

Games Designer

A games designer produces new ideas for computer games of all types: puzzle, adventure, role-play, combat, shooters and sports. They design games for different platforms: PCs, laptops, consoles, the internet, interactive TV and mobile phones.

The Work

You could be:

- planning and developing the different elements of a game: setting, plot, levels, characters, vehicles and objects and modes of play
- presenting ideas, using written documents and computer graphics or sketches, to the rest of the team
- working with artists and programmers to build a game prototype
- adapting and improving the game structure, functionality and user experience (known as UX) throughout the development
- changing the original ideas if they turn out to be technically difficult to put into practice
- working on the whole game or on one aspect of design, such as environment, characters or objects
- training testers to play the game to find any bugs (problems)
- writing the game's instructions
- working on more than one game at a time.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting salaries are usually around £22,000 to £27,000 a year. With experience this can rise to between £30,000 and £45,000 a year. Senior designers may earn £60,000 or more a year.

You might earn extra through profit sharing, bonus payments and performance-related pay.

Conditions

- You will spend most of your time working at a computer, usually in an open plan office.
- You work with other professionals, such as artists, computer animators, developers and testers.
- Although you work basic office hours, you might have to work overtime to meet deadlines.
- When deadlines are due, you work under pressure to complete projects on time.

Getting In

- Entry is highly competitive and most entrants are graduates with degrees in computing or IT, or specialist

degrees in Computer Games. You should be able to demonstrate a real passion for gaming.

- Abertay, Edinburgh Napier, Glasgow Caledonian, Heriot-Watt and the West of Scotland universities offer degree courses in computer games subjects. Abertay and Glasgow Caledonian universities offer specialist degrees in computer games including design.
- Entry requirements for most of these courses are 4-5 Highers usually including Maths plus National 5 English. Check with the individual institution.
- If you have a degree in a relevant subject you could do a specialist postgraduate games development course at Abertay University.
- The Creative Skillset website lists accredited degree courses for the computer games industry.
- You might get in through a Modern Apprenticeship in IT and Telecommunications or Digital Applications at SCQF Level 6, then work your way up with experience and further specialist training, or a Technical Apprenticeship at SCQF Level 8.
- You might enter after gaining experience as a programmer, graphic designer or games tester.
- You must have a portfolio of work including games projects and proposals.
- You could enter through the Creative and Digital Media Foundation Apprenticeship (FA), which you can start in S5 and study at school and college. Entry requirements vary between colleges, but you usually need 3-5 subjects at National 5 including English. Maths, Art and Design, Computing Science or a science subject may be required. It is recommended that you work towards relevant Highers by the end of S6.

Job vacancies are often advertised on the internet, for example, the Talent Scotland website. There is a lot of competition for jobs.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- imagination and creativity
- an analytical, logical approach
- excellent IT skills and knowledge of different platforms
- a wide knowledge of and a real enthusiasm for computer games, platforms and popular games culture
- good story telling and plot planning skills
- an understanding of design for user interfaces
- drawing and computer design skills
- excellent communication and presentation skills
- an awareness of target markets.

You need to be able to:

- adapt to ever-changing technology
- pay attention to detail
- be a good team worker
- work under pressure, accept criticism and meet deadlines.

Training

- Training is often on the job.

- You could take short training courses in languages such as C++ and artificial intelligence techniques.

Getting On

- Skilled designers are in demand and with experience you can specialise or move on to become a team or project leader.
- You may be able to work overseas in Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and Japan.
- With experience you could work on a freelance basis.

More Information

- According to TIGA, the trade industry games association, Scotland's games industry grew by 27% since 2016. Scotland has the second-fastest growing cluster in the UK games industry, and is the third largest in the UK.
- There are currently over 90 games companies in Scotland, employing around 4,354 games professionals. Most are based in the Dundee area, with other firms based in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fife and Perthshire.
- Computer games are increasingly used as educational tools to get across ideas about, for example, maths, science or social studies.
- You'll find a list of electronic technologies companies, including computer games specialists such as Denki, Rockstar North, Ruffian Games and Serious Parody on the [Talent Scotland](#) website.
- The University of Abertay has the UK's first university Centre of Excellence for Computer Games Education.
- If you are considering a career in IT why not take a look at the [Tech Future Careers](#) website developed by the Tech Partnership, the Sector Skills Council for Business and Information Technology? You will find the video case studies of workers and general information on the industry useful.
- BAFTA Young Games Designers is a competition with different categories for 10-14 and 15-18 year olds. You can write and illustrate your idea to enter the 'Concept Award' or make your own game to enter the 'Games-Making Award'. See the [BAFTA Young Game Developer](#) website for more details.

Contacts

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TIGA

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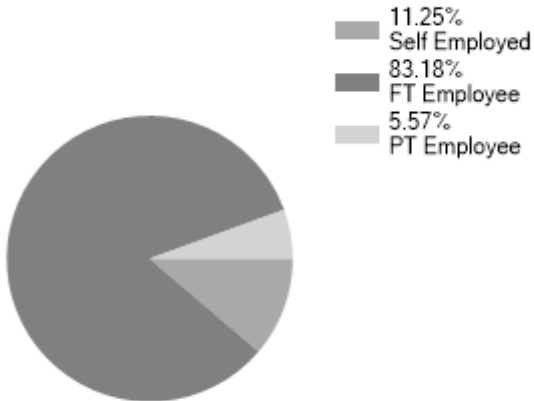
Website: www.tiga.org

Twitter: @TIGAMovement

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TIGAMovement

Statistics

Employment Status UK %



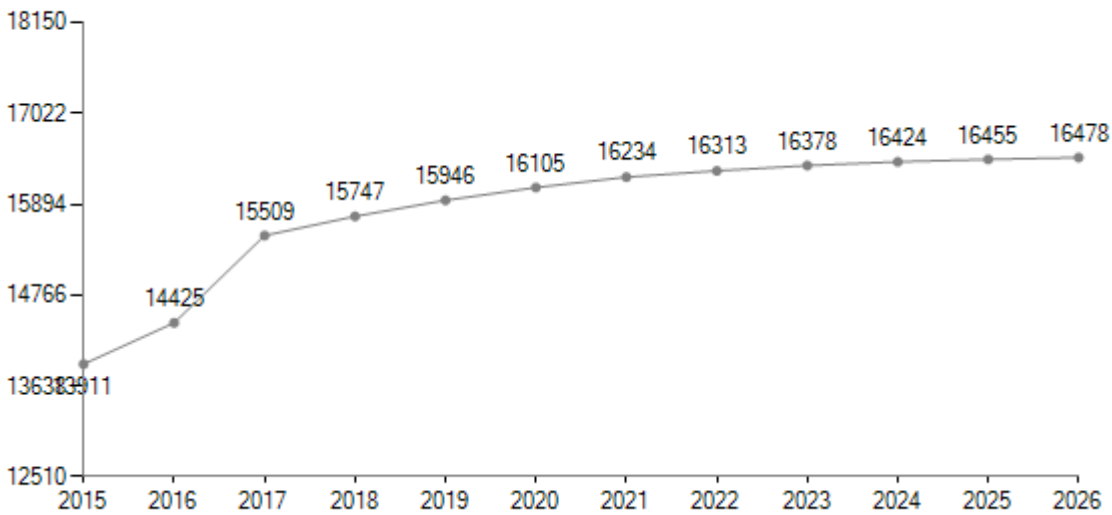
Past Unemployment - Scotland

Date	Unemployed
Dec 2015	0.27%
Dec 2016	0.18%
Sep 2017	0.17%
Mar 2018	0.12%

LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)