in unique ways through weapon and armour diversity.

### 4.4 - Abilities:

Now that we have solidified identities of each class, the set of abilities for each class can be re-designed to focus on each identity.

Melee abilities should have lots of burst-damage, but may trigger higher global cooldowns to prevent consistent DPSing. They should give melee users the tools to gap close targets and stay tanky and healthy. Any abilities that closely resemble (or carbon copy) another style's abilities should be changed to fit the identity of melee.

Range abilities should focus on consistent DPSing. Death's swiftness should stay only for range as it fits best with their identity. Ultimates could include an AoE buff to all allies that reduces their global cooldown by one tick - something rangers can use to really enhance their own (and their allies') DPS.

Magic abilities should work in tandem with existing spells, and provide lots of utility if a Mage opts into it. Provide them with binds, debuffs, ally buffs, or just straight up DPS options if they choose to forfeit some utility. Ultimates could include heavy AoE buffs, brief but powerful enemy debuffs (ex. Reduce a target's armour by 50% for 6 seconds) that allow allies in high level PvM to take down their target. Extend abilities to specific spellbooks - locking a mage into a particular style!

Personally, I believe most abilities which do not require significant decision making or thought process, or provide any real exciting gameplay should be removed. There is nothing exciting or interesting about memorizing an optimal rotation and executing it over and over again. We need more fun, decision-based abilities and less "I need to DPS, so I'm going to rotate these 4 abilities".

Defence abilities should still have a set available to all classes - and requiring a shield is a great concept. There should be additional defence abilities that also require a weapon of that particular class. For example, a Range defence ability might grant lifesteal to help the ranger mitigate damage. A magic defence ability might reduce the target's damage output significantly for a few seconds. These all mitigate damage still, but do so in ways consistent with a class's identity.

Additionally, certain ultimates which are currently less-used **should just cost less adrenaline**. No need to provide 10% bonus adrenaline on crit, just require 100% adrenaline, and make the ultimate cost ~30%. This can apply to threshold abilities as well - allow for varied adrenaline costs to create different abilities

One last point on abilities - certain delayed abilities have weird optimization cases where, for max DPS, you should fire another ability just as something like fury/conc blast/snipe

is about to end. I personally feel this is an unnecessarily odd optimization, and more an abuse of how ability cooldowns. It requires minimal skill to execute and comes off more as a nuisance than an expression of mechanics.

# 4.5 - Tier System/Weapon Diversity

As stated earlier, tiers should be guidelines, not a set formula that spits out damage and accuracy values.

By collapsing the tiers, we allow for unique weapons to be introduced at the same level. A new level 80 ranged weapon can be introduced with stats slightly different to the Zaryte bow - maybe this weapon excels at clearing out mobs but is weaker for bossing. Weapons can extend to buff various abilities, or focus in on a particular identity within a class. Allow differentiating accuracy, armour, and damage values within the same tier. GWD2 weapons are a good step forward for this, but still are plagued by the constraints of tiers.

Each weapon type should also have a particular associated passive effect. For example, longswords might deal bonus damage every 4th consecutive attack. Rapiers might apply a bleed effect over time, or cast two abilities in one tick after 6 consecutive attacks. Each weapon should have something that differentiates it significantly from others. Weapon decisions should be more than just "this is the cheapest available Tier X weapon so I'm going to use it". When people compare ascensions to noxious longbow, there's very little difference. They generally have the same DPS - **they should be very different!** 

Weapon speed should also become relevant again. It was left in the dust with abilities. Weapon speed could have a major impact on how abilities are used - maybe certain abilities require specific weapon speeds, or weapon speed affects GCD in some way.

Weapons with various speeds can exist simultaneously with different niches - chaotic rapier/longsword/maul all had different functionalities back in Pre-EoC!

# THIS DOCUMENT IS INCOMPLETE AND REQUIRES YOUR FEEDBACK!

Share your ideas, thoughts, feedback, constructive criticisms etc.

Participate in the discussion to help build out this document and make combat an amazing experience for everyone!