

ACCA7034

Advanced games design and production

Session 1
Concept, evidence and player experience



Firewatch / Campo Santo [1]

Today's learning outcomes

By the end of the session

Understand both CW1, CW2 and the connection between them

Recognise research, justification and iteration in Level 7 work

Analyse how visual and interactive choices affect experience

Draft a manageable original game proposal

The semester's production journey

12 weeks / two 2-hour sessions each week

Weeks 1–3: concept, research and visual language

Weeks 4–7: characters, worlds, assets and artistic direction

Weeks 8–12: mechanics, levels and playable development

Research and development evidence continue throughout

One concept, two assessed portfolios

CW1 / 50%

Visual Development Portfolio

Visual identity and artistic direction

Research, exploration and rationale

CW2 / 50%

Interactive elements + playable prototype

Mechanics, levels and player experience

Implementation, testing and evaluation

Both due: 20 January 2027 at 3:00 pm

CW1: visual development

A professional pre-production reference

Research and annotated influences

Characters, environments and
gameplay assets

Cohesion, iteration and reflection



Firewatch / Campo Santo [1]

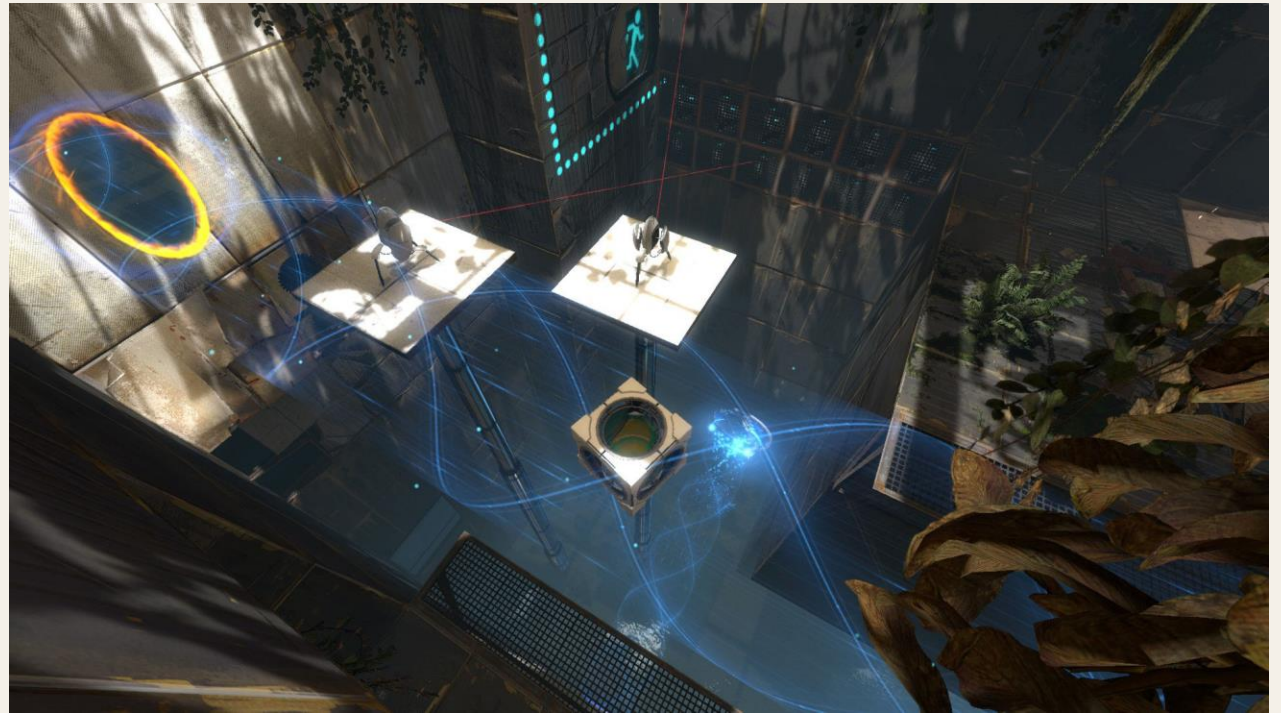
CW2: interactive development

Playable prototype + supporting portfolio

Core mechanics and level design

Interaction, feedback and
accessibility

Iteration, structured playtesting and
critical evaluation



Portal 2 / Valve [3]

Evidence of a design decision

A portfolio page

References and sources

Alternative versions

Selected design with annotation

A useful explanation

What did the research suggest?

What changed between versions?

Why does the choice suit the player?

Postgraduate design practice

Level 7 expectations

Compare credible research and competing approaches

Justify choices using evidence and context

Apply knowledge with originality and independence

Evaluate limitations and respond to uncertainty

Description and critical analysis

Description

“The environment uses warm light.”

Identifies an observable feature.

Analysis

“The bright clearing draws my attention, but playtesting would show whether it helps navigation.”

Explains a possible effect and its uncertainty.

Break

10 minutes

After the break: games as design evidence

Firewatch: visual direction and atmosphere



Firewatch / Campo Santo [1]

Close reading

Where does your eye go first?

What role does the radio suggest?

Which details imply isolation or connection?

Portal 2: mechanics and spatial design



Portal 2 / Valve [3]

Design relationships

What seems traversable?

How does damage change the setting?

What must we see in motion to judge the mechanics?

Journey: scale and movement



Journey / thatgamecompany [2]

Player experience

How large does the world feel?

What suggests a route forward?

What kind of movement do you anticipate?

Group activity: a game design argument

Groups of 2–3 / 15 minutes

Choose one example from today or a game your group knows

Identify the core activity and an intended player experience

Connect one visual choice to one mechanic or spatial choice

Prepare a claim, supporting evidence and one limitation

Report-back and discussion

About 2 minutes per group

“The experience we identified is...”

“The visual and gameplay evidence is...”

“This may work because...”

“A limitation or alternative interpretation is...”

A manageable project scope

Whole-game concept

A world and intended audience

A central player experience

Potential systems and progression

Prototype for this module

One principal gameplay system

One focused playable space

Enough feedback to evaluate the idea

An initial high-concept statement

Illustrative original proposal

A first-person puzzle game in which a lone lighthouse keeper redirects beams of light to restore a coastal warning system.

Your first proposal

Individual task / 5 minutes

Genre, platform and intended audience

Core player activity and intended experience

Setting and initial visual direction

A small playable situation that demonstrates the idea

Before Session 2

Independent study

Bring three possible game concepts

State the player, activity and intended experience for each

Keep references and early drafts



Journey / thatgamecompany [2]

Assessment and image sources

Source details also appear in the relevant speaker notes

ACCA7034 CW1 and CW2 assessment briefs supplied for this session

[1] Campo Santo. (2016). *Firewatch* [Various Platforms]. Panic, Campo Santo.

[2] thatgamecompany. (2012). *Journey* [Various Platforms]. Annapurna Interactive.

[3] Valve. (2011). *Portal 2* [Various Platforms]. Valve.