4. February 2016

For the Members of the Employers' Panel Games, IT University of Copenhagen

The minutes are formally approved as the first item on the agenda at the next employers' panel meeting.

Subsequently, the document will be made Public Available Information.

MINUTES

Employers' Panel Meeting
January 14 2016, at 16:00 – 19:00

Present:

From the Employers' Panel:
Karsten Lund (Chairman), Lego; Aksel Køie, Step in Books; Peer Jakobsen, Moviestar Planet ApS; Asbjørn Malte Søndergaard, Tactile Entertainment ApS.

From IT University of Copenhagen:
Espen Aarseth, Head of Programme; Camilla Rosengaard, Head of Communications; Martin Pichlmair, Assistant Professor; Daniel Cermak, Associate Professor; Joel Anthony Lehman, Assistant Professor; Eva Hauerslev, Programme Coordinator.

Absent:
Nick Price, IO-Interactive; Thomas Howalt, Dadiu; Jonas Wæver, Logic Artists; Simon Løvind, Danish Film Institute.

Agenda:
1. Approval of minutes (All)
The minutes from the meeting on September 24 was approved with no comments.

2. Update on work done since last meeting (Espen)
Espen Aarseth reported that the teachers on the programme will have a seminar in February where the programme review made by an external panel and the coming Employers' Panel report will serve as inspiration for the seminar. The seminar will among other things focus on the ideal study programme and

how close / far the current programme is. The panel asked if the programme review could be shared with them. Eva Hauerslev would look into this before the next meeting.

Furthermore, Espen reported that a new external lecturer in Graphics Programming has been employed. The external lecturer has a PhD within the academic area. In the future, a permanent researcher within this area should be employed.

Finally, Espen mentioned that more students have collaborated with a company in the past semester (similar to an internship). Asking the students, this facilitated collaboration seems successful and most likely something the programme will support in the future. Furthermore, more students have been attending DADIU in the fall and a new QA/UX role has started.

3. Presentation of storyline and report form from employers' panel (Karsten and panel)

Karsten Lund reported that four of the panel members met up December 15 and worked on the report. The outset was the SWOT analysis made for the report, which was sorted into topics of interest, delegated to the panel members, and retrofitted into the report. The panel also took into account the ITU goals.

The Panel presented their work on the following topics: Better marketing – Improve funnel – Redefine mandatory courses – More Data driven design/code – More practical game making – Restructured tickets lines:

Marketing

The Panel said that the marketing of the programme could be improved. This is important in order to get qualified applicants (from Denmark and abroad) and to get the right academic researchers. ITU must identify and communicate the unique selling points and core values of the university.

Espen Aarseth mentioned that the programme receive many applicants especially from abroad and that those applicants are very qualified. The number of students on the design track has been downsized and this is squeezing the Danish students out. Furthermore, there is also a new application process in the pipeline in order to attract the right students. This new process encompasses a more structured motivation letter and hand-in of portfolio. The panel expresses that they like the idea about the new process.

Improve funnel

The Panel believes that the students need a better understanding of games when they start the programme and that ITU must acknowledge that there are students with diverse backgrounds. The Panel would like ITU to offer supplementary courses, which applicants can do before they are enrolled to the programme, in order to improve the overall level. Another way to do this is to offer a bachelor degree in games.

Espen expressed that the ideas on a bachelor programme or supplementary courses are interesting but he did not regard it possible given the ITU's current priorities. However, he considers this an important question; some applicants have a background in game design – do ITU reject those applicants or create a special track for them?

The Panel and researchers discussed the possibility of including some kind of foundation in existing bachelor programmes and not having a programme particularly in games.

Redefine mandatory courses

The Panel expressed a need for redesigning the mandatory courses and possibly distributing ECTS differently as too many ECTS are delegated to mandatory courses, e.g. Thesis Preparation takes up many ECTS. The ECTS could be used for specializing instead. The Panel suggests that the programme market projects more to the students and facilitate group forming according to topics as this can create more specialisation options for the students.

Espen mentioned that the programme is open to students that want to do other things as long as it is well founded. Regarding the thesis preparation, this is a course that prepares the student for the thesis; helping the student finding a supervisor and literature and provides the student more time to dive into the topic of interest and help the student to hand-in on time. The course has been redesigned in the fall and Espen expresses that is will be interesting to see the effects in the summer.

More Data driven design/code

The Panel expressed a need in the game business for more knowledge on data science, in particular collection, analysing and use of data. This knowledge can be used for optimization of gameplay and monetization in freemium games. The panel recommends that data science is a more prevalent part of both the technology and design track.

Espen mentions that a course on Data Mining exists already for which both tracks can register. However, that this is something to look further into at the teacher seminar.

More practical game making

The Panel expressed that the students should have more experience in making games and they should make many games as they can use this for applying for jobs. Furthermore, the designers should learn how to code and coders how to design.

Martin Pichlmair mentioned that in the course Game Design the students make around 10 games in changing groups. In the Game Development course the students make one game but from beginning to end. He thinks that it also could be relevant to do some individual projects, as the students cannot hide in the groups regarding programming. Martin is working on this but there is among other things a resource issue. The Panel expresses that both the many smaller games and the bigger one is relevant.

Restructure lines

The panel presented the idea on restructuring the education lines in order to root the analyst/theory more in practical experience and integrate analysis/theory in the design and tech tracks. Furthermore, to include data analysis as a ticket in both tracks.

Espen expressed that there is a new course in Game World Design. The Panel mentions that it sounds like it is crossing the boundary between the two worlds but that it should have more focus.

Karsten ended the presentation and discussion by quickly going through the report. The Panel expressed that the field on 'short term/long term' was difficult to answer. The panel concluded that small adjustments to the programme could make a huge difference for the employment tickets. Furthermore, based on the discussions the panel agreed to move the needle from 'disagree somewhat' to 'agree somewhat'.

Furthermore, Karsten touched upon the road ahead for the panel: in collaborative work streams, they will have a deeper look at employment tickets, prioritize courses and offerings short and long term.

4. Alignment of supply and demand (All)
The item was not discussed as a separate item but included in item 3.

5. Commendations and recommendations (All)
The item was not discussed as a separate item but included in item 3.

4. Any Other Business
Eva Hauerslev reported that the next meeting in the panel will take place in April/May and Karsten, Eva and Espen would look into finding a date. The Panel asked for written feedback on the report before the next meeting. Eva and Espen agree to provide this to the panel before the next meeting.

The Head of programme, Espen Aarseth, thanks the panel for the work and engagement.