# Template for research proposal: Critical Report

This guide allows you to provide an outline of research motivations and objectives identifying key research to support a discussion on a specific research topic.
***Note:*** you should apply the Harvard referencing conventions in all sections.

## 1. Research Objective and Question

| ***A title's primary function*** is to define precisely and concisely the topic. A legitimate secondary function is to stimulate the reader's interest. Two-part titles are common: a main title to stimulate interest and somehow imaginatively 'encapsulate' the topic, and a subsidiary title to specify or focus the topic. |
|---|
| Title<br>Beyond Visual Fidelity: How Real-Time Rendering Enhances Cinematic Character Performance in Contemporary Video Games<br>Research Question<br>How do real-time rendering technologies support cinematic storytelling through character performance in contemporary video games?<br>Research Objectives<br>1. To investigate how real-time rendering technologies contribute to cinematic storytelling in contemporary video games.<br>To examine how character performance influences player engagement and emotional response.<br>To analyze the relationship between rendering techniques, visual presentation, and character performance.<br>To identify how these findings can inform character animation practice within real-time production environments. |

## 2. Project Rationale

| ***Consider and explain why you wish to research the subject?*** A short introduction to the topic, why it is of interest, and why the research is worthwhile. Clarify the central question you are addressing, what will your argument, (your hypothesis) be? (Max 200 words) |
|---|
| Contemporary video games increasingly employ cinematic techniques to create engaging narrative experiences. At the same time, advances in real-time rendering technologies have enabled more sophisticated visual presentation, allowing lighting, atmosphere and character animation to work together in communicating story and emotion.<br><br>While real-time rendering is often discussed in relation to graphical realism, this research focuses on its role in supporting cinematic storytelling through character performance. Games such as *Red Dead Redemption 2 (Rockstar Games, 2018)*, *Bloodborne (FromSoftware, 2015)*, and *Elden Ring (FromSoftware, 2022)* |

demonstrate how rendering technologies can enhance the audience’ s perception of character actions, emotions and narrative meaning.

This study will explore the relationship between rendering techniques, cinematic presentation and character performance, arguing that real-time rendering functions not only as a technical tool but also as a storytelling device. The findings may contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary game production and help inform future character animation practice.

## 3. Keywords and keyword phrases used for research

***Experiment with connecting key words and phrases*** relevant to your topic and research objectives on academic sites. You can optimise key words/phrase searching by reading around your topic.

Real-Time Rendering, Cinematic Storytelling, Character Performance

## 4. Situate your proposal in relation to key texts, issues and debates.

***Produce a draft review establishing and explaining the views of relevant authors*** and how they can support the presentation of your argument to answer the research question. Use Harvard referencing (Max 300 words)

The relationship between visual presentation, storytelling and audience engagement has become an important area of discussion within game studies. Jenkins (2004) argues that games communicate meaning through narrative architecture, highlighting how story can emerge through visual design rather than traditional linear narration. This perspective is particularly relevant when examining contemporary games that rely heavily on atmosphere and visual presentation.

Recent scholars have increasingly focused on the emotional impact of games. Isbister (2016) argues that player engagement is shaped through visual design, interaction and character presentation. Similarly, Hooks (2017) suggests that effective character performance depends on the communication of thought and emotion through subtle physical actions, making performance a crucial element of audience engagement.

Developments in real-time rendering technologies have further expanded the possibilities of cinematic storytelling. Techniques such as physically based rendering, dynamic lighting and global illumination contribute not only to graphical realism but also to mood, atmosphere and narrative interpretation. This research therefore examines how real-time rendering and character performance work together to support cinematic storytelling in contemporary video games, arguing that rendering technologies should be understood as narrative tools rather than purely technical innovations.

## 5. Identify any materials or data that will be examined

***Include names of material examples to be examined*** such as films, artworks, games, events, directors and artists, or any other relevant media. sources that might provide pertinent data or statistics to support research objectives. All material should be referenced using the Harvard Style

*Red Dead Redemption 2 (Rockstar Games, 2018)*
*Red Dead Redemption (Rockstar Games, 2010)*
*Bloodborne (FromSoftware, 2015)*
*Elden Ring (FromSoftware, 2022)*

## 6. Bibliography

List recognised academic books, journals and articles, that you may use to support the research you wish to undertake. This list should be referenced. Harvard Style – For guidance on how to reference correctly (using your UAL login) See appropriate examples on https://www.citethemrightonline.com/


Fernández-Vara, C. (2019) Introduction to Game Analysis. 2nd edn. New York: Routledge.

Hooks, E. (2017) Acting for Animators. 5th edn. London: Routledge.

Isbister, K. (2016) How Games Move Us: Emotion by Design. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jenkins, H. (2004) 'Game Design as Narrative Architecture', in Wardrip-Fruin, N. and Harrigan, P. (eds.) First Person: New Media as Story, Performance and Game. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 118 – 130.

Keogh, B. (2018) A Play of Bodies: How We Perceive Videogames. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Nitsche, M. (2008) Video Game Spaces: Image, Play and Structure in 3D Worlds. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Wolf, M.J.P. (2012) Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation. New York: Routledge.

Bateman, C. (2015) Game Writing: Narrative Skills for Videogames. New York: Bloomsbury.

Bizzocchi, J. and Tanenbaum, J. (2011) 'Well Read: Applying Close Reading Techniques to Gameplay Experiences', in Davidson, D. (ed.) Well Played 3.0: Video Games, Value and Meaning. Pittsburgh: ETC Press.

Mäyrä, F. (2020) An Introduction to Game Studies. 3rd edn. London: Sage.

Calleja, G. (2011) In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Rogers, S. (2022) Level Up! The Guide to Great Video Game Design. 3rd edn. Hoboken: Wiley.