

The
Princeton
Review®



THE BEST GAME DESIGN PROGRAMS RANKED BY THE PRINCETON REVIEW 2024

From top-notch teachers and distinguished alumni to state-of-the-art facilities, The Princeton Review is dedicated to matching you with the ideal school.

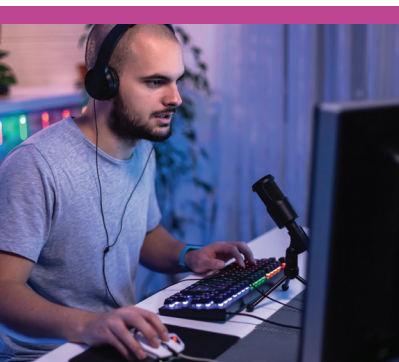
Games Designer. Unquestionably a dream job. You get to flex your creative muscles, work at the cutting edge of technology and craft the kind of compelling experiences that thrill players on a daily basis. But it's also an incredibly broad field, taking in everything from coding to storytelling, systems design to audience management, and a huge number of other specialities. As an aspiring game designer you'll have an array of disciplines to choose from and master, as you begin your journey toward that first shipped title.

The Princeton Review is your guide to the huge range of game design courses on offer throughout North America and Europe's finest further education institutions, whether you're a recent high school graduate or

looking for a career change. Here you'll find a rundown of graduate and postgraduate programs, with information on staff and facilities, as well as key statistics on employment rates and salaries, plus details on notable graduates. We also take a look at some of the problems, dilemmas and issues facing modern game designers, and how some of the biggest and most successful titles out there have tackled them.

We don't have all the answers (that's what the colleges are for), but our goal is to help you make a successful first choice as you embark on your game design journey.

For more information on game design programs visit www.princetonreview.com/game-design.



THE TOP 50 GAME DESIGN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS



Whether you're taking your first steps or refining your skills, there's a game design program for anyone. Check out the 50 best undergraduate and 25 best graduate programs out there.



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

1 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY (#1 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 20
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$76,400
Faculty: Eric Zimmerman (founder, GameLab), Dr. Clara Fernandez-Vara (Fiction Control, author of Game Analysis)
Graduates: Carol Mertz (PixelPop Festival, Insatiable Cycle), Robert Meyer (God of War: Ragnarok)
<https://gamecenter.nyu.edu/>



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

2 UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (#1 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 85
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$75,000
Faculty: TreaAndrea Russwurm (Author of Gaming Representation: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Video Games), Marianne Krawczyk (Writer, God of War I, II & III)
Graduates: Laird Malamed (COO of Oculus VR), Jenova Chen (Creator of Journey)
<https://games.usc.edu/facilities>



CLARK UNIVERSITY

3 CLARK UNIVERSITY (#2 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 65
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$65,600
Faculty: Ezra Cove (3D art for Lord of the Rings Online), Terrasa Ulm (VR/AR/XR, interactive fine art, virtual avatars, interactive theater)
Graduates: Stanley Pierre-Louis (CEO/President of the Entertainment Software Association), Gary Goldberg (President/Founder FableVision Studios)
<https://www.clarku.edu/schools/beckerschool-of-design-and-technology/>



UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

4 UNIVERSITY OF UTAH (#2 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 62
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$82,305
Faculty: Michael Young (PhD, Division of Games Chairman), Joe Barnes (Sr. Technical Director Disney and Epic Games)
Graduates: Doug Bowser (COO of Nintendo of America), Nolan Bushnell (Founder of Atari)
<https://games.utah.edu/>

5. UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA (#1 SOUTH)

2023 Grads Hired: 52
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$57,409
Faculty: Dr. Maria Harrington (Associate Professor, Aesthetic Computing)
Graduates: Richard Ugarte (Senior Producer, Epic Games), Ana Beltran (Disney Live Entertainment)
<https://communication.ucf.edu/games-and-interactive-media/>

6. ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (#3 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 86
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$73,500
Faculty: David I. Schwartz (Director and Lecturer, Game Design and Development)
Graduates: Elan Lee (Founder and creator of Exploding Kittens), Misko Hevery (Google)
<https://www.rit.edu/computing/school-interactive-games-and-media>

7. DIGIPEN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (#3 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 54
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$81,337
Faculty: Claude Comair (co-founded Nintendo Software Technology, 19 US patents in game design)
Graduates: Kim Swift (Xbox Game Studios), Matt Rosen (Audio Programmer, Baldur's Gate 3)
<https://www.digipen.edu/academics/game-design-and-development-degrees>

8. DREXEL UNIVERSITY (#1 MID-ATLANTIC)

2023 Grads Hired: 67
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$63,000
Faculty: Tony Rowe (Senior Game Designer, Indiana Jones, Star Wars, The Force Unleashed), Dan Rose (Shadow of the Colossus, Lord of the Rings Online), Dr. Youngmoo

Kim (PhD from MIT, Founder of Drexel's ExCiTe Center)
Graduates: Girish Balakrishnan (Director, Virtual Production at Netflix), Glen Winters (Rockstar Games, Red Dead Redemption 2)
<https://drexel.edu/westphal/academics/undergraduate/GDAP/>

9. MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY (#1 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 80
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$58,000
Faculty: Ricardo Guimaraes (Blizzard Entertainment, Ubisoft, Eidos, Critical Studios, Wizards of the Coast), Cory Heald (Underbite Games, Disney, Zynga)
Graduates: Scott Brodie (Heart Shaped Games, Microsoft Game Studios), Geoff Johns (Mad Game Productions, DC Entertainment)
<https://gamedev.msu.edu/>

10. NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY (#4 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 84
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$80,000
Faculty: Celia Pearce (IndieCade), Casper Harteveld (Serious games, StudyCrafter, DARPA Award Winner)
Graduates: Zhuo Chen (Ubisoft, AMD), Rachel Ellis (Blizzard Entertainment)
<https://games.northeastern.edu/>

11. ABERTAY UNIVERSITY (#1 INTERNATIONAL)

2023 Grads Hired: 75
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$45,000
Faculty: Professor Ruth Falconer (Professor of Complex Systems and Mathematics), Andrew MacDonald (LEGO, King, Mindshapes)
Graduates: David Jones (DMA Design, Creator of Grand Theft Auto and Lemmings), David Hynd (Rockstar Games)
<https://www.abertay.ac.uk/course-search/undergraduate/game-design-and-production/>

TOP 50 GAME DESIGN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS (CONT)

12. CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE

(#5 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 48

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$64,114

Faculty: Edmar Mendizabal (NVIDIA, Ubisoft Company), Nathan Walpole (Halo 2, Halo 3, Halo 4, Elder Scrolls)

Graduates: John Nagle (JPMorgan Chase & Co), Brenton Woodrow (Bungie)
<https://gamestudio.champlain.edu/>

13. VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL

(#2 INTERNATIONAL)

2023 Grads Hired: 15

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$65,000

Faculty: Rasmus Dahl Tindborg (Klei Entertainment), Derek Tam (Microsoft and Electronic Arts)

Graduates: Armando Troisi (MY.GAMES, Ubisoft), Elliot Hudson (Game Director, Blackbird Interactive)
<https://vfs.edu/programs/game-design>

14. WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE (#6 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 65

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$82,000

Faculty: Ed Gutierrez (Disney/Pixar), Gillian Smith (Indiecade award-winner, HEVGA fellow)

Graduates: Michael Gesner (Riot Games), Beth Beinke (Respawn Entertainment, Zynga)
<https://www.wpi.edu/academics/departments/interactive-media-game-development/prospective-students>

15. SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN (#2 SOUTH)

2023 Grads Hired: 44

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$62,500

Faculty: Cyril Guichard (Electrotank, Meta Quest Game Shock Troops), Aram Cookson (Epic Games)

Graduates: Harrison Pink (Diablo IV, Blizzard Entertainment), Zach Parrish (Netflix, Academy Award Winning, Walt Disney)
<https://www.scad.edu/academics/programs/interactive-design-and-game-development>

16. LAGUNA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN (#4 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 70

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$66,000

Faculty: Javier Perez (Sony PlayStation), Donald Ott (Amazon

Games, 3dmotive Founder)

Graduates: Gabriel Gonzalez (Blizzard Entertainment), Alexander Gonzalez (Ubisoft)
<https://www.lcad.edu/courses/game-art-program/>

17. FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY (#3 INTERNATIONAL)

2023 Grads Hired: 57

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$42,627

Faculty: Professor Tanya Krzywinska (Game studies, digital economy), Terry Greer (Microprose, Blitz Games)

Graduates: Rex Crowie (Media Molecule, Foam Sword, Return to Monkey Island), Andrei Pantilie (Ubisoft)

<https://www.falmouth.ac.uk/games-academy>

18. BRADLEY UNIVERSITY (#2 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 54

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$46,000

Faculty: Lynette Fernandes (DoubleDown Interactive), David Abzug (Deep Silver/Volition)

Graduates: Austin Holt (Amazon Games), Emily Berger (Blizzard Entertainment)

www.bradley.edu/im

19. THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS (#1 SOUTHWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 20

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$98,950

Faculty: Bryon Caldwell (Transformers: Rise of the Beasts, Star Wars: Visions, Rocket League, League of Legends), Nelson Lim (Fortnite, Warcraft Pacific Rim, Transformers: Age of Extinction)
Graduates: Veena Sommareddy (Neuro Rehab VR), Steven Billingslea (900lbs of Creative)
<https://www.atec-animgames.com/>

20. FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY (#3 SOUTH)

2023 Grads Hired: 25

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$60,476

Faculty: Jason Hinders (Gorilla Systems Corporation), Rodney Moye (Activision)

Graduates: Alejandro Garcia-Tunon (Ghostpunch Games), Kerry Allen (id Software)

<https://www.fullsail.edu/degrees/game-development-bachelor>

21. QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY (#7 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 18

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$65,000

Faculty: Elena Bertozzi (Ardea Arts), Peter Zoppi (Treyarch, AAA game development)

Graduates: Zaria Brogdon (Rockstar Games), Diego Holguin (MIT Lincoln Laboratory)

<https://games.qu.edu/student-work.asp>

22. SHAWNEE STATE UNIVERSITY (#3 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 6

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$70,000

Faculty: Greg Lyons (3D Art, Technical Art, Motion Capture), Dr. James Hudson (Computer Graphics, Software Engineering)

Graduates: Dan Clark (Epic Games), Sam Bushman (Wizards of the Coast)
<https://www.shawnee.edu/game-design-programs>

23. LASALLE COLLEGE VANCOUVER (#4 INTERNATIONAL)

2023 Grads Hired: 41

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$52,000

Faculty: Ivaldo de Sosa (Doctor of Philosophy – PhD Mathematics, Certificate in Machine Learning and Neural Networks), John Appleby (Master's in Game Design)

Graduates: Greg Findlay (Eidos-Montreal: Rise of the Tomb Raider, Thief), Dustin Stevenson (FIFA, LBC Studios)
<https://www.lasallecollegevancouver.com/game-design>

24. RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE (#8 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 37

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$80,539

Faculty: Maurice Suckling (BAFTA-award winner), Victoria Ransom (Wildfire Interactive, Google)

Graduates: Karthik Bala (Activision, Velan Studios), Ben Esposito (Donut County, Glitch City)
<https://hass.rpi.edu/gsas/games-and-simulation-arts-and-sciences>

25. NEW ENGLAND INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (#9 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 64

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$50,000

Faculty: Jim McClure (38 Studios, Idol Minds, Sony Online Games), Prof. Scott Lambert (Seeds for Change)

Graduates: Daniel Laba (Diablo 2

Resurrected, Vicarious Visions), Morganne Crosby (AppNeta, FireForge, WB Turbine)
<https://www.neit.edu/academics/video-game-development-design>

26. UNIVERSITY OF SILICON VALLEY (#5 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 20

2023 Grads Mean Salary: Not reported

Faculty: Evan Skolnick (Game Writer), Jason Loia (COO/Game Designer)

Graduates: Raymond Crook (Double Fine Games), Rosie Wrede (Sledgehammer, Twin Sun Games)
<https://usv.edu/programs/game-design-development/>

27. HOWEST UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES (#5 INTERNATIONAL)

2023 Grads Hired: 80

2023 Grads Mean Salary: Not reported

Faculty: Alexander Delagrangé (Airbornstudio, Guerrilla Games), Tristan Clarysse (Larian Studios, Bioware, Argonaut)

Graduates: Alena Dubrovina (Larian Studios), Leslie Van den Broeck (Gravity Well)
<https://www.digitalartsandentertainment.be/>

28. MIAMI UNIVERSITY (#4 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 27

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$48,500

Faculty: Geoffrey Long, PhD (MIT, USC, Microsoft, Disney, Amazon, HBO), Ben Nicholson (Taylor Swift, Katy Perry, Adidas, League of Legends)

Graduates: Sue Hoang (GIANTY), Michael Frazzini (Amazon Games)
<https://www.miamioh.edu/cca/academics/departments/etbd/index.html>

29. UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT (#5 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 20

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$46,000

Faculty: Dave Beck, MFA (Paverson Games), Dr. Seth Berrier (computer graphics, photogrammetry, web interfaces)

Graduates: Margaret Rigotti (Dreamworks Animation), Jose Estrada (Riot Games)
<https://www.uwstout.edu/animation-and-game-design-development-studio-lab>

30. PURDUE UNIVERSITY

(#6 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 76

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$63,979

Faculty: Robert Howard (Game Design), Tim McGraw (Game Programming)

Graduates: Dioselin Gonzalez (VR/AR/Metaverse, Microsoft), Tyler Kupferer (Disney)
<https://polytechnic.purdue.edu/degrees/game-development-and-design>

31. ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY (#2 SOUTHWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 5

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$68,000

Faculty: Karen St. John, PhD (game engine scripting, 2D Game Dev), Arisoa Randrianasolo (Computer Science, AI, Game Programming)

Graduates: Camila Rodrigues-Valesquez (Raven Software), Michelle Brothers (Sony Bend)
<https://acu.edu/academics/undergraduate/bachelor-of-science-in-digital-entertainment-technology/>

32. MARIST COLLEGE

(#10 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 60

2023 Grads Mean Salary: Not reported

Faculty: Dr. Karen Schrier (WHO, Nickelodeon), Dr. Ron Coleman (IBM)

Graduates: Darren Sugg (Fortnite), Grace Sin (Nickelodeon)
<https://www.marist.edu/games-emerging-media>

33. ACADEMY OF ART UNIVERSITY

(#6 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: Not reported

2023 Grads Mean Salary: Not reported

Faculty: Patrick Kenney (3D Modeling), David Goodwine (Producer)

Graduates: Audrey White (Game Taco), Tala Furniss (Playtika)
<https://www.academyart.edu/art-degree/game-development/>

34. DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

(#7 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: Not reported

2023 Grads Mean Salary: Not reported

Faculty: Allen Turner (Disney Interactive Studios/Wideload Games,

Council of Fools), Anna Anthropy (Dys4ia, Queers in Love at the End..., author of Rise of the Videogame Zinesters)

Graduates: Monica Fan (Pipeworks Studios), Mark Nauta (Firaxis Games)
<https://www.cdm.depaul.edu/landing/gaming/index.html>

35. UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA (#4 SOUTH)

2023 Grads Hired: 33

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$65,000

Faculty: Dr. Amelia Winger-Bearskin (AI and the Arts), Dr. Hyo Jeong Kang (Digital Arts & Sciences, UI/UX)

Graduates: Riley Knutson (Insomniac Games), Kendall Robertson (Microsoft)
<https://digital-worlds-institute.itch.io/>

36. DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY (#8 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 36

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$42,480

Faculty: Konrad Lightner (3D Art and Design), Erik Pederson (Business Development, Game Design, Product Management)

Graduates: Matt Engesser (Rockstar), Jimmy Chattin (Aristocrat Games)
<https://dsu.edu/programs/computer-game-design-bs.html>

37. ARTCENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN (#7 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 100

2023 Grads Mean Salary: Not reported

Faculty: Ross Berger (Writing), Tim FitzRandolph (Game Design)

Graduates: Zack Snyder (Blockbuster Filmmaker), Michael Bay (Blockbuster Movie Director and Producer)
<http://www.artcenter.edu/admissions/beyond-game-design.html>

38. UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN (#9 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 30

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$80,000

Faculty: Prof. Bruce Maxim (Sweetspot Games), Prof. Jennifer Proctor (Film Studies)

Graduates: Camile Lagman (Unity), Shane Costello (Counterplay Games)
<http://gamelab.cis.umich.edu/>

39. NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY

(#8 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 50

2023 Grads Mean Salary: Not reported

Faculty: Andrew Allen (Showrunner, AAA Game Writer, Feature Film Writer), John Zuur Platten (AAA game designer/writer, TV showrunner, screenwriter)

Graduates: Guillermo Quesada (Amazon Studios), Obinna Eze Ajoku (Microsoft)
<https://www.nyfa.edu/game-design-school>

40. RINGLING COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN (#5 SOUTH)

2023 Grads Hired: 57

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$79,000

Faculty: Morgan Woolverton (Game Development), Cesar Rodriguez (Game Development)
Graduates: Bret Iwan (Lead Voice - Mickey Mouse), Jeff Fowler (Film Director, Film and Visual Effects)
<https://www.ringling.edu/game-art/>

41. CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF ART (#10 MIDWEST)

42. FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

(#11 MIDWEST)

43. STETSON UNIVERSITY

(#6 SOUTH)

44. KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

(#12 MIDWEST)

45. CORNELL UNIVERSITY

(#11 NORTHEAST)

46. INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON (#13 MIDWEST)

47. UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

(#7 SOUTH)

48. HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

(#8 SOUTH)

49. UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD (#3 SOUTHWEST)

50. ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

(#4 SOUTHWEST)



GETTY IMAGES

HOMEWORK: Theorycrafting & player choice

It's a well-known axiom among game designers that, given the opportunity, players will remove all the fun from your game.

That might sound counterintuitive, but the goal of every game is to successfully inspire desire, to create something the player wants, and then put obstacles in their path as they try to achieve it.

The problem is that people will, by nature, pick the most efficient method to reach their goals. In doing so, they may well end up ignoring all the fun you've so carefully crafted for them.

Take a recent patch in the world's biggest MMORPG, World of Warcraft.

Among the many systems for player progression was the process of gaining renown with a group called the Dream Wardens, earning a powerful magic item.

The intention was for players to reach level 20 by doing enjoyable quests over several weeks, but it was possible to reach the goal in just days by constantly grinding out repetitive tasks. Many players did exactly that.

When offered a choice between fun and efficiency, many players will often sacrifice the former for the latter. In fact, it's something every player does to some degree or another.

Think about how you can design your in-game systems to offer meaningful progression choices without forcing the most determined of players onto a hamster wheel.

THE TOP 25 BEST GAME DESIGN GRADUATE PROGRAMS



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

1 UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA (#1 SOUTH)

2023 Grads Hired: 85
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$80,539
Faculty: Nick Zuccarello (Sony), Jonathan Annand (Disney)
Graduates: Carlos Barbosa (WB Games), Brian DeSanti (Blizzard)
<https://fiea.ucf.edu/industry/alumni-games/>



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

2 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY (#1 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 51
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$73,003
Faculty: Dr. Mitu Khandaker (Glow Up Games), Shawn Pierre (Philly Game Mechanics, Independent Games Festival)
Graduates: Atlas Chen (thatgamecompany, Echostone), Noelle Mazurek (Diablo IV)
<https://gamecenter.nyu.edu/>



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

3 UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (#1 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 90
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$85,000
Faculty: Mark Bolas (Fakespace Labs, Microsoft), Danny Bilson (The Rocketeer, The Flash, Da 5 Bloods, The Sims, Homefront)
Graduates: Laird Malamed (Oculus VR), Brandon Beck (Riot Games)
<https://catalogue.usc.edu/content.php>



UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

4 UNIVERSITY OF UTAH (#2 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 88
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$96,785
Faculty: Joe Barnes (Disney, Epic Games), Michael Young, PhD (AI for Games)
Graduates: Doug Bowser (Nintendo America), Nolan Bushnell (Founder of Atari)
<https://games.utah.edu/current-students/meae/>

5. SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY (#1 SOUTHWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 68
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$76,500
Faculty: Elizabeth Stringer, PhD (Atari, Activision, Xatrix), Myque Ouellette, MSCS (Origin Systems, Retro Studios, Atari)
Graduates: Chris Schmidt (Infinity Ward), Grace Liu (Netflix Games)
<https://www.smu.edu/Guildhall/About>

6. ABERTAY UNIVERSITY (#1 INTERNATIONAL)

2023 Grads Hired: 75
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$59,000
Faculty: Dr. Kenneth Fee (DMA Design), Martyyn Lynagh (Media Molecule, Axis Animation, I-Play)
Graduates: Richard Jolly (Splash Damage), David Hynd (Rockstar Games)
<https://www.abertay.ac.uk/news/2023/network-of-movie-magic-labs-to-keep-uk-on-cutting-edge-of-future-visual-effects-technologies/>

7. CLARK UNIVERSITY (#2 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 72
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$70,000
Faculty: Ezra Cove (Lord of the Rings), Amanda Theinert (Digital art, Design, Game Psychology)
Graduates: Gary Goldberg (Fablevision), Matthew Sylvia (Microsoft)
<https://www.clarku.edu/academics/graduate/programs/masters/master-of-fine-arts-in-interactive-media/>

8. ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (#3 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 83
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$103,300
Faculty: Shaun Foster (4D Productions), Flip Philips (Professor of Psychology, Skidmore College)
Graduates: Steven Van Slyke (Co-inventor of the OLED), Anna Sweet (Bad Robot Games)
<https://www.rit.edu/computing/school-interactive-games-and-media>

9. NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY (#4 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 84
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$80,000
Faculty: Celia Pearce (IndieCade), Christopher Barney (GDC speaker, Poptropica)
Graduates: Kyros Jalife (Warner Bros), Wendi Zhang (Activision Blizzard)
<https://camd.northeastern.edu/program/game-science-and-design-ms/>

10. DREXEL UNIVERSITY (#1 MID-ATLANTIC)

2023 Grads Hired: 90
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$74,000
Faculty: Dr. Paul Diefenbach (Founder of OpenWorlds Inc.), Dr. Youngmoo Kim (PhD from MIT, Drexel's ExCiTe Center)
Graduates: Anna Nguyen (Schell Games, Injustice 2), Glen Winters (Rockstar Games)
<http://drexel.edu/westphal/graduate/DIGM/>

11. MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY (#1 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 63
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$60,000
Faculty: Ryan Thompson (intersections between gameplay and audio), Wei Peng (games, design, UX design, usability, and health applications)
Graduates: Brian Murray (Electronic Arts), Geoff Johns (Mad Ghost Productions, DC Entertainment)
<https://gamedev.msu.edu/graduate-serious-games-certificate/>

12. DIGIPEN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (#3 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 56
2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$105,000
Faculty: Mark Henne (Pixar, worked on 6 Academy Award-winning films), Brian Schmidt (Founding member GameSoundCon & Game Audio Network Guild)
Graduates: Luis Villegas (Bungie, Destiny), Taralyn von der Linden (Trixter, Walt Disney)
<https://www.digipen.edu/academics/digital-art-and-animation-degrees/mfa-in-digital-arts>

13. THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS (#2 SOUTHWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 20

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$98,950

Faculty: Bryon Caldwell (Brazen, Riot Games, Industrial Light Magic, Agora Studio, Cloud10 Studios), Troy Griffin (Walt Disney Studios, Reel FX, Encanto, Raya & Last Dragon, Frozen II, Moana, Frozen)

Graduates: Dr. David Hanson (Hanson Robotics), Steven Billingslea (900lbs of Creative)

<https://bass.utdallas.edu/degrees/graduate-degrees/game-development-graduate-programs/>

14. FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY (#2 INTERNATIONAL)

2023 Grads Hired: 80

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$47,204

Faculty: Professor Tanya Krzywinska (Game studies, digital economy), Terry Greer (Microprose, Blitz Games)

Graduates: Rebecca Haigh (Playground Games), Sophie Shepherd (Respawn Entertainment)
<https://www.falmouth.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/games-and-computing-masters-degrees>

15. SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN (#2 SOUTH)

2023 Grads Hired: 77

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$61,333

Faculty: Nye Warburton (AI in games, Generative Media, Character Systems), Cyril Guichard (game design, gamification, VR game development)

Graduates: Lucas Slominski (Zenimax), Whitney Taylor (YouTube)
<https://www.scad.edu/academics/programs/interactive-design-and-game-development/degrees/ma>

16. WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE (#5 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 77

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$82,000

Faculty: Ben Schneider (Narrative design), Ed Gutierrez (Disney/Pixar)

Graduates: Michael Gesner (Riot Games), Jon Radoff (Beamable, gamerDNA)

<https://www.wpi.edu/academics/departments/interactive-media-game-development/graduate>

17. FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY (#3 SOUTH)

2023 Grads Hired: 29

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$60,475

Faculty: Dr. Shawn Stafford (Wargaming, UX Science), Dr. Robert Kennedy (Organizational Psychologist & Ergonomics Consultant)

Graduates: Narie Kay (Zynga), Erin Eberhart (Dreamhaven)

<https://www.fullsail.edu/degrees/game-design-master>

18. LAGUNA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN (#4 WEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 100

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$82,000

Faculty: Stefano Gualeni PhD (Game Design Philosophy), Chris Ulm (Velan Studios)

Graduates: Ben Thompson (Moonshot Games), Nicole Tan (Blizzard Entertainment, Crystal Dynamics)

<https://www.lcad.edu/courses/game-design-mfa/>

19. UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT (#2 MIDWEST)

2023 Grads Hired: 20

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$42,100

Faculty: Karl Koehle (Forensic & Litigation Animator), Dave Beck (Sculpture, Digital Arts & Sciences)

Graduates: Hue Vang (Dreamworks Animation), Andrew Murphy (Apple)
<https://www.uwstout.edu/programs/mfa-design>

20. RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE (#6 NORTHEAST)

2023 Grads Hired: 50

2023 Grads Mean Salary: \$80,539

Faculty: Maurice Suckling (BAFTA award-winning game writer), Rob Hamilton (Musical game innovator)

Graduates: Zach Barth (Opus Magnum, Eliza), Curtis R. Priem (Co-Founder, NVIDIA)
<https://hass.rpi.edu/gsas/critical-game-design-co-terminal-program-0>

21. BRADLEY UNIVERSITY (#3 MIDWEST)

22. AMERICAN UNIVERSITY (#2 MID-ATLANTIC)

23. DEPAUL UNIVERSITY (#4 MIDWEST)

24. UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA (#4 SOUTH)

25. UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI (#5 SOUTH)



GETTY IMAGES

HOMEWORK: Live service gaming & the infinite narrative

With more and more games adopting the risky but potentially lucrative live service model, modern titles require an almost endless flow of content – new opponents, new zones to explore and new powers to acquire.

This can be challenging from both a systems and storytelling perspective, as designers need to deliver new ways to play, as well as increasingly powerful antagonists for the players to confront.

Let's examine how some of the industry's longest-running franchises deal with this issue.

The Total War franchise, with its unique mix of turn-based campaign play and RTS battlefield simulations, dates back to the year 2000, with several successful historical titles. In 2016, Creative Assembly acquired the rights to Games Workshop's Warhammer brand.

A superb example of the use of existing IP, the massive success of the game coincided with the growing popularity of live service models. The Total War: Warhammer team delivered a steady stream of DLC packs and sequels, with new units, factions and systems for growing and managing your empire.

Both chart-topping and critically acclaimed, TW:WH is still delivering a constant stream of new experiences for players.

As an MMORPG, World of Warcraft has also evolved various new systems for the acquisition of player power over its 20-year lifespan.

More importantly from an MMO perspective, working with Blizzard's own IP, developers were able to take the storyline in any direction they wished. They chose to constantly raise the narrative stakes.

Player characters that had begun their careers rescuing cats from trees and fighting bandits quickly graduated to battling dragons, then demons, then the demons that oversaw the demons they fought the last time.

WoW players saved the cat, then the village, then the city, then the world, then the galaxy, then the universe and then... what?

The critically and commercially mauled 'Shadowlands' expansion tried to solve this problem by pitting the players against the very concept of death itself, but this wasn't enough to stave off antagonist fatigue and active player numbers dropped substantially.

Whether your choice is more systems, more story, or something else entirely, live service is a challenge for every member of a design team.