

Individual Games Technology Project – Project Proposal Document

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Enrolled Course:	Computer Games Design Level 6 (BSc)

Project Title:

Critical Combatants

Project focus:

Off the bat I want to exclude my project being either a first-person shooter or a Metroidvania style game. My main project from college and many subsequent projects in university have been FPS inspired from the likes of *Halo* or *Portal*, so I am comfortable with the design aspects that make an FPS, and I don't see myself improving as a Level and Gameplay designer by pursuing something familiar. And I'm excluding Metroidvania as another choice, because it was my most recent project for last year's semester task.

During the project, the main areas I want to focus on are improving my knowledge of blueprinting/scripting, as currently I feel my knowledge is not adequate for what employers maybe expecting of me, even if programming is not my area of expertise. Then furthering my knowledge of Level Design, by building areas with clear intentional design that facilitates the intended gameplay loop of whatever game I make. First by establishing a proper workflow, making diagrams and graphs showcasing early plans for the game and what it's intended core gameplay is.

Another thing I want to try for my project is some level of AI Scripting, nothing majorly complicated, just a punching bag for the player to whale on. As either my projects up to this point have been multiplayer focused, so the need for AI was not there, or the templates I was given already had ready-made AI blueprints. This will also help me get hands-on experience with enemy design to create a more fun and interesting combat system.

What are your inspirations for this project?

I have two main ideas for this project, one is a third person contemporary open world RPG game inspired by the mechanics and world of *Dragon's Dogma*. The second is a third person character action game, in either a more freeform style combat similar to *Devil May Cry 5* or more simple and stylised; think either *No More Heroes*, *Metal Gear Rising Revengeance* and *Bayonetta*.

Thinking on it, there is a lot of overlap between my ideas. The RPG style leans more in my expertise in Level Design whereas as the character action game is my attempt to cover my weaknesses in Blueprints. I may merge the projects into one uniformed idea, been considering it.

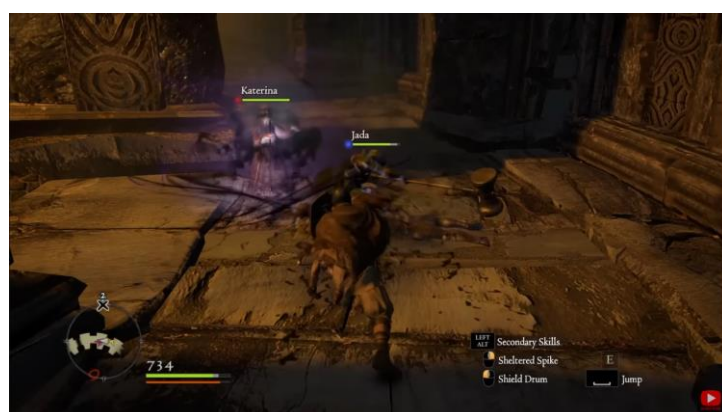
RPG Style Game



These are two screenshots of a regular combat encounter in *Dragon's Dogma*, in the game there are two modes of combat; **core** and **special combat**, switching is done by holding the right bumper on a gamepad. The player has access to a 'light' and 'heavy' attack button, simple. Through levelling the player can spend points to unlock 'core moves' that are linked to the normal inputs, these new combos power up the player's basic ability and don't consume stamina like special moves. I want to implement a similar complexity into my game's core combat to create more engaging gameplay, instead of player's just relying purely on damaging special moves.



This is a screenshot of the game's inventory system, but this is not the main point I want to discuss, only related. Enemies in the game drop common useful items such as gold, materials and rarely unique weapon drops. I want a similar looting system to encourage the player to fight enemies beyond other requirements, such as locking them in a room and forcing them to clean the area before being able to proceed.



My level is going to be made in the style of a dungeon raid, but with limited open areas outdoors for more varied visual design. Enemies should always be nearby, even in puzzle or low danger sections, but more tough encounters and stronger enemies should be saved for the main encounters and the end boss encounter.

Character Action Style Game



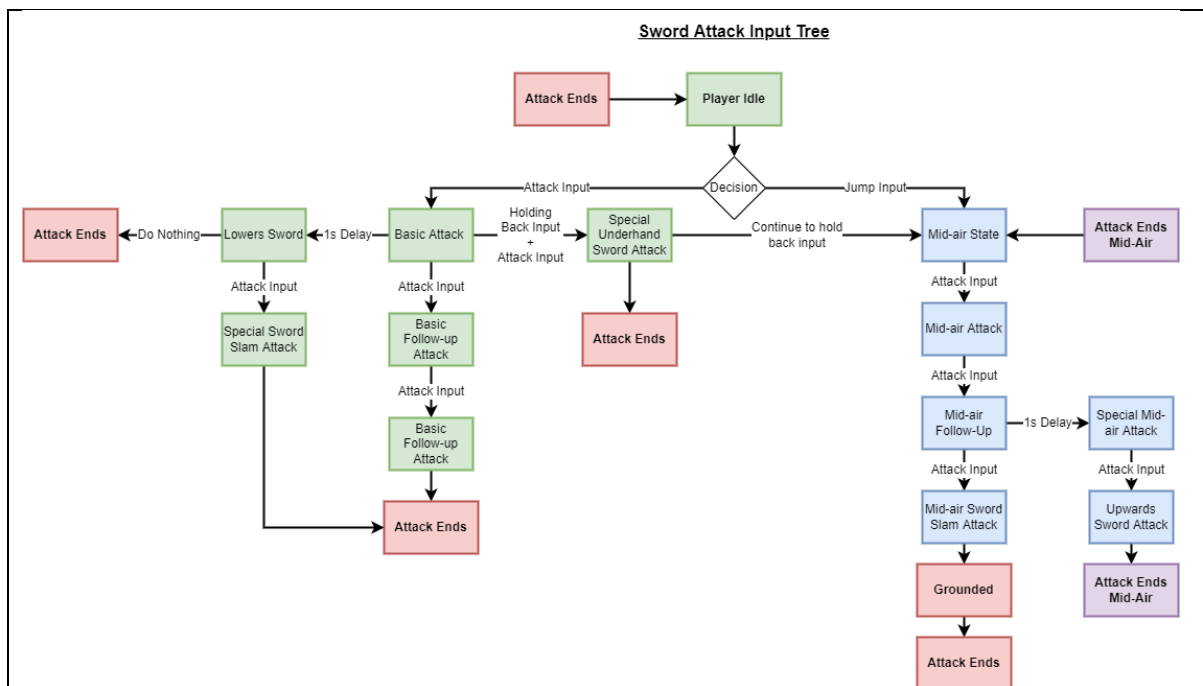
All these games have the player start with a foundational moveset, that slowly expands and complicates as the player progresses. This happens as they purchase upgrades, are rewarded with new weapons for defeating a boss or find hidden unlockable techniques in the hub world or level. This system helps new players ease into the freeform combat loop and without overwhelming them with a spreadsheet of moves, and they're able to steadily experiment with each new move/item they buy/unlock and incorporate it into their playstyle. Much like how you would learn to string together moves in a Fighting Game.

A more condensed version of this feedback loop is something I intend to add. The player can start in an area and clear of room of a couple punching-bag enemies, and when they the room they are gifted with a new move that expands their small moveset. Then the loop repeats until the end of the level where they face the boss with a now complete moveset.

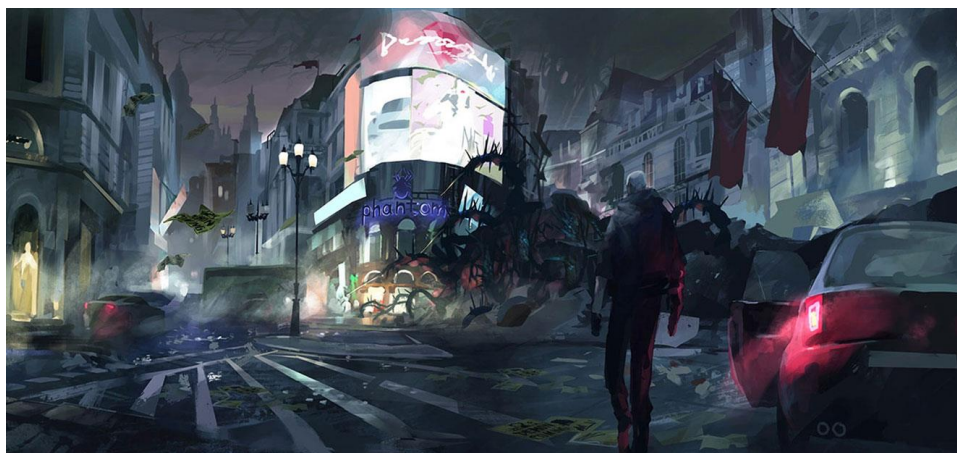
These kinds of games pride themselves on their enemy encounters, but that creates a situation where a lot of areas you fight in are some variations of a flat square or circular room that allows the most freedom of movement for the player to engage in the gameplay uninterrupted. But it can get repetitive, and for me it would not be a good demonstration on creating a memorable level arena.

What are the deliverables?

I had a conversation with the lead technical animator for Creative Assembly, and their current FPS project; *HYENAS*, while I was at EGX. He told me that if I'm able to create an original project, not based on any university template then my chances for landing a position in the industry, possibly even at the studio, are high. When I put it into perspective, my main goal for this year is to completely surpass what I achieved in the last. Better level design, better scripting, better focus, better documentation.



I made a flow chart for a potential combat system, both inspired by the core move system from *Dragon's Dogma* and Nero's moveset from the *Devil May Cry* Series. I want combat to be one of the focal pillars of my game next to the level design.



DMC5 Redgrave City Concept Art

1. For the first RPG style project of mine, the aesthetic design I was thinking of was a giant gothic castle the spiralled around. So, through the level you would be ascending the castle facing stronger guards as you go through their quarters, armoury and finally the throne room.
2. For the Hack and Slash/Character Action, a linear wrecked urban environment was what I have in mind. Inspired by the second Redgrave city level in *Devil May Cry 5*, you'll venture through the city fighting the enemies that horde the empty streets, nearly all paths are blocked off by rubble and wrecked vehicles.

How does this extend on your current knowledge base?

Shooters, first person and third are abundant now, in AAA, indie and other technical demos. This project for both ideas, or a merged concept are firmly outside my comfort zone and are meant to prove to potential employers I have experience in more genres and prove to myself I am flexible with what projects I work on.

And repeating myself from before, I'm hoping this project endeavour will improve my workflow for blueprinting and make me a more competent gameplay and mechanics designer.

Potential issues completing this project:

- Time Management (Balancing this project with other modules.)
- Motivational issues (Usually caused by burnout and a bad workflow, I'll make sure to avoid both.)
- Collecting assets (I'm using assets exclusively from the Unreal Store, so a uniformed art style maybe difficult)
- Dev time spent of improving, fixing and completing blueprints. (I intend to implement more complicated scripts for my project)
- Communicating ideas through gameplay or UI. (Last semester, I added a healing mechanic into the game but besides a sign in the game, there was nothing communicating to the player how or when to use it.)
- Animation (Both my projects have a heavy focus on combat, and I don't have a lot of experience with tweaking or importing animations to Unreal Engine.)