Teamwork

Important conversations to have with your team, team contract, advice to build a shared vision, what to do in case of conflict

1.

Important conversations to have as a team *before* you start working together

Your first meeting and conversations should not be about the game, rather about how to have a good professional relationship with each other.

Work Boundaries & Expectations

What are the work boundaries that you want to set <u>for yourself</u> ? Examples:

- When are you not available to work on the project?
- What type of role and tasks are you comfortable covering? Which ones do you want and do not want?
- Separation between group work and hang-outs (friends in addition to teammates)
- I will leave the meeting if it has no agenda and it goes on for more than 1h =P

What do you expect <u>from others</u> in a professional setting? Examples:

- My teammates will communicate when my work has problems (and when it's good)
- Don't promise things you can't do, don't wait too long to ask for help when you're stuck
- Update others about your tasks' progress
- No arguments during meetings, keep calm and stay respectful when disagreeing
- Don't do meetings without an agenda

Do some self-reflection and know your limits

What are the constraints that you need to keep in mind while planning the scope of your project? For example:

- What are the people in your team good at? What do they need to learn and how long would it take?
- Time and effort spent on the game needs to be fair, not necessarily equal. Be direct about what you can give, so that you can scope the project accordingly.
- Who in your team already had experiences in game development or similar interdisciplinary creative work?

Do some self-reflection and know your limits

For example:

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  need to learn and how lon
- Time and effort spent on
  necessarily equal. Be dire
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- Who in your team alread
  development or similar i

Remember that 1 ECTS = 27.5 hours of work for students, the total amount of time that by these standards you can be expected to spend on the course during the overall semester is 412.5 hours, **it includes time spent in class and you *have already spent* a good part of it in the first half of the semester.**

Many of you might not even have the time, ability and/or energy to work that many hours, so definitely don't expect from yourself or others to work more.

Do some self-reflection and be honest

Is there anything that you usually struggle with in group projects that the other teammates should be aware of to help each other out?

Examples from Laura's thesis team:

- *Teammate A tends to become passive and contribute less when they start losing the "Vision", this was solved by having frequent conversations about staying in the loop.*
- *Teammate B struggles with preventing themselves from working past-midnight, with negative consequences to their mood and ability to contribute later. This was helped by having other team members have respectful conversations about how this could affect everyone's work and work environment.*
- *Teammate C tends to procrastinate and struggles to speak up when unsure about tasks. Clear task assignment and frequent communication helps this.*

Goals

What are your goals for this project? Reflect on that both individually and as a group:

Examples of individual team members goals:

- Learning objectives
- Something you're interested in about game development (art objective, mechanics, theme, etc.)
- Doing something specific for the portfolio

Examples of shared goals:

- How do you want to work with each other?
- Is what you learn from the process more important to you than the end game's end result or vice versa?
- What is the game that you're trying to create? What is the intended player's experience? etc.

How to communicate with each other

Examples:

- Decide on channels of communication that the team will *actually* use.
- How often do you want to up date each other on work progress?
- Where do you keep the documentation about your game project?
- How do you want to handle disagreements and conflicts?

How to communicate with each other

Anything “unspoken” is potential trouble. Put your thoughts out in the open so that you can handle them with your team.

Examples of more good ways to work together

Be flexible. Don't assume you are always in the right.

- Example from Enrico's current team: Are you a game designer lamenting people did not read your GDD? Instead, try to change your approach. I have recently started using one-page long feature briefs so that anyone interested in a topic can find an accessible source of information. It worked way way better.

If someone is not involving you in areas of the work that normally fall under your role, maybe they are not doing it because they are evil.

- Example from Enrico's current team: I started taking the initiative and telling them I am available to discuss things and can offer any help they need from my role. I also asked for meetings to present my work to the whole team. It felt much better for me to feel that I was contributing, and the work I shared really helped the team to clarify the vision

2.
Team Contract Template

Team [team name] Contract

The members of Team [team name] are [all team member names]. I agree to follow the following rules outlined in this contract.

Conduct

I will use welcoming and inclusive language, be respectful of differing viewpoints and experiences, gracefully accept constructive criticism and focus on what is best for the community. I will not engage in harassment or discrimination on gender, age, physical ability, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity or national origin. In all, I will follow ITU's Code of Conduct[1].

[Add any other conduct rules you want to have as a team]

Responsibility

I will take responsibility according to my role. I will let others be responsible for their domains and productively work with others in their and my responsibility area.

[Add any other responsibility rules you want to have as a team]

Communication

I agree to frequently communicate with my teammates. We will use [add all communication tool(s)], to communicate. I will check for messages [frequency (eg. At least once every work day)] and respond to messages within [time (eg. 24 hours)] during workdays. If I am unable to achieve an assigned task I will communicate this immediately to the team so we can adjust the plan accordingly.

[Add any other communication rules you want to have as a team]

Meetings

I agree to attend all arranged team meetings. We will have a minimum of [number of meetings] meetings per week. Meetings should be scheduled at least [time (eg. 48 hours)] before the time of the meeting. If I am unable to attend a meeting I will [action (eg. post an explanation on discord before the meeting)]. If I am running more than [time (eg. 10 minutes)] late for a meeting I will [action (eg. post an explanation on discord immediately].

[Add any other meeting rules you want to have as a team, e.g. when the agenda will be posted or where meeting notes can be found and when]

[1] https://itustudent.itu.dk/~/media/itu-student/study-administration/rights-and-requirements/code-of-conduct-for-students-at-itu-pdf.pdf?la=en

Participation

I agree to work on the project at least [hours/week – be aware you should roughly work for around 20 hours/week including lectures & exercises on this course] per week. If I am unable to fulfil my participation for any reason I should [action (eg. Ask for help from a team member ASAP)].

[Add any other participation rules you want to have as a team]

Celebration

In our team we're celebrating when [event (e.g. a milestone)] happens/is achieved by [activity (e.g. having coffee at analog, playing a round of Among Us)]. We meet up for [activity (e.g. playing Magic: The Gathering, teaching each other a skill)] [when (e.g. once per month, after a milestone, ...)].

[Add as many activities as you like]

Conflict

I agree to aim to resolve any conflicts that arise in the team. If an unresolvable conflict does arise we will [eg. first arrange a meeting with a TA and if that does not resolve it escalate to the teachers]. In the case of lengthy conflicts about decisions, the team member responsible for the affected discipline[2] will make the decision to go with. I agree to support that decision without further conflict.

[Proposed extra rule: If the whole team except for the member with the responsibility agrees, the team can overrule the responsible, e.g. the Game Design Lead in design questions]

[Add any other conflict rules you want to have as a team]

_____

Names

_____

Date, Place, Signatures

[2] https://docs.google.com/document/d/1redCsdDqnbsnS56F4ivMJ-9LvKpf5YxsVmUh16sl7bIJ/edit?usp=sharing

What is the team contract for?

- It's a tool for you to discuss concretely how you want to work together.
- It should be an open conversation, you can come back to some topics in the contract or add more during the course of the project if you realize that something isn't working for one or more team member.
- It is not something to use against other teammates, the objective should be to use it to know how to negotiate with each other in a professional and respectful way.

What should be in the team contract?

You put into writing, more formally, the conclusions of your conversations about how you want to work together:

- How you will conduct yourself while working together
- How will you take responsibility for your share of the workload
- How will you communicate with each other
- How will you use and manage meetings
- How much do you agree on working on the project, what to do if you can't complete a task etc.
- How to handle conflict

3.

Have a shared vision for your game

Examples of ingredients to build a shared vision

1. As mentioned - ***Your learning objectives, boundaries, expectations, etc.***
2. Very in general - ***What are the game design values of each teammate and which ones are shared between you all?***
   - ➔ Example of papers that discuss design values: *Game Design Values* (Kultima&Sandovar, 2016)
3. If you already have a game idea - ***What is the overall concept of the game? What are key features that we want? What are usual design patterns and solutions used in similar games?***
   - ➔ Example of papers that look into game design patterns of specific genres: *Understanding and Evaluating Cooperative Video Games* (Aghabeigi, 2010)
4. Additionally, you can also consider - ***What design, development and production methodologies you'd like to use?***
   - ➔ Example of papers about design methodologies: *Player-centred game design* (Sykes & Federoff, 2006), *Game Design Praxiology* (Kultima, 2018).

Examples of ingredients to build a shared vision

Put these ingredients together in a list of statements and divide them by how they help you:

- Set **goals** (for the game, player experience, playtesting, final result etc.): they tell you **what to do**
- Set **guides** (for ideation, design, development, etc.) - they tell you **how to work**
- Set **general attitude and approach** - they inform **your teamwork**

Examples of ingredients to build a shared vision

- Examples of goals:

  “We want to learn how to make dependency on each other feel positive, balanced and dynamic rather than frustrating”; “designing for a range of skill levels allows players with different experiences levels and accessible to players with disabilities”; “Gameplay should support cooperative play”

  - ➔ They are still too broad to help us make choices during development.
  - ➔ However, they inform enough to know during development if we are achieving these goals. If not, evaluate what can be done to shift the design and development of the game towards a better direction.

Examples of ingredients to build a shared vision

- Examples of guides:

  "Having both players interacting with the same object"; "Encouraging communication and teamwork by allowing players to make choices together and complementing each other"; "Shared goals that give a reason for the players to work together"

  - ➔ They can guide the process of ideation, design and/or development.
  - ➔ If an idea or choice went against these design principles, or did not contribute to them or other principles we would change it or discard it, which allowed us to stay focused in our work.

Examples of ingredients to build a shared vision

- Examples of attitudes and approach:

  “Direct, honest, calm and respectful communication: don't hesitate to say when you're encountering problems, need help or when something another team member’s work has flaws to work on”; “Communicate how your work is progressing to minimize issues with dependencies”; “Respect boundaries about how much and when other team members can and want to work”

  - ➔ They set ground rules and boundaries that allow us to work more effectively and respectfully.
  - ➔ This indirectly allowed us to pursue more efficiently the other design goals and guides.

4.

What to do in case of conflict?

Step 1

- If another teammate acts in a way that affects you or the whole team negatively, you should talk with them about it
  - ***What to do:***
    - Explain how what they are doing is affecting you, the team, and/or the project.
    - Listen and be open to their explanation, try to find a solution/agreement together.
  - ***What NOT to do:***
    - Don’t wait it out. If you don’t tell people that they are doing something that is causing problems, they might not even realize that it’s a problem.
    - Don’t throw accusations lightly and don’t assume intentions. We do not know why people act certain ways unless we talk together.

Step 2

- If the conflict is not resolved through conversation, contact the TAs. Be aware we will report back to the teachers, anonymously if requested. Depending on the nature of the conflict, they won't necessarily be involved.

- Remember that contacting the TAs, teachers, and/or SAP is not an escalation or a punishment, it's asking for help to figure out how to work better together. You are entitled to this help. You do not need permission from other people to talk with your TAs, teachers, or SAP.

- If the teacher thinks it's necessary, or one of the students involved asks for it, there will be a meeting to resolve the conflict where the teacher and/or TAs will mediate.

Step 3

- The teachers and/or TAs have helped you mediate the conflict and compromised a solution. With this guidance, you will be able to continue working on the project and will get some regular check-ins to make sure everything is back to running smoothly.

- If the intervention to mediate the conflict does not result in a solution, the individuals involved will have to discuss with the teachers and SAP how to handle the exam. Depending on the circumstances, individuals may have to resort to an individual exam instead. Please note this is an extreme scenario. You should never reach this point. Instead, everyone should be able to work in a professional and mature manner, and this course as well as the whole MSc is a chance to prove this fundamental skill.

Remember that:

- You will very likely work again with people from this class during the rest of your Master, for other courses, projects and the thesis.
- The people around you are your future colleagues and contacts.

Thank you for listening!

Q&A?