Video Game Art & Design at College of the North Atlantic
Frequently Asked Questions and Suggestions for Student Success
Updated June 2023

Program Description: http://www.cna.nl.ca/program/video-game-art-and-design

FAQs

What skills, knowledge, characteristics, and attributes are needed to be successful in this program and in the workplace?

- ➢ Dedication and participation are important
- ➢ Artistic ability with the desire for improvement
- ➢ Writing skills at the college level or above
- ➢ Good organizational skills
- ➢ Attention to detail
- ➢ Strong work ethic
- ➢ Basic computer skills
- ➢ The ability to present your work to others and receive critique and constructive feedback
- ➢ Providing critique in a constructive manner

I want to do programming for video games, is this the right course for me?

Short answer, No.

The Video Game Art and Design program is an Applied Arts program, so it is heavily focused on the creative aspects of game production. We use a method called visual scripting rather than language-based programming, to create our interactions, however some people refer to visual scripting as 'programming'. This allows us to focus heavily on game design, theory, art creation, document writing, and all the numerous aspects involved in the creation of original games.

If your primary interest is becoming a video game programmer, and not the art or design aspects of game creation, then this may not be the best program fit.

I am really good at playing video games and I am considering a career in video games; can you tell me what it takes?

While being good at playing video games is a great experience as reference when designing games, playing games and making games aren't the same thing. Making games typically means you are creating a product with the intention of engaging others. Making games requires hard work, a variety of skills and a lot of patience. There are many different types of games and audiences. Successful students are typically dedicated to their studies and are willing to put in the time required to complete projects and assignments.

I am not a 'hard core' gamer, will I fit in?

Absolutely! The Video Game Art and Design program covers a wide range of game genres and styles including board games, educational games, and casual games. Professionalism, respect for various perspectives, teamwork, and courtesy are practiced. A lot of great information can be found about the diverse population of gamers in Canada in the Entertainment Software Association of Canada's resources, please see the Labour Market Information section below.

Am I too old to be in the program?

Absolutely not.

At CNA, lifelong learning is one of our initiatives. We welcome diversity. Our students range from those fresh out of high school to those with prior education/work experience who are looking for a change of career or focus. Just like games themselves, game art and game design are for people of all ages and backgrounds.

I am wondering how the program is organized? Is there regular homework?

Like many post-secondary programs, the Video Game Art & Design program is organized into courses. Classwork is typically a combination of reading, writing, quizzes, projects, and assignments. The program takes a creative approach to game design with emphasis on theory, document writing, creative writing, and creating original art assets.

The entire program is online (**for students beginning year 1 in Fall 2020**) and requires logging to the CNA distributed learning platform regularly, but has flexible timing (classes are asynchronous). It is paced according to each course, for example, a course might have a module that needs to be completed within a one- or two-week time frame, and assignments or activities have due dates during the semester.

Year 1 serves as a foundation in art and an introduction to game theory and storytelling. Years 2 & 3 mainly revolve around creating playable games and levels. It is essential that students perform effective time management and focus on their work in order to maximize their productivity.

While online program courses provide some flexibility, some students find the time to work at a part-time job while enrolled. Please consider that this is a full-time program and working full-time job hours while taking a full-time college program is not recommended.

I want to begin practicing, what should I do?

Draw often and keep an on-going sketchbook and an idea journal. You will learn digital drawing while in the program, but if you already practice drawing digitally using a digital tablet or laptop with touchscreen display, it is recommended to continue practicing both on paper and digitally.

It would be helpful to practice and become familiar with Photoshop, and Microsoft Office (especially Word and Excel) on a basic level. Other advanced game creation and art software will be taught from a beginner level during the program.

What are the recommended computer specs and equipment for the program?

The ***Video Game Art & Design Tools and Equipment*** can be located on the college website through the following link: https://dls.cna.nl.ca/future/programs.shtml
(Choose Diploma Program > Video Game Art & Design > Required Materials and Supplies
*Note: If you already have a computer that meets the minimum requirements of Adobe Photoshop CC and D2l courses in general, you may use this for **Year 1 and choose to wait until Fall of Year 2 to purchase the more powerful computer required, as described in this tools and equipment list above.**
> You may find other computer specs listed by CNA, such as *Distributed Learning General Computer Requirements* or

What types of jobs would someone get coming out of your program?

After completing this program, you should be ready to work in an entry level position in games and related media. Job roles like Game Designer or Producer at a larger game company are usually earned after gaining some experience in the game industry, although they could be an entry level position in some cases like in smaller companies and in start-ups.

> Some examples positions:
> - Video Game Artist (2D, 3D, UI, characters, environment, etc.)
> - Video Game Tester
> - Independent Game Developer
> - 3D Modeler for Simulations
> - Scenario Designer for Simulations
> - Level Designer
> - Scenario Designer for Games
> - MMO Community Manager or Referee
> - Streamer/ Video host
> - Game Designer
> - Producer
>
> There is also a focus on business, and the route of indie game development is explored to introduce:
> - Entrepreneurism
> - Small game studio start-up
> - Working as a Freelance Artist or Designer

Additionally, skills learned in the VGAD Program can be applied in other fields of entertainment, education, and multimedia development; just to name a few.

What are the job opportunities in NL or elsewhere for this type of work?

The games industry is vast and provides many opportunities for qualified people. In addition to what people would typically think of as game related fields, such as entertainment, people with games related training have found opportunities in industries such as education, marine simulation, robotics, and many

other industries that use digital media and virtual reality. Working remotely over the internet from any location has been present in the game industry for over 20 years, and remote work has been gaining more growth recently.

There are video game companies in St. John's, NL and Atlantic Canada. Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto are centers for game development in Canada. Simulation companies in St. John's develop world class marine simulations and training, and graduates have found good opportunities in that field.

A Few Examples:

NL Game and Simulation Companies	
Other Ocean Interactive	https://otherocean.com/
Clockwork Fox	http://clockworkfoxstudios.com/
Virtual Marine Technology	https://virtualmarine.ca/
GRI	https://www.grisim.com/

Atlantic Canada	
HB Studios	http://www.hb-studios.com/
Gogii Games	http://www.gogiigames.com/
Red Space	https://www.redspace.com/

Across Canada	
Ubisoft	http://toronto.ubisoft.com/ https://www.ubisoft.com/en-US/careers/search.aspx
EA	https://www.ea.com/careers
Behaviour Interactive	https://www.bhvr.com/
BioWare	http://www.bioware.com/careers/
Beenox	https://beenox.com/
Rockstar Toronto	https://www.rockstargames.com/careers/offices/rockstar-toronto

Worldwide	
Game Dev Map	http://gamedevmap.com/
Search by City	https://gamejobhunter.com/video-game-cities/

A graduate of the program has even gone as far as the US to work at Epic Games, this was after gaining some experience at a local company.

What are the chances of landing a job in the field once I complete the course?

The needs of the industry can change rapidly and there are often fluctuations in the job market. Check this industry website for more information. https://gamejobhunter.com/

The video game industry is talent based and competitive. During the 3 years of the VGAD program, students learn the necessary skills to develop both 2D and 3D games; there is also a strong focus within the program towards entrepreneurship. Many of our students have set their sights on creating their own opportunities by developing games or opening small studios independently.

Unfortunately, there can be no guarantees of work being available once you finish. The game industry does, however, have a very strong presence in Canada.

Labour Market Information:

Entertainment Software Association of Canada is a great resource http://www.theesa.ca/
- Report on the Canadian Video Game Sector 2019 Link: http://theesa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CanadianVideoGameSector2019_EN.pdf
- Essential Facts 2018: http://theesa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ESAC18_BookletEN.pdf
- Essential Facts Videos: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLoAoV6S70xyJsT-O_x7qrYC2FvKzJCOki
    - ESA features Other Ocean Interactive in St. John's, Chris Navarro - Development Director https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0z3rVV9j9SQ

Highlights:
- Video Game Development Industry Contributes $4.5B to Canada's Economy
- Industry employment grows by almost 30% in just two years
- Canada's video game industry is well-positioned for continued growth; in the last two years, the number of Canadian video game companies increased by 16%

Can you help me get in touch with a specific person or studio contact?

Sorry but instructors cannot help prospective students by giving out specific industry contact info due to the volume of requests and the busy schedules of their industry contacts.

What is your best advice for someone going into this program and hoping to work in this field?

- The culture of game development practiced in the classroom is articulate, professional, diverse, cooperative, welcoming and respectful to others which can be attractive to potential employers
- Play nice and maintain a good impression on your classmates and instructors for continued connections in the future, they are your network!
- Some students find their niche while in school (art, level design, game design, writer, etc.) and then develop their focus further after college by working with fellow graduates on projects
- Keeping skills updated with the evolving software 'tools of the trade' after graduation

APPLYING TO THE VIDEO GAME ART & DESIGN PROGRAM

College Admissions: https://www.cna.nl.ca/admissions/

Where are the program specific application instructions?

Go to the program page https://www.cna.nl.ca/program/video-game-art-and-design and click on the word '**Description**' to open a drop down. Keep scrolling down to see the **Entrance Requirements** and **Portfolio Requirements** specific to this program. The Portfolio submission is not general or previous work, it has very specific instructions for creating drawings and writing samples. Application Contact: Romona Keats, Email: Romona.Keats@cna.nl.ca

How soon after applying should the portfolio be sent?

The recommendation is to have your portfolio items submitted as soon as possible after submitting your application. Applications to the Video Game Art & Design program will not be considered complete until all application materials, including portfolio submissions, have been received.

What are the CNA & Distributed Learning (DL) sessions, dates, fees?

- ➢ Distributed Learning Home: https://dls.cna.nl.ca/index.shtml
- ➢ Calendar of Events: https://dls.cna.nl.ca/future/calendar_events.shtml
- ➢ Orientation Sessions: https://dls.cna.nl.ca/future/student_orientation.shtml
- ➢ Textbooks: https://dls.cna.nl.ca/current/textbooks_listing_current.shtml
- ➢ DL Registration: http://dls.cna.nl.ca/current/registration.shtml
- ➢ DL Fees and Charges: http://dls.cna.nl.ca/current/fee_charges_current.shtml
- ➢ CNA Fees and Charges: http://www.cna.nl.ca/Admissions/Fees-And-Charges.aspx

CONTACTS:

Application Questions: Romona Keats, Email: Romona.Keats@cna.nl.ca
PPD Student Development Officer: (mainly non-academic support)
- ➢ Email: dlsdo@cna.nl.ca
Core Video Game Art & Design Program Instructors:
- ➢ Janice Hertel, Email: janice.hertel@cna.nl.ca
- ➢ Greg Wells, Email: greg.wells@cna.nl.ca
- ➢ Adam Power, Email: adam.power@cna.nl.ca
CNA Guidance Counsellors at PPD and DL:
- ➢ Ted Power, Email: Ted.Power@cna.nl.ca , PPD, Phone: (709) 758-7368
- ➢ ECounsellor: https://dls.cna.nl.ca/future/ecounsellor.shtml
College of the North Atlantic General Information:
- ➢ CNA Main Helpdesk   dls.cna.nl.ca/main/helpdesk.shtml
- ➢ Phone (toll free): 1(888) 982-2268
Distributed Learning Contacts: http://dls.cna.nl.ca/main/contact.shtml
- ➢ DL Email: dlshelp@cna.nl.ca
- ➢ DL Phone:
    - o 1(877) 465-2250 option 1 (toll free)
    - o (709) 466-6961 (local)
- ➢ DL Help and live chat: http://dls.cna.nl.ca/main/helpdesk.shtml