

# Career Development Plan

## Ian Ward

### Summary Statement

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*I'm a university student studying game design. My goals are to enter the industry and develop my skills further with the aim to eventually move to smaller studios where I can take on more significant roles that let me be a greater part of the creative process.*

### Goals

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#### In 1-2 years, I will:

- *Gain employment in the industry as a designer*
- *Develop connections within the industry*
- *Developed my weaker areas such as programming so I'm a more well-rounded designer*

#### In 3-5 years, I will:

- *Have an officially released title on my portfolio with a studio*

- *Receive a promotion or move to another company at a higher position*
- *Be in a position where I can fully support myself through being a game designer*

#### 5-10 Years, I will:

- *Have gained enough experience to move onto a smaller studio and assume a more significant role*
- *Have multiple commercially released games on my portfolio*
- *Have a solo commercially released indie title*

### Skills audit

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#### Current strengths:

- *Can write detailed design documentation*
- *A strong passion for the industry*
- *Very idea-driven, good at fleshing out details*
- *Good people skills and working with others*
- *Good punctuality/time keeping*
- *Creative problem solver*

### Skill gap analysis:

Goal - subgoals of main goals	Skills - needed	Gaps - skills lacking
Learn to make pixel art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● General art skills</li> <li>● Know how to make art that can tile</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● General art skills</li> <li>● Know how to make art that can tile</li> </ul>
Learn to code more complex enemies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Planning skills</li> <li>● Better programming skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Better programming skills</li> </ul>
Make connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Networking</li> <li>● Self marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Self marketing</li> </ul>
Demonstrate my design skills to potential employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Understanding of design philosophy</li> <li>● Demonstrable design skills</li> <li>● Show design proficiency in multiple areas</li> </ul>	N/A
Make and release a small indie game for my portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Time management</li> <li>● Design skills</li> <li>● Programming skills</li> <li>● Organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Time management</li> <li>● Organisation</li> </ul>
Learn how to self publish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic level of Marketing</li> <li>● Understanding of the rules and regulations for each engine and platform i use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic level of Marketing</li> <li>● Understanding of the rules and regulations for each engine and platform i use</li> </ul>
Learn how to polish my code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Better programming skills</li> <li>● Learn which practices give me the most control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Better programming skills</li> <li>● Learn which practices give me the most control</li> </ul>

## Resources

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1. *Patreon creators who make large amounts of cohesive assets*
2. *Online tutorials such as youtube, skillshare, and Udemy*
3. *Online Game Jams on Itch.io, Discord, etc*
4. *My BA in Video Game Design*
5. *Online documentation released for games by developers/publishers, such as LDD and GDD*
6. *Game design content creators such as Masahiro Sakurai who has a youtube channel about game design*
7. *Online communities around game design/game dev that can help me learn skills I need but don't have. Such as on Facebook, discord, Twitter, etc.*

## Action plan

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<b>Action item</b>	<b>Associated skill/goal</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress notes</b>
Have a CV tailored to working as a game designer	Gain employment in the industry as a designer	1-2 Years	Used the university CV builder to ensure I have a CV appropriate for game design
Practice pixel art	Develop weaker areas	3-5 Years	Have played around a little with some software such as Aesprite, Photoshop, and Clip Studio paint
Learn to code more complex enemies	Develop weaker areas	1-2 Years	Designing some enemies in my FMP that switch between behavior based on changing game states.
Networking	Develop connections within the industry	1-2 Years	Joined a few discords, and followed several industry people on

			Twitter. Updated LinkedIn.
Improve my skills in unreal and visual scripting	Develop weaker areas	1-2 Years	Due to my FMP being in Unreal, I've already improved a decent amount with my use of the engine
Improve my skills in unreal and visual scripting	Develop weaker areas	1-2 Years	My ability to use visual scripting has improved a lot from feeling pretty helpless to being able to try most of my ideas out without resorting to a tutorial from the start.
Make a good portfolio to highlight my work and skills	Gain employment in the industry as a designer	1-2 Years	Several attempts made to have an eye-catching portfolio that highlights my strengths as a designer
Research possible entry positions that I can apply for	Gain employment in the industry as a designer	1-2 Years	I've managed to go through most listed studios in the UK looking at open positions to see what is often looked for in potential candidates

## Outcomes

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The first goal I'd like to talk about my progress towards was improving on the areas I'm weak at, in this instance both my use of the Unreal engine and my ability to script. I came into my FMP with the idea to use the Unreal engine to force myself to improve in my use of it. I would have had a much easier time if I had used Unity instead. However, the end of my education is just the beginning and not the end and I understand I have many years of learning and improving ahead.

I understand that creating my best work to advertise myself better and increase my chances of employment after uni, however, I wanted to take this opportunity to improve myself as a designer still believing I could create something worth showing off even if I chose an engine I'm weaker.

I feel like I've been successful in my goals of improving my understanding of the Unreal engine and my ability to script. At the start of the project, I really didn't know what I was doing or how to do even some of the very most basic things I could do in Unity. This only served to reinforce my belief that I needed to do this to make myself a better and more well-rounded designer. I've come a long way in the short duration of this final semester and I feel like I can do most things within Unreal now that I can in Unity. There are some things I still can't do using Tilemaps but I'm unsure if that's a lack of knowledge on my part or just features missing in Unreal that are present in Unity.

Now I understand that Unity is widely accepted as a better/more suited engine for indie/2D games. However, some of the Unreal engine Tilemap functionality is tied behind keyboard controls meaning it took me much longer than needed to learn how to do some very basic things. When it comes to building my level I can now highlight areas to copy and paste elsewhere in the level, but I can't just highlight and move like I can in Unity.

My visual scripting skills have grown exponentially, at the start I'd need to follow a tutorial for virtually everything and I was never quite sure how most nodes even worked. Now I'm in a position where when I have an idea I'm usually able to go about trying to create it and test it myself through my understanding of Unreal's blueprint system before I need to resort to online guides and tutorials which has increased my productivity a lot. As a result of my improved understanding of both Unreal and visual scripting, I feel a lot more confident in myself and my abilities. I already feel confident in my ability to design so increasing my skill level in the areas I deemed my weak spots will only make me a more well-rounded candidate for companies when I'm looking for work, this higher level of confidence will also carry over into the interviewing process I'll need to go through as I seek employment as a designer.

Because I can now go about scripting an idea I have without following a tutorial it means I can be less rigid in my approaches and not only do what a tutorial suggests I do. This means I can make things in a way that is best suited for the aims I'm trying to achieve rather than just whichever version I can find online and just try and force it into my project. Often after I've figured something out or come across a new way to approach things I'm going back over some of my earlier scripts in the project to see if I can adjust how I've done something to include this new understanding if it would make the script better. An example of this is when I was using a delay to try and time up the damage of an enemy attack with the animation. I later learned that you can use the position in a flipbook (sprite animation) as a condition which made doing something at a certain point in an animation a whole lot easier, this is something that is used a lot to replace delays. However, one instance where I want to use this on the player for some reason doesn't return the frame of the animation so the condition is always returning as a fail. This shows me that although I've improved a lot over the short duration of this project I've still got plenty to learn and that I shouldn't get complacent with the progress I've made thus far.

My first attempt at a portfolio I feel went rather well, but I'd never really made a website before so I didn't quite realise how limiting the service I was using truly was until I was given feedback

that I just couldn't implement. So I went and made a second portfolio on another site hosting service called Squarespace. This allowed me a much greater level of control over my portfolio and needing to make it a second time I feel has led to a much better portfolio in the end which will be a better reflection of myself and my work.

Something I've learned about myself which causes barriers when starting new things is that when I run out of ideas on how to try and progress with something, I feel like I've run into a dead end, a solid barrier preventing progress. It frustrates me and if I know I need to be making progress I start to panic. I noticed this as my understanding of both Unreal and visual scripting got better I was running into dead ends less frequently and was often able to figure out a way to either solve whatever problem I faced or think up and implement a suitable alternative. This meant my mindset was gradually improving in parallel relative to my skills. This mindset has certainly led me to prematurely quit things in the past and I need to be more mindful of it going forward, forcing myself to persist as things were rarely as much of a dead end as they appeared and I just needed to put more time into trying to find a solution.