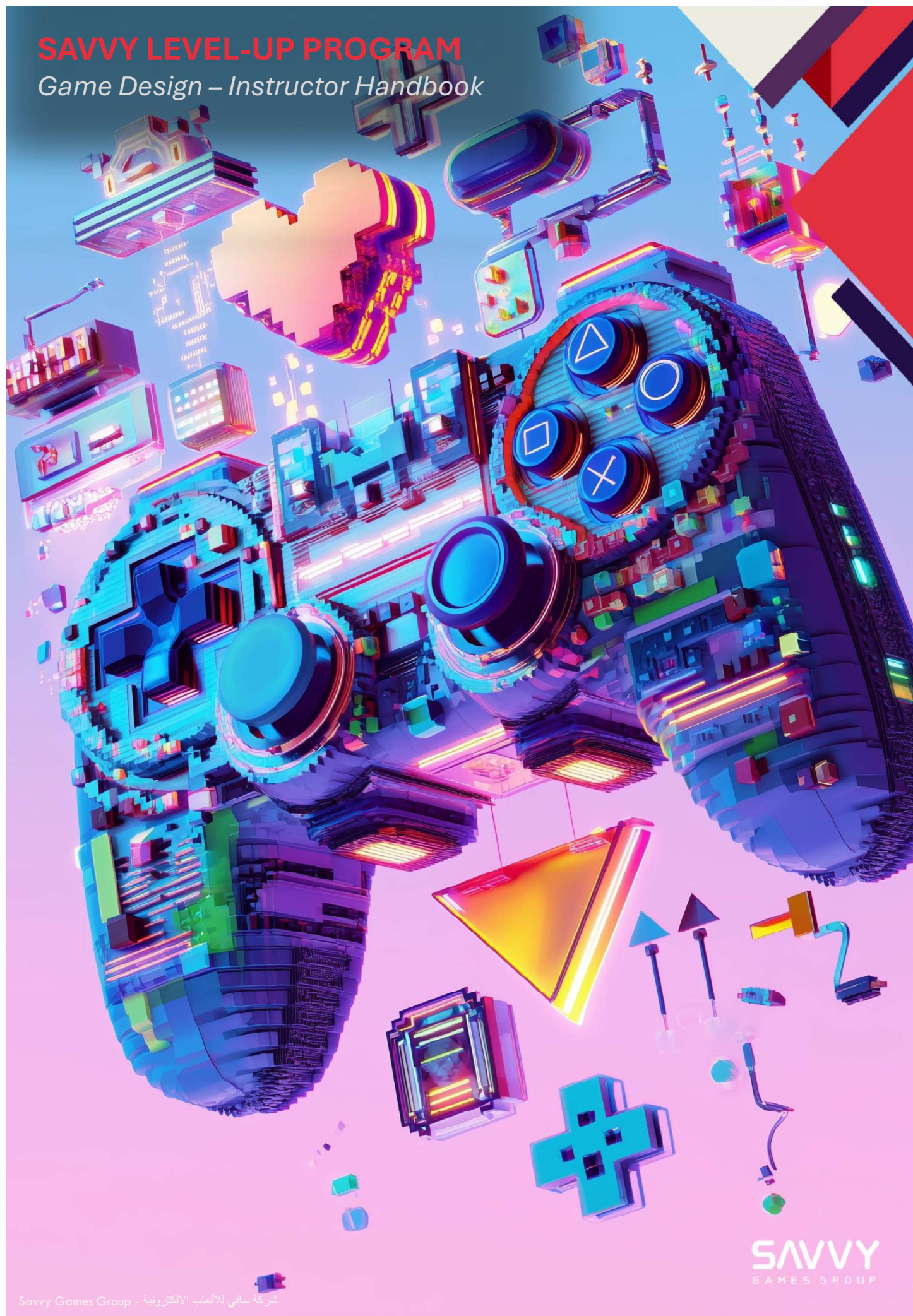


SAVVY LEVEL-UP PROGRAM

Game Design – Instructor Handbook



SAVVY
GAMES GROUP



Savvy Games Group is a games and esports company formed with a mission to drive the long-term growth and development of esports and the broader games industry worldwide. The games industry is one of the most exciting and buoyant sectors globally, with games the world's fastest-growing form of entertainment and esports the world's fastest-growing sport.

Through games, we see people of all backgrounds, ages, nationalities, genders and abilities connect, play, learn, compete and triumph together. We believe that games and esports are fast becoming key enablers for better entertainment, health, and education. Savvy Games Group exists to lead global games investment and growth by empowering people.

One of Savvy's core strategic objectives is the development of a robust gaming and esports ecosystem in Saudi Arabia. By fostering innovation and investing in local talent, we aim to position Saudi Arabia as a global hub for game development and esports.

The Savvy Academy's mission is to train & empower the Saudi aspiring video game makers. We believe in the high potential of Saudi youth and have developed several programs designed to provide these aspiring game changers with career awareness, readiness, and experience. One of the Academy's pillars is dedicated to Saudi college students who want to learn about the fundamentals of games development & eSports. Welcome to the Savvy Level-Up Program.



جامعة الفيصل
Alfaisal University

Alfaisal University is one of the Kingdom's leading institutions in higher education, recognized for its commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and future-focused programs that prepare students for emerging industries and advanced technologies. Through its strong emphasis on research, technology, and interdisciplinary learning, the university continues to contribute to the development and progress of the Kingdom while preparing graduates to compete on a global scale.

Among its forward-looking initiatives is the growing focus on Game Design, a specialized field designed to equip students with the technical and creative skills required to conceptualize and develop interactive digital experiences. The program combines storytelling, game mechanics, visual design, user experience, artificial intelligence, and immersive technologies to prepare graduates for opportunities in the rapidly expanding gaming and entertainment sectors, both within the Kingdom and internationally.

The Kingdom's efforts in higher education began decades ago, with major investments aimed at expanding opportunities and strengthening academic institutions across Saudi Arabia. Since the establishment of modern universities and specialized colleges in the 1970s, academic programs have continued to evolve in alignment with national development goals and the increasing demand for advanced technological and creative disciplines. Riyadh has become a major center for higher education, hosting leading universities and research institutions that contribute to innovation, entrepreneurship, and talent development.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has accelerated its investment in digital transformation, creative industries, and technology-driven education as part of its broader vision for economic diversification and global competitiveness. Universities now play a central role in developing the next generation of designers, developers, artists, engineers, and innovators capable of shaping the future of interactive media and digital entertainment. Through programs such as Game Design, Alfaisal University continues to support this vision by fostering creativity, technical expertise, and industry-ready talent.

Dear Instructor,

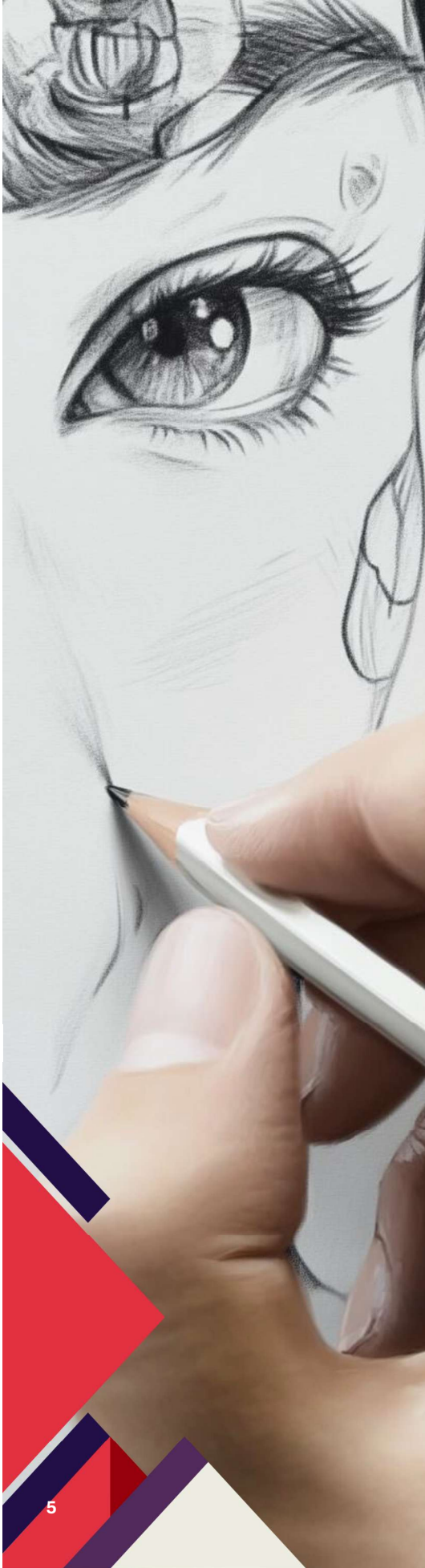
Welcome to the Savvy Level-Up Program! We are delighted to have you join us on this exciting and enriching educational journey. If you are reading this handbook, it means you have been selected to lead the **Game Design** track of the program—congratulations to you and your students!

This handbook is designed to provide you with all the theoretical and practical resources necessary to deliver the program effectively. We strongly encourage you to read it carefully to familiarize yourself with the core principles and overall structure of this educational experience.

We are honored to have you as an instructor and are excited about the positive outcomes this program will achieve through the collaboration between your university & Savvy Games Group.

You may make minor curriculum tweaks to take ownership (e.g., assignments), but keep the program structure, course volume, topics, and distribution unchanged.





Game Design for video games is the process of creating the systems, mechanics, and experiences that shape how players interact with a game. It combines creativity, problem-solving, and player-focused thinking to craft engaging gameplay, meaningful progression, and memorable experiences that align with the game's vision and objectives. Game Design is a broad term that encompasses a range of roles, including:

A **Gameplay Designer** develops the core mechanics and player interactions that define the game experience. They create systems, rules, and challenges that ensure gameplay is engaging, balanced, and enjoyable, while continuously refining features through testing and iteration.

A **Level Designer** builds the spaces where gameplay takes place, designing environments that guide players, encourage exploration, and support the game's mechanics. Their work involves creating layouts, and ensuring a smooth and rewarding player journey.

The **Systems Designer** creates the underlying frameworks that drive progression, economy, combat, and other interconnected features. Their work focuses on balancing complexity and accessibility, ensuring all systems work together cohesively.

A **UX Designer** designs the player's experience and interaction flow, including menus, feedback systems, and controls. Their goal is to make gameplay intuitive, accessible, and enjoyable while supporting the game's overall design vision.

A **Narrative Designer** creates the stories, characters, and world-building elements that enhance player engagement. Their work integrates storytelling with gameplay, ensuring narrative and mechanics support one another.

Overseeing it all is the **Game Director**, who ensures consistency and quality across all aspects of the player experience. They guide the team and make critical decisions to align gameplay, narrative, and systems with the game's creative vision and design goals.

Together, these roles form some of the foundation of game design, turning ideas into engaging and memorable player experiences.



The PPPP (Projects, Peers, Passion, Play) principles from the *Lifelong Kindergarten Group* at the MIT Media Lab, championed by Dr. Mitchel Resnick reflect a learning philosophy designed to nurture creativity, collaboration, and curiosity across all ages. These principles are the foundation of the learning methodology and pedagogical signature of the Savvy Academy.

The **Projects** principle emphasizes learning by doing. Students engage in hands-on activities where they create, experiment, and build something meaningful, helping them connect theory with practical applications. This approach ensures deeper learning as students actively solve problems and apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. Most of Savvy Level-Up Program assignments are therefor project-based.

Peers highlights the importance of collaboration and learning in a community. By working together, students share ideas, provide feedback, and inspire each other. Peer interaction fosters a supportive environment, helping learners build essential communication and teamwork skills. While students are expected to deliver individual projects, they are encouraged to gather by level and center of interest to share ideas and challenge themselves.

Passion focuses on personal motivation, encouraging students to pursue topics that excite and interest them. When learning aligns with a student's passions, they are more likely to invest time, energy, and creativity, leading to a deeper and more fulfilling learning experience. The program's objective is to turn the students' passion into vocation.

Play promotes exploration, experimentation, and creativity in a low-stakes environment. It encourages students to take risks, learn from failures, and discover new possibilities. This principle fosters curiosity and innovation, making learning enjoyable and engaging. In our Program, we prioritize the use of gaming narrative (scores, leaderboard), as well as progress by unlocking features and tools once prerequisites & fundamentals are mastered, just like in a video game!

As the instructor, we strongly encourage you to carefully adhere to these key principles when teaching your class.

We believe that education should be adaptable, as one size does not fit all. Everyone learns at a different pace, encounters unique challenges, and possesses diverse skill sets. To accommodate this, your students can choose from three levels of difficulty for their assignments: foundation, challenge, and mastery level.

This approach enhances learning in two keyways. First, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in 1980, emphasizes three core needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—that drive intrinsic motivation. When students have the freedom to choose, feel capable, and are supported, they engage more deeply, fostering better learning and well-being. Second, psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's 1975 theory of Flow describes a state of focused immersion and enjoyment achieved when tasks strike a balance between challenge and skill. In this state, individuals lose track of time, feel in control, and perform at their best, promoting personal growth and peak experiences. By offering your students a choice of difficulty levels, they are more likely to meet the Flow.

By allowing students to select the level of challenge that best suits their abilities, they optimize their learning process. While instructors are encouraged to provide guidance, the final choice should rest with the students, empowering them to take ownership of their learning journey.

In terms of grading, **Recruits** are capped to 6/10, **Challengers** to 8/10, and only impressive works from **Legends** could get a perfect 10/10.

FOUNDATION LEVEL
RECRUITS

CHALLENGE LEVEL
CHALLENGERS

MASTERY LEVEL
LEGENDS

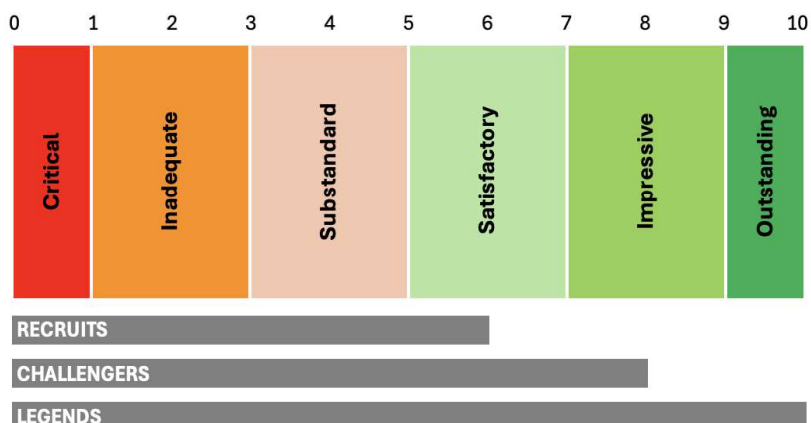
The following are provided as **suggestions only**. You, with the university's approval, are free to track students' performance and progress using your preferred methodologies. But in case you seek guidance, we recommend the following:

1 Grading System: Use a 10-point grading scale, which is widely understood. Decimals, such as 5.3 or 8.9, can be used for greater precision. As shown in the table below, a grade of 5 is the minimum passing score. As a general guideline, the 0 to 0.9 "Critical" grade should only be applied to students who failed to meet deadlines, while 9 to 10 "Outstanding" grade reflects the level expected of an entry level full-time employee and should be reserved for exceptional cases.

2 Evaluation Categories: Students should be graded across three categories, each with different weights based on their importance: Technical Skills (50%), Knowledge (20%), Soft Skills (30%) (e.g., attendance, time management, communication skills, teamwork, behavior, commitment, etc.).

3 Subcategory Weighting: Within each category, subcategories should also carry different weights. For example, a 30-minute class assignment should have less weight than a multi-day homework project. Additionally, whether AI is utilized or not should influence the overall grade assigned to each student.

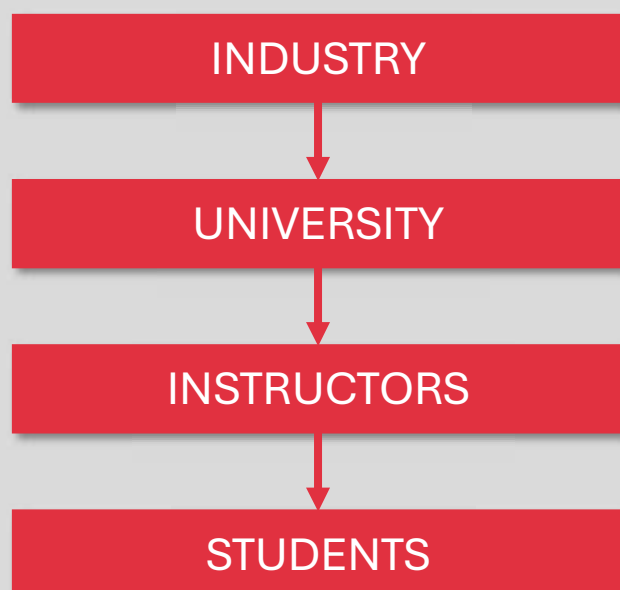
4 Tailored Training Impact: The level of tailored training should also affect grades. For instance, a satisfactory "Legends" level assignment should receive a higher grade than a satisfactory "Challengers" level assignment. Students are limited based on the level of difficulty they select for their assignments: Recruits max 6/10, Challengers max 8/10 or Legends max 10/10.



The Savvy Level-Up Program is designed with a strong emphasis on career preparation rather than diploma attainment. Its primary mission is to equip your students with the essential knowledge, soft skills, and technical expertise needed to secure entry-level roles in their desired industries and positions.

To craft our curriculum, we began by thoroughly analyzing industry requirements. This involved engaging directly with talent acquisition teams, producers, and managers to gain a deep understanding of the skills and qualities employers seek. Using these insights, we partnered with curriculum design specialists and subject-matter experts to break down objectives into structured modules encompassing theories, demonstrations, and hands-on exercises.

Last, we believe that excellence in education comes from constant innovation. The best programs evolve to reflect the latest trends, technologies, and industry demands. To achieve this, we have assembled a dedicated team of expert educators and industry professionals who meet regularly to refine our curriculum and assignments. This ensures your students are always learning relevant and up-to-date skills that directly align with industry needs, empowering them to excel in their careers.

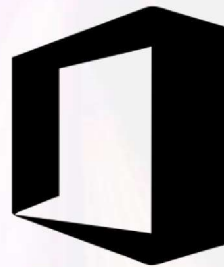


The below equipment is required for each participating student.

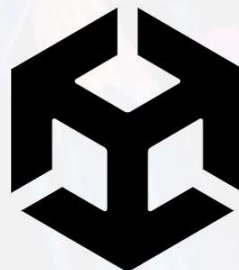
► **Provided by the University/Savvy**



- 1 computer



- Microsoft Suite



- Unity



- GitHub Desktop



Upon successful completion of the program, students will acquire the following TILO:

► Knowledge

Game Development Lifecycle: Understand the stages of game development, interdisciplinary team structures, production workflows, and the application of project management methodologies in game production environments. **Market Analysis & Player Behavior:** Analyze market trends, audience segmentation, monetization models, user acquisition strategies, and player engagement metrics within the game industry. **Production Tools, QA, & Pipelines:** Comprehend production tracking workflows and professional tools (e.g., Jira, Trello, bug tracking systems) used in planning, testing, quality assurance, and live game operations. **Launch & LiveOps Strategy:** Understand launch preparation, post-launch management, LiveOps systems, DLC planning, community management, and long-term growth strategies for digital games.

► Skills

Prototyping and Concept Validation: Produce rapid prototypes, validate gameplay concepts, interpret market data, and evaluate product positioning through structured testing methodologies. **Project Planning, Tracking & Coordination:** Create production schedules, manage tasks, allocate resources, track milestones, and adapt workflows using industry-standard project management tools. **QA, Launch & LiveOps Operations:** Develop test plans, manage bug tracking systems, coordinate launch preparation, analyze KPIs, and operate post-launch LiveOps and DLC strategies. **Professional Communication:** Present production plans, collaborate with multidisciplinary teams, prepare project documentation, and communicate production goals clearly both orally and in writing.

► Competence

Integrated Capstone Project: Apply accumulated knowledge and skills to produce a complete game production plan and project pitch, demonstrating initiative, adaptability, creative problem-solving, and effective coordination across production pipelines. **Professionalism & Autonomy:** Exhibit employability skills, collaborate in multidisciplinary teams, manage time and personal productivity, and adhere to ethical standards and professional practices in game production and management environments.



SCHEDULE

Week	Day 1		Day 2		Day 3	
1	1.1.1	1.1.2	1.1.3	1.1.4	1.2.1	1.2.2
2	1.2.3	1.2.4	1.3.1	1.3.2	1.3.3	1.3.4
3	1.4.1	1.4.2	1.4.3	1.4.4	1.5.1	1.5.2
4	1.5.3	1.5.4	1.6.1	1.6.2	1.6.3	1.6.4
5	1.7.1	1.7.2	1.7.3	1.7.4	Masterclass 1	Masterclass 2
6	2.1.1	2.1.2	2.1.3	2.1.4	2.2.1	2.2.2
7	2.2.3	2.2.4	2.3.1	2.3.2	2.3.3	2.3.4
8	2.4.1	2.4.2	2.4.3	2.4.4	2.5.1	2.5.2
9	2.5.3	2.5.4	2.6.1	2.6.2	2.6.3	2.6.4
10	3.1.1	3.1.2	3.1.3	3.1.4	3.1.5	3.2.1
11	3.2.2	3.2.3	3.2.4	3.2.5	3.3.1	3.3.2
12	3.3.3	3.3.4	3.3.5	3.4.1	3.4.2	3.4.3
13	3.4.4	3.4.5	3.5.1	3.5.2	3.5.3	3.5.4
14	3.5.5	3.6.1	3.6.2	3.6.3	3.6.4	3.6.5
15	3.7.1	3.7.2	3.7.3	3.7.4	3.7.5	Masterclass 3

SCHEDULE 2/2

Week	Day 1		Day 2		Day 3	
16	4.1.1	4.1.2	4.1.3	4.1.4	4.2.1	4.2.2
17	4.2.3	4.2.4	4.3.1	4.3.2	4.3.3	4.3.4
18	4.4.1	4.4.2	4.4.3	4.4.4	4.5.1	4.5.2
19	4.5.3	4.5.4	4.6.1	4.6.2	4.6.3	4.6.4
20	4.7.1	4.7.2	4.7.3	4.7.4	5.1.1	5.1.2
21	5.1.3	5.1.4	5.1.5	5.2.1	5.2.2	5.2.3
22	5.2.4	5.2.5	5.3.1	5.3.2	5.3.3	5.3.4
23	5.3.5	5.4.1	5.4.2	5.4.3	5.4.4	5.4.5
24	5.5.1	5.5.2	5.5.3	5.5.4	5.5.5	5.6.1
25	5.6.2	5.6.3	5.6.4	5.6.5	5.7.1	5.7.2
26	5.7.3	5.7.4	5.7.5	Masterclass 4	6.1	6.2
27	7.1.1	7.1.2	7.2.1	7.2.2	7.3.1	7.3.2
28	7.4.1	7.4.2	7.5.1	7.5.2	8.1.1	8.1.2
29	8.1.3	8.2.1	8.2.2	8.2.3	8.3.1	8.3.2
30	8.3.3	8.4.1	8.4.2	8.4.3	Masterclass 5	Masterclass 6

Holiday buffer to be inserted between teaching weeks.

CORE GAME DESIGN FOUNDATIONS

COURSE 1

One of Savvy Games Group's mandates is to establish Saudi Arabia as a key player on the global video game map. Education plays a pivotal role in achieving this objective.

In addition to developing and supporting significant educational initiatives across the Kingdom, Savvy Games Group is dedicated to training and empowering local aspiring talents by offering internship opportunities through its subsidiaries. To support this mission, the Savvy Academy has created the **Savvy Kickstarter Program**, a six-month hands-on training initiative focused on various roles in video game development and esports event management.

Enrollment in the Savvy Kickstarter Program is merit-based, requiring applicants to complete a rigorous admission process. Although we do not guarantee enrollment nor employment, top graduates of the **Savvy Level-Up Program** do receive priority consideration over other candidates.

Stay tuned by following our social media channels for updates and announcements. Ensure your students don't miss the next application window!

SAVVY
GAMES GROUP



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GROUP**

The Savvy Level-Up Program brings together universities with complementary strengths across the core disciplines of video game development, forming an environment where collaboration can naturally emerge. Each institution contributes a specialized area that mirrors real-world game studios: Princess Nourah University in Game Art, King Abdulaziz University in Game Production, Alfaisal University in Game Design, and King Saud University in Gameplay Programming. Together, these fields represent the complete set of skills required to create a fully playable game.

By uniting students from these focused programs, Savvy Level-Up encourages artists, designers, producers, and programmers to connect, exchange knowledge, and explore collaboration beyond their own campuses. These connections may lead to side projects, experimental prototypes, or the transformation of individual capstone projects into multidisciplinary game productions developed by students from multiple universities.

To support these interactions, Savvy shares a designated point of contact for each participating university, helping students identify where to begin when reaching out across institutions. While the program actively promotes networking and collaboration, it does not monitor, manage, or formally organize these inter-university projects. All collaborations are voluntary and student-driven, shaped by shared interests and initiative. In this way, Savvy Level-Up acts as a facilitator, creating opportunities for meaningful cooperation while leaving ownership, direction, and creative control entirely in the hands of the participants.



CreaDev is a beginner-friendly game creation platform that enables students and aspiring developers to transform their ideas into fully playable games without needing any programming knowledge. Through intuitive visual tools and simple drag-and-drop features, users can design characters, environments, and gameplay mechanics with ease, making it ideal for classrooms and first-time creators who want to focus on creativity, storytelling, and experimentation rather than technical complexity.

Through its partnership with Savvy Academy, CreaDev is now directly supporting students' side projects for AA games, giving learners structured guidance and real opportunities to bring their concepts to life. This collaboration also includes an exceptional 90% discount on both monthly and yearly licenses, making professional-grade game development tools highly accessible to students.

- ▶ Saudi-made platform
- ▶ No coding required
- ▶ Visual drag-and-drop tools
- ▶ Ready-made themes and assets
- ▶ Easy game publishing
- ▶ Special 200 SAR/year, code: **SAVVY966**

GO TO CREADEV



At the Savvy Level-Up Program, our mission is to transform players into creators and their passion for gaming into a fulfilling vocation. One of the most impactful ways to achieve this vision is by organizing visits to video game studios and hosting masterclasses with local industry professionals, either in person or virtually. These initiatives offer students a unique opportunity to experience the inner workings of the game development world, enabling them to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and professional practice.

Studio visits immerse students in the real-world environment of game production, where they can observe firsthand the intricate workflows, advanced technologies, and collaborative dynamics that drive successful projects. Masterclasses, led by seasoned professionals, provide a platform for students to gain valuable insights into industry trends, practical problem-solving, and career pathways. These interactions not only inspire students but also facilitate networking, equipping them with the connections and mentorship needed to navigate their own professional journeys. Together, these experiences enrich students' understanding of the creative and technical complexities of game development, aligning their skills and aspirations with the realities of the industry.

Studio visits and masterclasses are an excellent way to break the redundant monotony of a traditional curriculum, invigorating the learning experience by introducing fresh perspectives and dynamic activities. Unlike regular coursework, these special events bring in new voices—experienced professionals who share their knowledge, stories, and expertise in ways that captivate and inspire students. Site visits offer an immersive change of scenery, allowing students to step outside the classroom and into the vibrant, fast-paced world of video game development.

- ▶ Player Experience Design
- ▶ Core Gameplay Design
- ▶ Design Documentation Mastery
- ▶ Design Career Readiness

► **Industry-Relevant Teaching Practices**

Instruction within the Game Design program should reflect current industry practices and the multidisciplinary realities of modern game production. Teaching approaches should balance theoretical foundations with applied design practice in order to prepare students for professional environments that require systemic thinking, analytical reasoning, iterative development, and collaborative production workflows. Instructors are encouraged to connect course content to contemporary game-design methodologies, production pipelines, player-experience frameworks, monetization structures, and emerging AI-assisted workflows to maintain both academic and industry relevance.

► **Applied and Experiential Learning**

Best practice within the program involves prioritising experiential and project-based learning methodologies that allow students to apply design theory through structured implementation and iteration. Instructors should integrate practical exercises such as game-system analysis, loop mapping, greyboxing, onboarding redesign, balancing workshops, playtesting sessions, and prototype development activities throughout the curriculum. Learning experiences should encourage experimentation, analytical problem-solving, and evidence-based iteration while reinforcing the relationship between player behaviour, systemic design, and production constraints.

► **Collaborative Learning and Professional Communication**

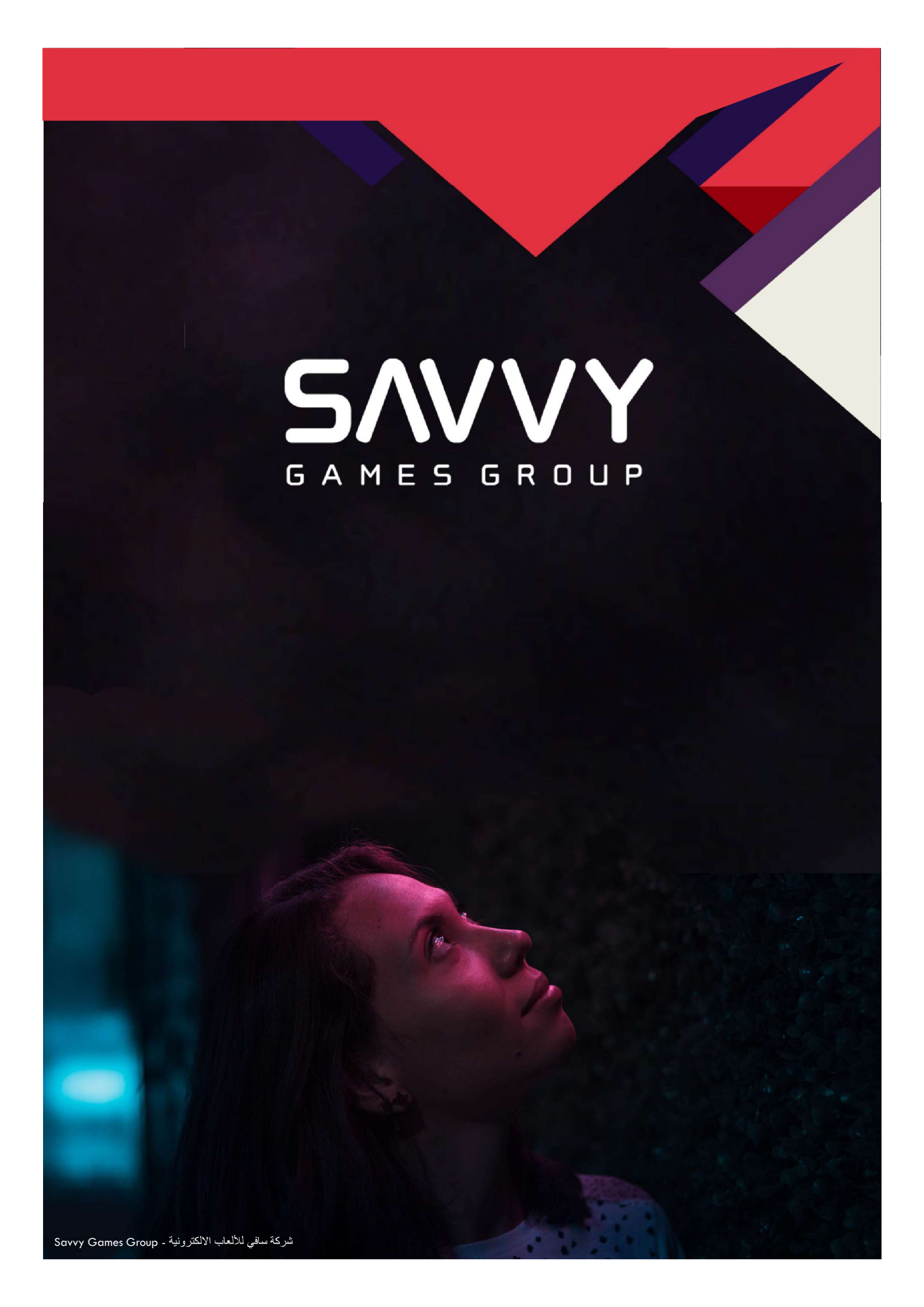
Teaching practices should foster collaboration, critical discussion, and professional communication across all areas of the curriculum. Students should regularly participate in team-based production simulations, design critiques, peer reviews, and milestone-driven projects that reflect the collaborative nature of professional game-development environments. Instructors are encouraged to model structured feedback practices, promote accountability within production teams, and reinforce the importance of clear design documentation, rational decision-making, and interdisciplinary communication throughout the design process.

► **Industry Alignment and Continuous Adaptation**

Given the rapidly evolving nature of the game industry, instructors should continuously adapt learning materials, tools, and case studies to align with contemporary production standards and emerging design paradigms. Best practice includes exposing students to current industry workflows related to mobile systems, retention design, UX practices, economy balancing, LiveOps strategy, spatial design methodologies, and AI-assisted production pipelines. Instructors should encourage adaptability, systems thinking, and continuous refinement so students can respond effectively to changing technologies, player expectations, and commercial realities.

► **Ethical Practice and Student Development**

Instruction should reinforce professional ethics, player-centered design principles, and responsible production practices across all areas of the program. Instructors are encouraged to support student development through mentorship, structured reflection, iterative feedback, and the cultivation of professional habits such as accountability, time management, production discipline, and collaborative responsibility. Assessment practices should encourage creativity and innovation while maintaining standards of analytical rigor, accessibility awareness, ethical monetization considerations, and professional design accountability.

The image features a dark, textured background with a woman's face in profile, looking upwards. The top of the image is decorated with a red and purple geometric pattern. The logo for Savvy Games Group is centered in the upper half.

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