Case Study 4:
Using Game-Based Learning for Induction

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ABSTRACT

This case study tracks the development of a digital induction resource implementing game elements that focuses on the first two stages of Gilly Salmon’s Five Stage Model, namely ‘access and motivation’ and ‘online socialisation’ (Salmon, 2011). In the summer of 2016, a prototype was developed and presented at the Playful Learning conference, with a view to completing a full evaluation for the next cohort of the programme.

KEYWORDS

Game Based Learning, Gamification, Gamified Systems, Induction

INTRODUCTION

The department of Psychology at Manchester Metropolitan University are now in the third year of running a very successful online Master’s degree, with over 200 students studying on the programme every year, many of whom are part time and study around busy professional lives. Although the majority complete the course successfully, a common concern of tutors is that students often underestimate the time needed to successfully complete the course, which leads to difficulties down the line. There is evidence to support the claim that a clear induction strategy for online students increases retention and progression rates (Crosling, Heagney, & Thomas, 2009).

The user of the resource/game follows a fictional character through a typical day on the programme in question, charting their struggles to keep up with the demands of the programme and at the same time maintaining a social life. The nature of the game is to make decisions for the character around what activities you would like to carry out, whether that be to go out for a coffee with a friend, catch up on a TV show or attempt some academic work. Each decision takes up time, and if you get to the end of the day not having completing your required academic tasks, you lose. The user is penalised for not knowing where to find information on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which uses up more time, or getting to the end of the day not having completed any ‘fun’ activities for the character. The story that is followed was developed in conjunction with students and staff to create a compelling narrative which not only engages but is representative of common student concerns.

Why Gamify?

Gamification can be defined as using game elements and game design techniques for use in non-game contexts (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011). One of the main objectives of the gamified resource was to reduce the number of hours staff were committing to dealing with ‘administration’ type queries such as where certain documents were located or submission formats – information that was readily available in text format on the institutional VLE. By gamifying, an alternative delivery
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