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# Bifrost Studios Valhalla

Computer game design traineeships



# Overview

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## **Who are Bifrost Studios?**

We are a computer games development studio based in the Brisbane CBD, with satellite studios based on the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast. Since 2007 we have been making games for Xbox, Android, iPhone and iPad.

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## **What is the traineeship about?**

We offer a workplace traineeship program designed to suit senior students (years 10, 11 and sometimes 12) who are currently enrolled in school and have an interest in the computer games industry or related creative media careers.

The traineeship provides students with paid work experience in a professional game design studio with dedicated training and support from Brisbane North Institute of TAFE (BNIT).

Students who meet all the competency requirements are awarded a Certificate III in Media from TAFE.

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## **What makes the Valhalla project unique?**

Our traineeship is almost entirely studio-based, which makes it a highly compressed, focused, value-for-time experience.

TAFE instructors come to our premises and provide training in the morning, then trainees work on studio-based projects in the afternoon, with support and supervision from our artists and programmers.

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## **When and where does it run?**

We run the program twice each year. (Start dates vary by location. See our website for current dates.) The majority of our trainees are with us for about six months.

Trainees work in our studio one day per week from 10am to 4pm (or 9am to 3pm on the Sunshine Coast).

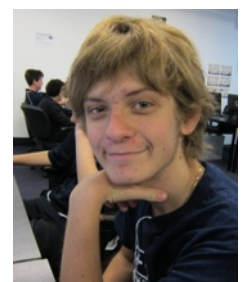
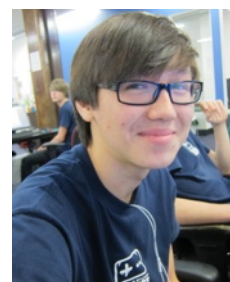
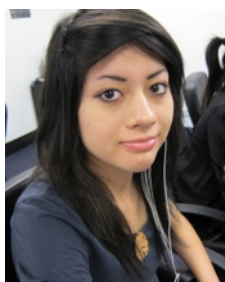
We have studios in the Brisbane CBD and on the Chancellor State College campus on the Sunshine Coast. We are opening a Gold Coast studio in the second half of 2012.

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## **Is there any cost to the student?**

There is no financial cost to the student—in fact, on the Valhalla project trainees are paid to learn.

However, students and parents should be aware of the time commitment involved. This is a workplace traineeship, and as with any job it runs through school holidays. While students can make up missed days, we encourage everyone to stick to the program as closely as possible.



# Course content

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## TAFE and studio programs

The working day at Bifrost is broken into halves, with TAFE staff directing the students in the morning, and studio staff directing them in the afternoon. Each session offers practical, hands-on, project-based work.

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## TAFE curriculum

Lecturers from BNIT deliver core training and assess participants on the following competencies for the CUF30107 Certificate III in Media:

Code	Title
CUFANM302A	Create 3D digital animations
CUFANM303A	Create 3D digital models
CUFANM301A	Create 2D animations
CUFDIG304A	Create visual design components
CUFCAM201A	Assist with a basic camera shoot
CUFSOU204A	Perform basic sound editing
CUFPOS201A	Perform basic vision and sound editing
CUFLGT101A	Apply a general knowledge of lighting to work activities
BSBCRT301A	Develop and extend critical and creative thinking skills
CUFIND301A	Work effectively in the screen and media industries
CUSOHS301A	Follow occupational health and safety procedures

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## Studio curriculum

Studio afternoons follow a structured program that relates the builds on the TAFE training with a focus on computer games development.

Students are given tutorials and projects that develop their skills in modeling, animation, sound editing, programming and marketing.

While some projects are designed to build foundational skills, others are workplace tasks related directly to current projects in the studio, including game design, asset creation, bug testing and copywriting.

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## Continuous improvement

The entire Valhalla program undergoes regular review and adjustment involving both TAFE and studio staff to improve learning outcomes for the students and relate student work to current projects within the studio.



# About the students

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## What kind of students participate?

Most of our trainees are bright, motivated Year 10 and 11 students from state and private schools around Brisbane.

Some of these students are computer nerds, some are talented artists, some are maths and logic geeks, or writers and readers. The best performers in the studio are often the top students at their schools, or deeply eccentric, or both.

In selecting students for the program, we look for smart, industrious, creative and focused young people who enjoy learning, experimenting and working on cool projects.

We look for students with the tenacity to stick with difficult problems and who care about producing quality work.

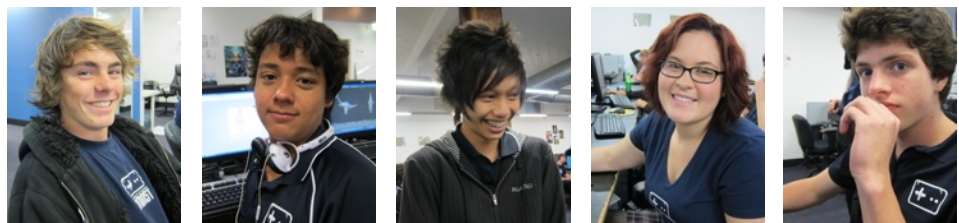
We follow a rigorous selection process to ensure that the students who enter the program are capable of completing the required work.

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## Eligibility limitations

Students must be Australian citizens, permanent residents or New Zealand citizens who have been in the country for more than six months, and they can't have previously completed another traineeship.

Students must be in Year 10 or above in the year they attend the program. (Students are welcome to apply in Year 9 for the following year.)



# Pathways

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## Is the program only for students wanting a career in the games industry?

While some of our trainees will pursue careers in the games industry, many have their sights set on other careers including graphic design, animation, advertising, education, engineering, architecture and software development.

Game design is a true liberal art. It combines complex skills such as visual communication, writing, problem solving and algorithmic thinking, all of which are valued in other fields of work.

Many of our trainees join the program because they want to develop these specific skills, master widely-used tools such as Blender, Unity and Photoshop, and they want to work on real-world projects where the only limits are their effort and imagination.

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## What opportunities are there for further study in games or creative industries?

We are in the process of developing a number of pathways for students wanting to undertake further study in creative media and game design.

BNIT are in the process of creating a one-year school-based Certificate IV in Media which will be ideal for Valhalla graduates in Year 11. Tertiary education pathways for Valhalla graduates include Qantm College or QUT.

Bifrost Studios offers internships for university students, and we give preferential placement to students who have been through the Valhalla program.



# Staying in touch

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## What kind of reporting is provided to schools?

We work closely with the vocational coordinators at schools.

We provide weekly attendance reports and monthly performance reports, where staff rate each trainee's performance and comment on behaviour and attitude in the studio.

We are also available for contact between 8am and 5pm at the studio.

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## How can parents stay informed about what is happening in the studio?

Each month we email a newsletter to school coordinators and parents of students currently in the program.

For more frequent updates, parents can follow the Valhalla Bifrost Facebook page and Twitter stream, where we regularly post updates on what's happening that week.



# How to apply

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## When can students apply for a traineeship?

Students can apply for the program at any time during the year.

We get every prospective trainee to come into the studio for a one-day work experience trial to assess their suitability, and to give them a chance to experience the environment.

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## How do students apply?

While students are welcome to apply directly to the studio, we will ideally work with the vocational coordinators at each student's school. Before applying, students should contact their school's vocational coordinator and find out if they are already familiar with the Valhalla program.

The process is as follows:

1. Valhalla receives an expression of interest either from a school VOC officer or from a student via the web-based application form on our website.
2. We contact the vocational coordinator at the applicant's school to arrange a trial day for the student.
3. The student comes to their closest studio for one day and completes a range of set tasks, including a job interview.
4. Bifrost advises the student and school as to whether or not the student has been accepted into the program.
5. Closer to the start date of the program, Bifrost negotiates the best day for the student to attend the program.
6. Finally, the student and their primary carer must come to a one-off sign-up evening where formal TAFE and traineeship documentation is completed.

Successful applicants then begin their traineeship at the next program start date!



# Advice for students

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## Making the most of the experience

You don't need any special skills to participate in Valhalla. We will give you all the basic training you need.

However, if you are super-passionate, here are some suggestions for things you can do before joining our program, based on your interests.

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## 3D modeling

3D modeling and rigging challenges many students, so any time invested in building your modeling skills will be worthwhile.

We work in [Blender](#), which is free and open-source. The Blender community has created many excellent video tutorials and manuals.

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## Art skills

Sketch and paint. Go to art galleries and exhibits. Read graphic design and art magazines and websites. Build a range of references and develop your taste.

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## Programming

We only touch on programming basics in the Valhalla program, but if you're serious about game programming then we salute you!

Our developers use the [Unity 3D](#) engine and editor and we do our scripting in C#. You can find all the Unity tutorials you could want at [3DBuzz](#).

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## Game design

Play a wide variety of games and analyse your experience of them. Play computer games, boardgames, sports, pen and paper, cards.

Read good games journalism and discussion like [EDGE](#), [Gamasutra](#) and [Gamers with Jobs](#) (which has a great [podcast](#)).

Try making some computer games using development kits such as [GameMaker](#) and [Alice](#).

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## Industry practice

Read [Alt Dev Blog a Day](#). This is a good insight into what professional game developers think and talk about.

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## Inspiration

Creativity is combinatoric, which means it's really about combining existing ideas in novel ways. So a simple way to be creative and inspired is to soak up a lot of interesting experiences and smush them around in your head.

Read widely, including novels, comics, history and science. Watch unusual movies. Listen to music. Study paintings and photographs. Pay attention to the world around you. Make things and share them with people.

