

CR6001 Advanced Specialism

Job Research & Skills Audit

Job Research

The job role I decided to research for my Advanced Specialism project is Combat/UX Designer. A UX designer is a broad role, which can help multiple departments down the pipeline to conduct the most optimal final player experience. A Combat designer needs to make sure what they make is fun to play, feels realistic and leaves the player wanting more. Where a combination of Combat and UX needs to ensure the feel and usability of the combat is optimised/visualised clearly with all users in mind.

-Job Listings-

- **TTGames/Steel City Interactive**

A large requirement of mastering combat design is to make sure your mechanics behaviour is clear and concise but unique to the player, this is stated on a job role for TT Games where they said we should “Ensure that the behaviours are distinctive, varied and are clearly understood by the player.”, this is a consistent goal to keep apparent when referring to UX design as well as they recommend being able to “Define and maintain design documentation” showing it pays to be consistent in your design this allows your mechanics stay readable and easily understood for your audience, reinforced by Steel City Interactive who believe UX designers should “Help shape an enjoyable, engaging and consistent player experience.”, equally as important is making sure your game is accessible and playable to everyone so a UX designer needs to be strong at “ensuring complex game mechanics and flows are simplified and understandable. Another important aspect to this job role is providing, “collating and acting on feedback.” This allows you to understand areas to improve and what's working in the best and most effective way.

- **Combat Designer - RuneScape Dragonwolds**

At Jagex they are looking for someone who can make combat that “feels intuitive, polished, and rewarding.”. They mention wanting someone who can build and iterate this is due to experimentation as combat is something that requires you to test and play around with till you've gotten it right. Jagex also needs someone who can work well in a team as combat design needs to be a cooperative process between loads of departments, such as animations, AI, level designers and more. In this job they would also like you to run play

sessions meaning it's very important that you collate information and get the most out of play testing.

-GDC Talks-

- **Breaking Barriers: Combat Accessibility in 'God of War Ragnarok'**

Both job specs also mention the ability to make your work easily understandable to the player as this is a core way to keep someone engaged for longer, this heavily leads into more forgotten communities like those who've got motor disabilities making playing games harder and sometimes impossible, this is an issue highlighted by one of the senior combat designers on God Of War Ragnarok (Adam Oliver 2023) who spoke on the importance of making games accessible, we can do this through limiting inputs and adding more customisable controls and gameplay mechanics. The speaker made multiple references to playtesting as this is the main way to understand if the target audience is being appropriately helped.

- **Game Accessibility: Practical Visual Fixes from EA's 'Madden NFL' Franchise**

This talk starts off with an example where the speaker gives a real life example where not having properly implemented accessibility features made it completely impossible for players to play Madden showing how important these features are. "When we design software we can design it to include as many people as possible and that's what accessibility is". The speaker goes over features people don't realise are accessibility features such as: brightness, gamma, subtitles and volume control. One feature they included was increasing the size of buttons that get visually displayed on the screen, for example the pass icons, after retesting this with their friend, they were now able to replay the game. They also cover the importance of playtesting and getting user feedback from these changes, this is something that I can use in my project to make sure I'm making the best product possible.

-Portfolios-

To get a better understanding of how to create a great combat design portfolio I am going to pick apart and research thoroughly into what makes them so strong and why they are successful:

- **Craig D. Leak**

Craig is a combat and technical designer that has over 4 years of experience in the industry who has a lot of knowledge in "rapid prototyping, iterative design, attention to detail, and dedication can help elevate any project!". This is very important when it comes to combat design as the smallest change can highly shape your gamefeel and the overall end project.

He doesn't have a lot of industry shown off work on his timeline as he's still early days, but the work that is shown off captures some great examples of impactful and fun combat design.

Under his name it says "A professional combat designer with a love of speed and grandiose impacts" exclaiming that he has a strong understanding of what actually makes combat fun.

- **Bob Wu**

Bob is a technically combat designer who is also bilingual which is clearly shown at the top of his portfolio showing employers he's more hireable for more abroad jobs. He also has a very full timetable of projects from the last 4 years clearly advertising what his roles were on these projects, working on games such as 'Phantom Blade Zero' a game set to release sometime next year which is very combat heavy.

He also has a show reel playing in the background showing off all his impressive passion projects in the background this really shows off his skills when it comes to variety of combat and weapon gameplay design.

- **Théo Caselli**

Théo is a combat designer who has over 7 years working on multiple projects developing their skills throughout. Right at the top of their page you'll be able to clearly see where they're skilled in, instantly telling an employer if they could be a viable candidate.

Although the last project stated was from 2020, it's also quite a big title 'Sifu' where under the page accurately gives an account of what exactly they did for this project listed in bullet points.

- **Giandomenico Lombardi**

Giandomenico is a technical gameplay designer with over 10 years working with unreal, who has done a lot of work in combat design. One big thing that he's done on his portfolio that not many do is a link to a downloadable version of the game, actually giving the employer a proper taste of the game for themselves.

Sources:

- [Job At TTGames](#)
- [Job At Steel City Interactive](#)
- [Job At Jagex](#)

- [God Of War Ragnarok - GDC Talk](#)
- [Madden Accessibility - GDC](#)

- [Combat Portfolio - Craig D. Leak](#)
- [Technical Combat Portfolio - Bob Wu](#)
- [Combat Designer Portfolio - Théo Caselli](#)
- [Technical Gameplay Designer](#)

Skills Audit

Unreal Engine

Multiple techniques are going to need to be utilised for this project such as setting up animation blueprints to make convincing movement and attacks, the use of: anim montages, blend spaces, statemachines and linetraces will play a key role in making everything feel convincing. Another skill needed for this project is UX designer i.e. UI and settings menus allowing for fully customisable controls and gameplay mechanics. Adapting the games code for a gamepad will play a useful role as controllers are a more ergonomic and friendly way to play games opposed to keyboard and mouse. Ai design will be a large part in this project so the combat has a use in the game. My main focus will be playtesting ensuring my approach will have the best accessibility in mind as its important more focus is placed upon this in the games industry.

Photoshop

Making the UI clear and easy to understand is a large part of what's important to UX design so making sure players know how to navigate the menus efficiently, without stress. Photoshop will help me make my UI elements feel right with nicely but not overdone UI tabs.

Audio Design

Audio design is a big thing when it comes to making or breaking the immersion of a combat system, this is because if you choose the wrong sound, make it play in the wrong place, not have it correctly match with the gameplay or be too loud, it'll feel uncanny to real life as most people have a psychological understanding of realistic sound, this could have formed from everyday life, or media like games/movies. So this is something I'll be focusing on heavily throughout the project as I haven't really explored that side of design before.

Behaviour Trees/Ai Design

When you have combat in a game you'll need someone to use that combat on so I'll have to step outside my comfort zone and work on including interactive AIs that you can mess around and fight, they need to react to my acts in a realistic way so it'll make the MC combat feel like its actually happening. This side of game design isn't something that I've properly done before so I am excited to puzzle solve the trials and tribulations of it.

-References-

Jobs References:

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Steel City Interactive, (2025), UX Designer, [Job Listing], Available at:

<https://gamesjobslive.niceboard.co/job/1828880-ux-designer-steel-city-interactive>

Jagex, (2025), Senior Combat Designer, [Job Listing], Available at: [Linkedin Job Listing](#)

GDC Talks:

Breaking Barriers: Combat Accessibility in 'God of War Ragnarok', (2023), Adam Oliver, Santa Monica Studio, [GDC Talk], Available at:

<https://gdcvault.com/play/1028971/Breaking-Barriers-Combat-Accessibility-in>

Game Accessibility: Practical Visual Fixes from EA's 'Madden NFL' Franchise, (2017), Karen Stevens, EA, [GDC Talk], Available at:

<https://gdcvault.com/play/1024114/Game-Accessibility-Practical-Visual-Fixes>

Portfolios:

Craig D. Leak. (2023). Craig D. Leak | Combat Designer Portfolio. [online] Available at:

<https://craigleak2.wixsite.com/my-site>.

Bob Wu. (2024). Bob Wu. [online] Available at: <https://www.jingkaiwu.com> [Accessed 23 Nov. 2025].

Theo Caselli (2020). Caselli Theo - Portfolio. [online] Available at: <https://theocaselli.com> [Accessed 23 Nov. 2025].

Giandomenico Lombardi (2016). Technical Game Designer Portfolio. [online] Available at: <https://giandomenicolombardi.altervista.org> [Accessed 23 Nov. 2025].