

Independent Project Proposal - Rebecca Jones

by Rebecca Jones

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BA (Hons) Computer Games Design

Independent Project

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Proposed supervisor: Adam Head

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How can elements of an environment be used to provide information and affect the actions of the player?

The visual elements of an environment can provide crucial information for the player such as where to go, what to do and even what has occurred in that location, providing narrative detail as well as direction. A well-designed environment can also provide the player with new information, free of clunky or invasive blocks of information that can break player immersion and create frustration. It is this subtlety that I intend to research and implement into my own work.

For example, some games employ some variation of 'yellow paint' or other obvious contrasting colour to guide the player to interactive surfaces, in most cases used to imply that something able to be climbed, though this practice is not looked upon too favourably by players. Another example would be tall or interesting landmarks placed around a landscape in an open world environment, 'points of interest.' These would be used like advertising, in order to guide the player to interesting content created by designers.

Aims & Objectives

In this project, I aim to explore how the different elements of an environment can be used to give information to a person interacting with it. In order to achieve this, an area or areas that can be interacted with will be created in Unreal engine, implementing research gathered on the topic. Player feedback will then be gathered, both to see if the research was correctly applied and if any alterations can be made to improve the quality of the environment.

I intend to:

1. Complete research on the ways different existing games subtly guide the player.
2. Create a single good-sized interactive area or multiple small areas using the gathered research that a possible player could explore.

3. Gather feedback on the created environment via a handful of observed and surveyed play tests to see how players respond.
4. Create further iterations of the environment based on player feedback in order to improve the design.

By the time that this project ends, I will have a well-polished environment designed with both research and aesthetics in mind.

Why is this project worth doing?

I believe that this project is worth doing because making the absorption of information more intuitive for players can only improve the experience of a game, increase the fluency of gameplay and reduce the frustration felt by players when they are being spoon-fed information, such as during a forced and lengthy tutorial segment.

Required resources for the project

In order to complete this project, I need access to a capable computer with the following: Autodesk Maya for modelling environment elements and props, 3D sculpting software for the same purpose, Adobe Substance Painter so the created models can be textured, as well as Unreal Engine in order to create the environment.

Ethical considerations for the project

Participants in any play testing and surveys that may be conducted will need to give their consent at the start of a survey in order to take part. If any information is collected from participants, it will also need to be safeguarded with the use of secure cloud storage and password protected machines and storage devices. This information, if collected, will be stored until the project's conclusion and then destroyed once used for its designated purpose.

Familiarity with the topic

I have a personal interest in how games will try and subtly provide information to the player, often taking note of different methods used in the games I experience in my personal time. It is due to this interest that I want

to undertake this project and discover new ways I may have missed previously.

My studies have given me experience in level design, modelling, texturing, using Unreal Engine, as well as using these skills in the creation of a virtual environment for past modules which will be useful for the the practical element of this project. I have some limited experience in using 3D sculpting tools in my personal time but would like to incorporate it into my work to further enhance my skillset. It is my hope that during the course of this project I will be able to refine these skills and create an end result of the desired quality.

Example concepts from existing games

The use of contrasting colours to show interactive environments, known as 'Yellow Paint.' An example of this would be in "Assassin's Creed Shadows." [1]

Tall and obvious landmarks can be used in an open world environment in order to advertise new and interesting content to the player. An example of this would be in the opening sequence of "The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild" where the player is shown a panoramic view of Hyrule, displaying multiple interesting landmarks.[2]

In the game "Ghost of Tsushima," there is a mechanic to point the player towards their current goal using a visual representation of the wind, a much more immersive solution compared to obvious map markers covering the landscape. [3]

References

- [1] *Assassin's Creed Shadows*. Ubisoft, Ubisoft Quebec, 2025
- [2] *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*. Nintendo, Nintendo EPD, 2017
- [3] *Ghost of Tsushima*. Sony Interactive Entertainment, Sucker Punch Productions, 2020

Bibliography

J. Wolens, "Assassin's Creed Shadows didn't have yellow paint originally, but unfortunately players like me are stupid," PC Gamer, Apr. 02, 2025. <https://www.pcgamer.com/games/assassins-creed/assassins-creed-shadows-didnt-have-yellow-paint-originally-but-unfortunately-players-like-me-are-stupid/> (accessed Oct. 20, 2025).

C. Lewis and R. Bishop, "Ghost of Yotei devs 'like having a clean screen' free of mini maps and yellow paint: 'Why would we muck it up with all this stuff on the screen if we can figure out other ways to guide you?,'" GamesRadar+, Oct. 09, 2025. <https://www.gamesradar.com/games/open-world/ghost-of-yotei-devs-like-having-a-clean-screen-free-of-mini-maps-and-yellow-paint-why-would-we-muck-it-up-with-all-this-stuff-on-the-screen-if-we-can-figure-out-other-ways-to-guide-you/> (accessed Oct. 20, 2025).

Two articles showing opposing developer viewpoints on the use of 'yellow paint' in their games.

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

54/100

BA GAMES – PROJECT PROPOSAL – ACCA6020
INDEPENDENT PROJECT (5%)

Student **Rebecca Jones**
Mark **54%**

Intro / A&O (500 words)		
Project title; Identification of a specific problem to be investigated; Well-defined aims and SMART objectives; Explaining why this project is worth doing; Discussion of what the project needs to do in order to be a success; Description any deliverables that will be produced at the end of the project	40	22
Aims and objectives are stated clearly and concisely in the submitted work.		
A little more in regards to project planning could be good to see, such as a general		

(rough) timeline, or stating milestones to measure progress by. This can be helpful when considering the scope of the project.		
Background to the Project (500 words)		
Description of how the work to be done by in the project relates to the work identified in the literature review; Discussion of any ethical issues raised by the project Identifying what has already been done within the field; Topic familiarity; Brief literature review using appropriate sources – 6-8 journal papers and book chapters rather than just websites; Selection of relevant models & concepts Ethical considerations have been raised in the study regarding player participation and use of information. It is good to see this being acknowledged. The concept of Yellow Paint in environment design is an interesting one and hopefully this can be explored to a greater degree in the full dissertation. A few more research sources would be good to	40	22

see as this would help display that the topic had resources that can be used to develop your understanding in this area.		
Document Presentation		
Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation; Flow of narrative/fluency; Coherence; Word processed ; Correct use of referencing with bibliography; Strict word limit A little more of an introduction might be good. This could lead into the research question with an overview of what is about to be covered in the proposal. Similarly, a conclusion/summary would be useful to see too. It feels like repetition in a small document but it is the best approach for written formal academic work. References have been used correctly and adhere to IEEE format, though these are still quite light in the proposal. To enhance this more statements could be supported with research materials, such as any comments made by authors who discuss environmental design and/or engagement.	20	10

Some supporting images would be good to see as these would help communicate elements of level design that are to be investigated to a reader.		
TOTAL	100	54

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