



Messiah University Game Selection Criteria (2022)

Overview

This game selection criterion outlines how Messiah University's esports program chooses titles to compete in on the varsity level. Games are chosen based on popularity, current collegiate league infrastructures, learning potential, and content that is aligned with Messiah's core values.

What is esports?

Esports is a form of competition using video games as the medium. Esports titles are specifically designed to provide a one-on-one or team competitive experience. The industry that supports esports is also sometimes simply referenced as "esports." Messiah University is providing students with the opportunity to engage with this industry on the varsity level and actively learn Christian leadership through teamplay.

What is "Meta"?

In esports, the term "meta" applies to a move or strategy that is popularly viable in competitive play. We apply this concept to our game selection first and foremost because esports is constantly evolving. Games that are popular in one five-year cycle may not be popular in the next. This means that opportunities for college players are fewer for programs that don't make changes when they are needed.

Thankfully, esports players tend to know where trends are going well in advance, which is why Messiah has a proposal system (handily nicknamed "META") for students to petition for a game title to be included in the esports program on campus.

Students are asked to assess the following of a game in their petition: meaning to the student body, educational and cultural learning potential, tournament availability, and appropriateness of content:

- **Meaning to the student body:** A game should provide a good experience for the students playing it. Esports should be popular enough that there is a healthy playerbase to provide a legitimately competitive experience. If the title is a team based game, it is even more important that the title have a popular player following so enough teams can be created to support a robust tournament scene. Collegiate esports organizers tend to run events only for the most popular games.
- **Educational and cultural learning potential:** Video games, like movies or music, can provide learning experiences for students. Esports in particular can foster teamwork, strategic thinking, and promote better understanding of culture or art. Games run by Messiah Esports should also lean into Messiah's own learning objectives ([found here](#)).

Note: Orientation seminars for esports players are held to cover critical thinking skills so that gaming is not a passive consuming experience, but an active and engaged one.

- **Tournament availability:** Games should be assessed for the tournament availability so students can get the most out of their collegiate esports experience. Does the developer or a third party, reputable provider organize tournaments for colleges? If so, then the game should be worth consideration if students are currently playing.
- **Appropriateness of content:** When games are being considered for Messiah Esports, students should consider the game's appropriateness for general audiences (i.e. genre, ESRB rating, content). Careful attention to Messiah's foundational values ([found here](#)) is important in this process as well. For example, games that are overly violent, explicit, or spiritually degrading would not be considered in alignment with these values. Clarifying questions to help guide this assessment are found in the next section.

As of the 2021-2022 school years, Messiah Esports fields varsity teams for:

Overwatch, League of Legends, Rocket League, Hearthstone, Smash Ultimate

Questions for consideration

The following questions are helpful for considering what games to select as esports titles at Messiah:

- 1) Will the community (school, staff, and families) support this game if they see Messiah students representing the school playing it?
- 2) Do important stakeholders need to be surveyed before the game is accepted into the program? This might look like students, parents, or administration.
- 3) First persona shooters (FPS) carry potential concerns as they can sometimes depict the use of realistic guns in combat. If the game being considered is an FPS, is it violent in nature or does it have the option to filter out violent content? Does the game promote modern warfare or is it more of a fantasy setting?
- 4) Fighting games also require some careful thought: Does the game depict realistic blood? Are the characters dressed explicitly? Some games pass this test well (like the Smash Bros series), others do not (i.e. Mortal Kombat).

Procedure for game selection

The varsity game proposal process is as follows: Students first arrange a meeting with the esports coach to discuss the title they would like to introduce to the program. If the coach feels it can be a sustainable addition, students will draft a META game selection proposal to present to the Cocurricular Education Council. CEC will meet to discuss the game and make a final decision. Approved titles receive the official support of Messiah University's esports program. Games can be cleared for recreational play but will not receive financial resources. However, these teams can play under the Messiah Esports name and apply for lab space from the esports program. Please note that games can be removed at will by school administration at any time should concerns arise.