UCLA GAME LAB

High School Summer Institute

Student Handbook

2025 UCLA GAME LAB SUMMER INSTITUTE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Hello, and welcome to the 2025 UCLA Game Lab Summer Institute program!
The following handbook is designed to orient students (and parents) to the program— and to help everyone get ready for online instruction/distance learning this summer Please review all the material below to ensure that you—and your computer—are ready to go before classes begin!

PROGRAM INFORMATION

The 2025 UCLA Game Lab Summer Institute will be held Monday, July 7 - Friday, July 18 in a virtual/online format (Session A). During this two-week/four-course program, students will take two courses during week 1, and two courses during week 2 (Monday through Friday). Students will be expected to attend two live classes every day (one for each course) via Zoom videoconferencing (with class recordings provided as a backup at the end of each day of the program).

The UCLA Game Lab Summer Institute program is carefully designed to introduce students to the art and technology of game development. This includes learning the fundamentals of game design; creating characters and avatars that express personality and identity through animation or movement; building unique and compelling game worlds to navigate or explore; and developing programming skills to create interactive, gameplay experiences. In short, students will develop the ability to create games and game art that express a personal and subjective approach to game making.

Commitment to diversity, equity and inclusivity

UCLA Game Lab Summer Institute is committed to the values of diversity and equity, and to fostering an environment of inclusivity for all students and staff, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, age, political affiliation, or religion. We expect students and staff to respect these values and to help ensure that the Summer Institute is a safe and supportive environment for everyone.

ABOUT THE UCLA GAME LAB

The Summer Institute is sponsored by the UCLA Game Lab, an internationally renowned, creative research center that approaches game development and design as a discipline that combines technology and the arts.

Founded in 2009 by artist and game designer Eddo Stern, a professor in UCLA's Department of Design Media Arts, the lab is sponsored by the School of the Arts and Architecture and the School of Theater, Film, and Television.

The lab's mission is to foster the production of various game forms and game-related research along three areas of focus:

- Game aesthetics - experimentation with the look, sound, language and tactility of games
- Game context - development of games that involve the body, interface, physical space and/or performance in new ways
- Game genres - examination of the history and discourse of gaming and the development of game forms that explore new subject matter for games and push the boundaries of the medium

THE COURSES

Game design

This course will introduce students to the fundamentals of game design, such as creating playable characters, designing conflicts and choices, and giving players compelling motivations and goals. Students will work to create their own tabletop game with a focus on game systems, game flow, creativity, and aesthetics. It is the goal of this course for students not only to produce an original game, but also to develop an understanding of how game design really works, and to explore the potential of games for creative expression.

Character animation

Videogames give us characters to interact with, and this course provides an introduction on how to create playable characters through modeling and animation. Students will develop a character or avatar, which they will learn how to bring to life through stylized visualization and movement. This emphasis allows students to learn various aspects of modeling and animation as applied through After Effects, a state-of-the-art modeling and animation application.

World building

Videogames rely on world building to give game environments narrative potential and playful motivation. In this course, students will put the concept of world building into practice by creating a game environment in the Unity game engine (a leading development platform for creating indie/professional games). Students will create multiple environmental elements, such as buildings, plants, terrain, and lighting to build the geography of a game world. The end result will be a navigable space that expresses the creative decisions of each student.

Game programming

Videogames use computer programming or code to express movement and collision, provide spaces for interaction, and capture player input. This course introduces students to the fundamentals of game-related coding as they create their own 2D adventure videogame in Unity. The instructor will lead students through the core features of their game, and teach students about programming for movement, input, collisions, a simple inventory, NPC behaviors, sound, and text. Students also will be encouraged to customize their designs by adding custom sprites, tilesets, and other features.

Faculty and staff

All faculty and program assistants are practicing game design artists and educators affiliated with the UCLA Game Lab, with extensive experience and expertise in their respective course subjects. Each course will be led by a faculty instructor and program assistant, with additional staff to provide support.

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

Below are the course schedules for the program. Please be sure to refer to the email from the UCLA Game Lab to find your particular Group color assignment. Your Group color indicates your particular class schedule.

Orientation and "Tech Check"

In addition to this handbook, all students will receive an official welcome and orientation email prior to the start of the Summer Institute program. That email will direct you to the student web portal and provide additional information, as needed. Our goal is to ensure all students understand the technical and logistical preparations required for the program — and are ready to dive into class on their first day. To that end, Summer Institute staff will be holding a live online orientation and "tech check" via Zoom before the start of the program. We strongly encourage students to attend the orientation session if possible.

Session A schedule (all times PDT)

- The schedule below features the program's daily live classes, which will be held via Zoom and accessed through our student web portal (http://si.games.ucla.edu/student-portal/). The classes will be taught by our instructors, and will feature some mini-lecture components—but most class time will be spent working hands-on, just like in a studio art class.
- The Lab sessions at the end of each day (except Fridays) are optional, program-assistant led "study halls" held on Zoom to answer questions and/or offer extra practice on assignments.
- As a backup and for additional student reference, all classes will be video recorded and posted to the student web portal by the end of each day.

Before the Summer Institute begins!
Orientation and Tech Check
12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, June 26

	Week 1 - Morning Monday, July 7 - Friday, July 11	**Week 1 - Afternoon** Monday, July 7 - Friday, July 11	**Week 2 - Morning** Monday, July 14 - Friday, July 18	**Week 2 - Afternoon** Monday, July 14 - Friday, July 18
Blue Group	**Game Design** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.	**Character Animation** 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.	**World Building** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.	**Game Programming** 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Red Group	**Character Animation** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.	**Game Design** 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.	**Game Programming** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.	**World Building** 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Yellow Group	**World Building** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.	**Game Programming** 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.	**Game Design** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.	**Character Animation** 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Green Group	**Game Programming** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.	**World Building** 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.	**Character Animation** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.	**Game Design** 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Class Labs 6 - 7 p.m. All Class Labs are optional. No Class Labs on Fridays.				

Student game art exhibition

The UCLA Game Lab Summer Institute will conclude with a web-based exhibition of all completed student work. This is a wonderful way to experience all of the creativity—and hard work!—that students will have put into creating games and game art during the program. Invitations to the exhibition website will be sent by email and posted to the student web portal.
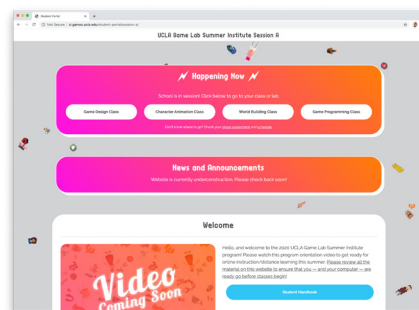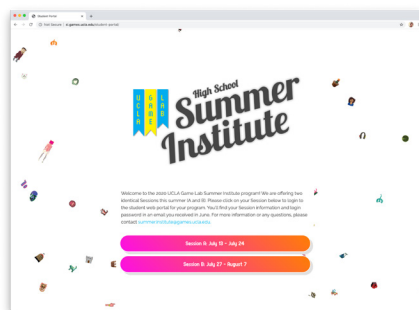
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

After the Summer Institute

· Students who successfully complete the UCLA Game Lab Summer Institute program will receive 4 units of UC college credit from the university. If you wish to obtain a transcript of your UC college credit, please visit this site and follow its steps: https://www.registrar.ucla.edu/Student-Records/Academic-Transcript/Order-an-Academic-Transcript.

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Course syllabi and online resources

http://si.games.ucla.edu/student-portal/

This student web portal is your school—the place where you will begin and end each day in our program. To access the portal you will need the username and password found in the email you received from the Summer Institute. On the website you'll find links to all the resources we have to offer, such as a copy of the handbook, our course syllabi, bios about our faculty, and more. Everything the website contains can be found in the site index at the bottom of the page. Also, please be sure to watch the program orientation video and the software installation videos (under "Get your computer ready for day 1!") before you install any required applications.

Expectations: student work and code of conduct

To successfully complete the UCLA Game Lab Summer Institute and receive 4 units of college credit from the University of California system, students must meet two expectations. First, students need to complete in-class assignments and turn them in on a daily basis. This daily assignment process is essential to ensuring that students are on-track with lesson plans and progressing successfully through each course. Students who miss live classes or assignment deadlines are expected to view recorded class sessions and to get back on track with all assignments as quickly as possible. Students who do not complete two or more of the four courses in the program will receive a "no pass" grade for the entire program (and thus will not receive university-level credit).

Second, and consistent with the code of conduct you will receive from Summer Sessions (the umbrella organization for UCLA Summer Institute programs), we want to emphasize that participating in the UCLA Game Lab Summer Institute means you are joining a community of students. Creating and maintaining a good, productive community includes not only taking responsibility for ourselves, but also looking out for the needs of others. All of us come from different places and different backgrounds; we all have different gifts and different challenges. This diversity is essential to how we learn and grow as artists and as people. The UCLA Game Lab is committed to the values of diversity and inclusivity, and we will take any action needed to ensure these values are preserved. If at any time during the next two weeks you experience an issue or problem that makes you feel less than welcome or supported, please let any faculty, program assistant, or staff know about it. We are all here to help.

Technical requirements and recommendations

As a vritual/online institute program, all class instruction and student work will need to be facilitated through student-acquired hardware and software. The exact specifications are listed below. In most cases, these requirements are already met by most desktop or laptop computers students already have. Please email the UCLA Game Lab Summer Institute if you have any technical questions at summer.institute@games.ucla.edu.

Desktop/laptop recommended specifications:

- CPU: 64-bit Multicore Intel/AMD processor or ARM-based Apple Silicon processor
- GPU: 2GB of GPU VRAM
- Microsoft Windows 10 / macOS v10.13
- RAM 16GB recommended
- 20GB of available hard-disk space; Additional disk space for disk cache (10GB recommended)

Other required hardware:

- Keyboard and mouse
- Web camera (built into computer is fine)
- Microphone (built into computer is fine)

Software:

- IMPORTANT! All software must be set up in a very specific way for use in our classes. BEFORE downloading and installing these applications, please watch the installation videos on the student web portal. At the June 26 Orientation and Tech Check, faculty will check your computer remotely to make sure the software is correctly installed. For more information, please see the next section: GETTING READY FOR THE PROGRAM, step 4.

- UCLA ID and Logon along with Duo Mobile phone app for multi-factor authentication (Download Duo Mobile here: https://ociso.ucla.edu/iamucla/mfa-at-ucla/activate-ucla-logon-mfa). If you can't find or remember your UCLA Logon, you can look it up at https://accounts.iam.ucla.edu/lookup, but you will need your 9-digit UCLA ID number (which was assigned to you at enrollment) to access that information.
- Adobe Creative Cloud—All-Apps subscription provided with UCLA logon: https://ucla.service-now.com/support?id=kb_article&sys_id=KB0013458
- Unity Hub—free download: https://unity3d.com/get-unity/download. Be sure to download Unity Hub and not standalone Unity. Then install the current LTS version of Unity within Unity Hub. See the Unity installation video on the student portal for more details.
- Zoom—free download: https://zoom.us/download

Also recommended (but not required—workarounds will be possible in all classes for students without access to the following):
- Mobile phone with a scanner application (such as Scannable or CamScanner); a flatbed scanner may also be useful
- Drawing paper and pens (Micron-brand pens are particularly recommended)
- Tablet for digital drawing and illustrating (stylus, Wacom tablet)

GETTING READY FOR THE PROGRAM
Before Summer Institute starts
1. Read this handbook (you're already winning!).
2. Get connected: Make sure you have a reliable wi-fi or ethernet connection.
3. Visit the student web portal: http://si.games.ucla.edu/student-portal. To access the portal, log in to your session using the following

   Login: sessiona   **Password:** levelup2025!

   You'll attend class, upload assignments, and access program information via the student web portal. You'll also find important orientation/welcome information and tech-check tutorials posted to the site.
4. Make sure you have your UCLA ID Number and UCLA Logon (username + password), which you created when you completed enrollment in the program. You'll need this information in order to access your Zoom classrooms and the Adobe Creative Cloud applications used in our program.
5. Download, install and prep the software for your courses. As noted above, you will need Adobe Creative Cloud (After Effects, Photoshop, Illustrator, and Media Encoder), Unity Hub, and Zoom to attend your classes and complete your game project assignments. IMPORTANT: Before installing these software packages, please watch the installation videos on the student web portal. See the section titled "Get your computer ready for

day 1!" on the student web portal to watch the videos. If you follow the guidelines in the handbook—and attend the June 26 Orientation and Tech Check—you and your computer will be ready to go!

During the Summer Institute

- Make sure you have your UCLA ID Number and UCLA Logon (username + password) so that you can attend class.
- Begin each day by logging into the student web portal at http://si.games.ucla.edu/student-portal.
- Your course schedule is determined by your group color. If you have forgotten your group color you can look it up at (http://si.games.ucla.edu/student-portal/sessiona/#schedule-and-group-color)
- Based on your group color, you will then click your course link in the "Happening Now" section to go to your Zoom classroom.
- After you arrive at your Zoom classroom, your instructor and program assistant will take attendance and get you started on your game projects.
- After the break between classes, please return to the student web portal to access your second class of the day.
- Please take advantage of the live Lab sessions with program assistants at the end of each day if you need any additional assistance in completing an assignment. Labs can be accessed in the same way as classes: just visit the student web portal and follow the link to the correct Lab.
- PLEASE BE SURE TO TURN IN YOUR ASSIGNMENTS EACH DAY! This is very important for all of us in the program—it helps us ensure everyone is on track and moving forward with their game projects. All assignments will be turned in via the student web portal in the "Submit your daily assignments" section. Clicking a course link will take you to a Google Forms page for that particular course, where you will upload your files. Note: students must have a Google Account (any type or affiliation is fine) in order to use Google Forms. Please be sure to carefully follow the instructions in Google Forms for turning in assignments each day, as some days require more steps and file types.
- Consider temporarily turning off or sleeping background applications that sync to the cloud (e.g., Dropbox, Time Machine, Google Drive, iCloud, One Drive, Backblaze, etc.) These applications can affect your internet bandwidth—especially during Zoom classes.

Zoom tips

You may be familiar with Zoom already, but please take a moment to review the following tips and suggestions prior to the first day of class:

- For Mac users only (PCs should do this automatically): Zoom security and privacy permissions need to be set to access the microphone, camera, screen sharing and other features. Please look at this Zoom website for a step-by-step guide: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360016688031.

- Test your UCLA Logon access to Zoom: Visit the "Get your computer ready for day 1" section of the student web portal, and then click the button labeled "Test Zoom setup." Follow the steps outlined in the "Zoom access" video to confirm your class access.
- Backup computer: If you have any additional computers or tablet, you should consider installing a backup copy of Zoom on them, just in case you have a problem connecting. This could include installing Zoom on a smartphone or tablet.
- Note: If you plan on using two computers—one to attend class and one to do class work—please make sure both computers are "attending" your Zoom class.. This will allow you to share your work with your instructors.
- Once you have entered a Zoom class, most of the Zoom interface you'll be using will be found in a toolbar at the bottom of the screen.
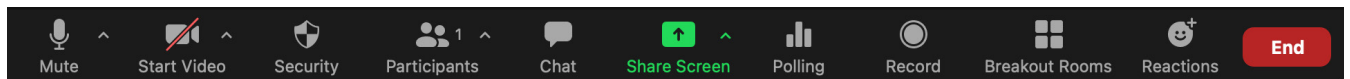
- Please be sure to mute yourself if you are not speaking.
- Asking for assistance during Zoom class: You can use the chat feature and emojis in Zoom to signal the instructor and/or program assistant for assistance. But please be sure to follow your instructor's guidelines on how best to communicate during class.
- Screen sharing will be an important feature in class, so that instructors and teaching assistants can work with you one-on-one—and even demonstrate certain techniques from inside your own applications or projects. The screen sharing feature is found in the toolbar (see image below). After you share your screen, please select the "Desktop" option. Your instructor may then ask you to allow remote-control access of your desktop. Please approve this request when it appears in a dialog box on your screen (if on a Mac, please set your System Preferences/Security and Privacy to allow for remote control).

- If for any technical reason you cannot connect to a Zoom class, please reboot your computer and try again. If this does not resolve the issue, try connecting to the Zoom class with one of your other devices. If that doesn't work, please email us right away at summer.institute@games.ucla.edu.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
We hope this information has helped you get ready for this summer's UCLA Game Lab Summer Institute program! If you have any further questions, please contact us at:

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