

Justification for the Workshop:

The Games Industry is a melting pot of different disciplines; Art, Design, Animation, Engineering, Project Management, the list goes on. Education within the industry has to find the balance between all of these different aspects, and more, in order to satisfy internal and external stakeholders.

As the leading international association for games research, the Digital Games Research Association provides a crucial forum for examining not only games as objects of study but also the infrastructures that sustain games scholarship and practice. Degree programmes are foundational to the field's future: they shape research cultures, industry pathways, and innovation. This workshop aligns with DiGRA's commitment to critical reflection, interdisciplinary exchange, and the strengthening of global games research networks.

There remains significant variation in how these programmes are structured: the balance between theory and practice, the relationship to industry, assessment strategies, capstone models, technical scaffolding, and the integration of critical, ethical, and cultural perspectives.

This workshop addresses a pressing question for games educators and researchers: What should a university/college-level videogame curriculum look like in 2026 and beyond?

As our field matures and faces new challenges (AI integration, sustainability, precarity in creative industries, evolving engines and pipelines, and changing student expectations) there is an urgent need to collectively reflect on programme design and long-term resilience.

This workshop aims to:

- Map existing structural models of videogame degree programmes.
- Identify best practices and persistent challenges in curriculum design.
- Compare regional and institutional differences (research-intensive universities, art schools, technical institutes, private colleges).
- Develop shared principles for sustainable, inclusive, and future-facing programme structures.
- Generate a collaborative white paper or resource document for the DiGRA community.

Structure:

Introductions: (40 mins)

Each attendee will briefly introduce themselves and their background to the group.

Lightning Mapping Exercise: (30 mins)

Participants briefly present (3–4 minutes each) the structure of their programme:

- Degree type (BA/BSc/MA, etc.)
- Core vs elective balance
- Studio vs lecture ratio
- Capstone structure
- Industry integration
- Theoretical/critical components

Identifying the Issues: (20 mins)

The group as a whole will debate what they believe are the primary issues facing the industry at this moment.

Break: (30 mins)

Participants take the opportunity to take a breath, network and grab refreshments

Breakout Rooms on Solutions to the Primary Issues: (30 mins)

Participants divide into groups to address key structural themes identified in the last session. Each group takes one primary issue and records their findings digitally, sending them to the workshop facilitator at the end of the session.

Design the Dream: (30 mins)

Groups collaboratively design a model 3 or 4 year videogame degree structure responding to contemporary challenges (AI tools, sustainability, precarity, interdisciplinarity). How would each group go about applying their solutions to a real-world degree programme?

Presentations & Recommendations: (30 mins)

Each breakout group will have 5-6 minutes to present their findings and recommendations on their specific issue to the greater group.

Organisers: Led by Robert Emerson, Board Member, Imirt - the Irish Gamemaker's Association. Supported by Darragh Lydon, Lecturer, Queen's University Belfast. More organisers will be identified in the coming weeks through parties interested in attending the workshop.

Intended Attendees: This workshop will be open to anyone attending the conference to register and take part. In light of this conference's emphasis on growing bridges between academia and industry, this workshop welcomes views from attendees right across the breadth of the industry.