

SURVEY: The employment of game education graduates in Finland from 2016 to 2019

Abstract:

For years, the talent shortage has been one of the challenges hindering the growth of the Finnish Game Industry. Neogames Finland ry., the umbrella organisation of the Finnish games industry has identified two keyways to tackle this hurdle: the immigration of skilled industry specialist and rising new industry talent through formal education.

During the past few years, Neogames Finland has focused predominantly on getting high-level political support to solve problems hindering work-based talent attraction, immigration and integration. However, it is equally important to secure that there is a clear path from primary education to game education (meaning degree programs targeted for requiring necessary skills to get employed in the games industry) and from there to employment. For this reason, during Spring 2020, we launched a study on the employment of game education drop-outs and newly graduated students.

For this study, Neogames Finland interviewed 10 Finnish game companies (10 / 240) and 11 game education representatives (11/52). Furthermore, the association organised a survey (with 108 responded) for the graduates or drop-outs from game industry education in Finland during the years 2016-2019. Since there is no coherent statistics about numbers of graduates in 2016 - 2019, it is difficult to assess the share of the sampling compared to all the graduates in respective years

Game companies often focus their recruitment activities on senior-level talent. It is self-evident that newly graduated students are not yet seniors per se. Naturally, this has led to a widespread assumption that there would be a mismatch between the recruitment requirements of game companies and junior talent available in Finland, leading to unemployment of newly graduates.

However, the results of our survey show that **54% of Finnish game education graduates have got employed to the game industry to existing studios. 8% of graduates have established a game studio of their own and 7% have continued their game studies. All together 69% of graduates have found their way to continue in the game industry. In addition to that 18% of graduates have been employed in other industries.**

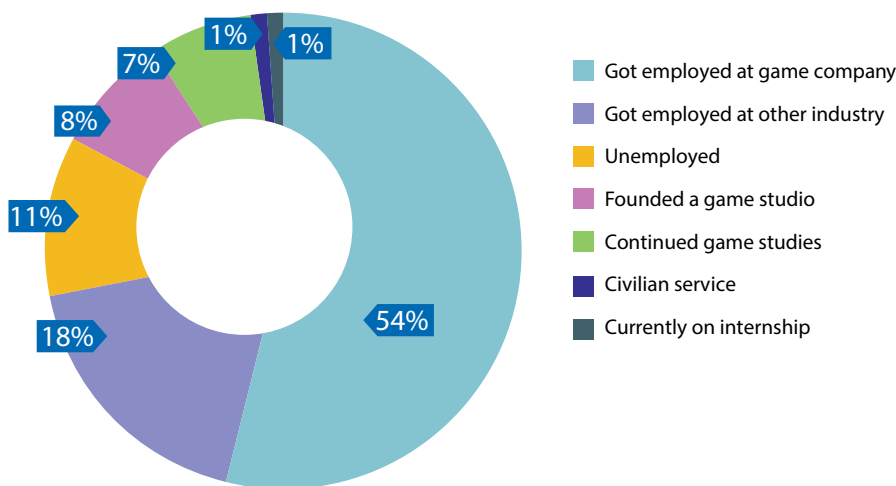
1) Statistics Finland:
http://www.stat.fi/til/sijk/2018/sijk_2018_2020-01-23_tie_001_en.html



From all responses, only 11% classified themselves unemployed. As in other sectors, graduates from vocational education faced more employment-related challenges than the graduates from the Universities of Applied Sciences.

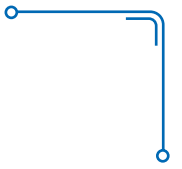
According to these results, it seems that in game studies employment possibilities after graduation are around the same than employment possibilities of graduates on average in Finland⁽¹⁾

Students from the game industry-focused educational institutions got employed relatively fast: 46% per cent of students got employed while studying and 22% right after graduation. 18% got employed during the year following the drop-out or graduation.



Although there does not seem to be any fundamental issues in the skill level of young graduates, we were able to identify several key recommendations for further research on improving the quality of Finnish game education and training:

- **Finnish industry needs to create more career opportunities for juniors:** Around 30% of graduates from game studies do not get employed to game industry. The Finnish game companies recruit mainly senior talent, and there are only a few open junior positions available. Game companies need guidance and best practices on how to coach juniors.
- **Game education must:**
 - **Widen its focus to soft skills:** The required skills level in the Finnish game companies is high. Thus, even four years in higher education can lead to a too narrow skillset to reach out the industry exceptions for junior talent. Especially skills connected with **team and communication skills, working life competence and job search skills** (e.g. CVs, portfolios and writing an application)



- **Increase its co-operation with the private sector:** There is an evident need for better communication and co-operation between educational institutes and game companies on the skills and skill level required for junior positions.
- **Integrate students in the industry community:** Students enrolling to games education need better guidance on mapping the way to reach the skills required to get employed at a specific industry position during their studies. There is a supportive and active game developer's community in Finland. Unfortunately, students seem to enter that community when they are starting to searching for an internship or employment possibilities at the end of their studies. Instead, they should seek support and guidance from game industry professionals already during the first years of their studies.
- **Focus on student exception management:** Many students do not have a realistic image of games industry professions and the skills and skill level required to reach specific positions. Sometimes, industry success stories hyped in media give a romantic and unrealistic impression about game development and everyday work in the industry.
- **Collect better statistics e.g. about number of places in game studies, graduates and employment of graduates after studies.** At the moment many educational institutions don't have coherent statistics about any of these. This makes it difficult to assess the need and targeting of education.
- **Students need to go beyond the formal requirements:** Students, studios and representatives of game education institutions all agreed that just following the curriculum is not enough to secure a position in the industry. Independent and voluntary studies and extra-curricular activities are a necessity to reach out skills that are needed even for a junior job in the Finnish game industry.