

# How to Welcome First-year Students: Best Practice of a Gamified Orientation Day

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**Abstract:** Various difficulties characterise students' adaptation to university. It is crucial to engage first-year students from the first moment of university entrance, to support their transition from secondary to higher education, and to facilitate their learning experiences and learning outcomes. This study starts from the dual premise that orientation activities offer first-year students important transitional support to cope with the stressful challenges while enabling a sense of community, and that, as students sometimes consider orientation activities as tedious, gamification might make participation more enjoyable, while stimulating students' motivation and information retention. Based on educational literature on gamification of learning settings, this study presents the design, implementation, and evaluation of a gamified orientation day, organised for first-year students. The design of the gamified orientation day is based on the eight gamification features of Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe (2013): players, story, goals, rules, problem solving, feedback, safe environment, and sense of mastery. The objectives of the orientation day and its practical implementation are explained on the theoretical basis of these eight features. Qualitative survey data ( $N=1326$ ) were collected to evaluate the strengths of the orientation day and the areas for further improvement. The data show that students perceive the gamified orientation day as a pleasant learning experience. Students appreciate collaborating with peer students and their active participation in knowledge acquisition. This study provides evidence-based best practices for the gamification of orientation days, and aims to inspire other universities in adapting their strategy on facilitating the transition and orientation of first-year students.

**Keywords:** gamification; higher education; first-year experience; first-year students; orientation day; university transition

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## 1. Introduction

Engaging first-year students from the moment they enter university is crucial to facilitate their transitional period from secondary to higher education, as well as their learning experiences and learning outcomes (Conley *et al.*, 2014). During university entrance, students often face various transitional challenges (Vinson *et al.*, 2010). Orientation days offer valuable transitional support, as they “normalize the stress and distress that come with this exciting yet disruptive transition, ... and ensure that students know concrete steps for utilizing support services” (Conley *et al.*, 2014, p. 206). Additionally, participation in orientation activities is beneficial to first-year students' sense of community and social integration, and counteracts loneliness (Myrtveit *et al.*, 2017). Research on the effectiveness of orientation day offers various best practices: e.g., activities in small groups, supported by student-centered university staff, should encourage active information acquisition (Vinson *et al.*, 2010). As students often perceive orientation activities as tedious, Fitz-Walter *et al.* (2012) argued that gamification makes these learning experiences more enjoyable and engaging. Recent studies have explored the benefits of gamified orientation days: students explore the campus and connect with peers, which strengthens their sense of belonging, while being motivated to actively learn crucial know-how on the university culture (Fitz-Walter, Tjondronegoro and Wyeth, 2012; Bürgisser *et al.*, 2018; Salisbury, Rossiter and Ung, 2018). Additionally, Brull *et al.* (2017) demonstrated that gamification outperforms other orientation didactics regarding students' information retention.

Literature from various disciplines investigated gamification: “game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding *et al.*, 2011) arousing gameful experiences to foster behavioural outcomes (Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa, 2014). Within the educational discipline, especially higher education research and practice, gamification has shown great potential in engaging students and enhancing their learning processes (Caponetto, Earp and Ott, 2014; Manzano-León *et al.*, 2021). Gamified learning benefits university students' cognitive and behavioural outcomes (Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa, 2014; Sailer *et al.*, 2017), and enhances engagement, motivation, and academic achievement (Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe, 2013; Faiella and Ricciardi, 2015; Brull *et al.*, 2017; Manzano-León *et al.*, 2021). Positive consequences of gamification are explained based on several educational premises: e.g. the goal-setting theory, flow theory, and self-determination theory (SDT) (Bai, Hew and Huang, 2020). However, some scholars also demonstrated gamification to negatively affect motivation (Faiella and Ricciardi, 2015). On the question of how many game elements are needed to qualify as gamification of learning,

Kapp (2012) responds that “multiple elements are required to make a game an effective learning experience” (p. 50), and argues that some elements are more crucial in supporting learner engagement and motivation than others. Whilst points, badges, and leaderboards – i.e., the PBL triad – are frequently implemented elements (Bai, Hew and Huang, 2020; Manzano-León *et al.*, 2021), they lead to decreased intrinsic motivation and increased extrinsic motivation, due to external reward stimulation, and social comparison and competition (Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa, 2014; Hanus and Fox, 2015). Implementing PBL is insufficient and solely entails superficial engagement, Kapp (2012) argues; instead, ‘deeper game elements’ are the story, safe environment, challenge, and sense of mastery. In this regard, Faiella and Ricciardi (2015) highlight clear objectives, challenging tasks and authentic narratives, that stimulate a sense of belonging. Additionally, timely, regular, and appropriate feedback is crucial in gamified learning (Domínguez *et al.*, 2013). Finally, gamification should provide a sense of novelty and enjoyment (Perrotta *et al.*, 2013; Faiella and Ricciardi, 2015). The framework of Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe (2013) summarises these design elements, crucial to create meaningful gamified learning environments. The framework distinguishes eight features of gamification: players, story, goals and clear outcome, rules, problem solving, feedback and rewards, safe environment, and sense of mastery.

This study focuses on a gamified learning environment organised for first-year students entering university: an orientation day particularly designed with the objective of enhancing the social integration, information retention, and engagement of first-year students, while stimulating them to explore the campus in a pleasant manner. The design of this gamified orientation day is based on the eight features of Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe (2013). The aim of this study is twofold. First, it offers an overview of the theoretical design and the practical implementation of the gamification of an orientation day for first-year university students (Section 2). Second, qualitative data serve to explore how students perceive this gamified orientation day (Sections 3 and 4). Finally, the conceptual design and the evidence-based results are jointly discussed (Section 5).

## **2. Features of a gamified orientation day**

What follows, elaborates on the design and implementation of this study’s gamified orientation day, based on the eight features of Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe (2013). Each subsection focuses on one feature with first, a theoretical overview of the relevant literature on gamification and orientation activities, followed by a discussion of how these insights were incorporated in the design and implementation of the orientation day. Each feature contributes to the dual objective of the gamified orientation day. The first objective relates to the students playing the game, whilst the second objective comprises the orientation processes.

### **2.1 Players**

Crucial to gamified learning is the social mechanism: enabling players to share experiences and build connections over a mutual goal (Perrotta *et al.*, 2013). The ways in which players may interact with each other are highly diverse. Some gamification settings primarily induce cooperation by facilitating players to collaborate in teams, whereas other settings mainly foster competition between players (Kapp, 2012). Gamification characterised by collaboration is considered beneficial to students’ sense of relatedness and feelings of enjoyment (Sailer *et al.*, 2017; Bai, Hew and Huang, 2020). Contrastingly, gamification settings that enable competition, might enhance social comparison and discourage students (Domínguez *et al.*, 2013; Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa, 2014). Hanus and Fox (2015) explain how destructive competition (i.e., as one player/team wins, the other players/teams lose) could damage intrinsic motivation, whereas constructive competition prioritises pleasant experiences and positive interpersonal growth.

Based on these theories, this study’s gamified orientation day divided students into small groups of six, with whom they collaborate during the orientation day. Students are assigned a group number at the start, without self-selection. However, what students are unaware of, is that teams are pre-assigned based on tutorial groups which are part of their first-year curriculum. Consequently, during the gamified orientation day, students will get to know five peers with whom they will be in tutorial sessions. In line with scholarly insights, teams are not in direct competition; they proceed at their own pace, with equal opportunities to submit their final answer at the end. Winning teams are determined by the correct answer and by a tiebreaker question.

### **2.2 Story**

“Storytelling is an essential part of the gamification of learning ... [a] story provides relevance and meaning to the experience” (Kapp, 2012, p. 41). A story or narrative behind the game, sometimes fantasy-based, is crucial to engage and motivate students (Perrotta *et al.*, 2013; Hanus and Fox, 2015; Manzano-León *et al.*, 2021).

This study's gamified orientation day involves a central narrative: solving the mystery of the famous economist. Following the suggestion of Costa, Viana and Raleiras (2021), a video was developed to effectively involve students in the story. At the start of the day, students watch the video in which a famous economist challenges them to discover their identity. After the video, each team receives a first challenge (i.e., a puzzle). When completed, they receive a folder, containing a booklet with ten possible economists (e.g., Milton Friedman, Elinor Ostrom), and a description of their characteristics (e.g., year of birth, nationality, most important theories). Throughout the game, students can earn clues to discover the right economist. The economists included in the game are chosen deliberately, as their theories are part of the first-year curriculum. To maximize students' engagement and immersive experience with the story (Manzano-León *et al.*, 2021), all game materials (e.g., video, folder, decorations, signposts, posters) were designed in the same theme.

### **2.3 Goals and clear outcome**

Clear goals are essential to effective gamified learning, providing players with a mission or "a sense of purpose" (McGonigal, 2012; Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe, 2013; Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa, 2014). Clear goals and outcomes, together with structured rules (cf. below), define gamification, and distinguish gamefulness from more improvisational playfulness (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). According to Kapp (2012), goals should be clear, specific, and immediate, implying that one should see the direct consequences of certain efforts. Moreover, goals should be challenging, though not too difficult (Kapp, 2012; Perrotta *et al.*, 2013).

In this study's gamified orientation day, a video clearly states the goal from the very beginning. Students are informed on how to achieve this: by completing challenges throughout the game. Nevertheless, besides this game-related goal, the orientation day is organised to prepare students for university: it informs students (e.g., course schedule), stimulates them to complete administrative tasks (e.g., curriculum registration, ordering course books), and encourages to explore the faculty buildings and meet peers. Beyond the game-related goal, these practical and social outcomes comprise the orientation day's essential orientation goal.

### **2.4 Rules**

Rules form one of the basic mechanisms of gamified learning settings, distinguishing the systematical and analytical nature of gamefulness from solely exploratory playfulness (Deterding *et al.*, 2011; McGonigal, 2012). According to Perrotta *et al.* (2013), "rules can be more or less complex depending on the choices they elicit and the related consequences ... simple and binary (if/then); or multifaceted and accommodating a broad range of decision making processes" (p. 9).

Students participating in this study's gamified orientation day are informed of the game rules through a folder with all necessary information: a hand-out with guidelines, a booklet with ten economists, the reply form to submit their definite answer, a map of the faculty, and a route description (i.e., sequence of the stations). Team-specific routes are composed so that not all teams take the same route, to avoid 'bottleneck stations'.

### **2.5 Problem solving**

Gamified learning settings confront the players with problems and tasks, typically challenging enough to motivate them though not too demanding to get discouraged, and which engage players to think creatively and logically to reach the goal of the game (Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe, 2013). Challenges form an essential design principle of educational gamification; they should be "clear, concrete, actionable learning tasks" (Dicheva *et al.*, 2015, p. 78). Moreover, challenge is crucial to effectively motivate players (Kapp, 2012), and encourages active discovery and experiential learning (Faiella & Ricciardi, 2015; Perrotta *et al.*, 2013).

In this study's gamified orientation day, students solve problems and complete challenges, to retrieve clues on the mysterious economist (goal of the game). Students are offered a different challenge at each of the ten stations, located across the faculty. Every station is organised around a certain theme characterising the first-year student transition, including the course schedule, curriculum, student societies, library, student counselling. At a station, students first solve a problem or complete a task linked to the orientation process (e.g., ordering books, subscribing to student counselling). Station tasks vary in length and difficulty. After task completion, students receive a reward: a clue on the economist's name. Each station thus consists of an orientation part (learning task linked to university transition) and a game part (reward to reach the game objective). However, the first challenge students face during the orientation day is not yet linked to a specific station. After watching the video which explained the goal of the game, each team first must solve a puzzle to receive their folder with

game information. This first challenge, which all groups complete at their own pace, assures that not all teams begin the game route simultaneously.

## **2.6 Feedback and rewards**

Another essential trait is feedback that “tells players how close they are to achieving the goal ... [it] serves as a promise to the players that the goal is definitely achievable and it provides motivation to keep playing” (McGonigal, 2012, p. 21). Feedback should be informational, instant, clear, and frequent (Kapp, 2012; Domínguez *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, it should be formative in nature, to facilitate players’ competence satisfaction and evoke the desired actions and performance (Perrotta *et al.*, 2013; Sailer *et al.*, 2017). In this study’s gamified orientation day, students can continuously ask staff members for informal and direct feedback. At every station, staff members guide each team through the orientation task and reward them with the clue on the mysterious economist. Moreover, students can always ask additional questions or feedback to staff members at a central station.

Rewards should have a meaningful link to the goal of the game: “if a reward provided for a task is seen as informational, then it will make one feel competent and in control, leading to higher intrinsic motivation. If a reward is seen as controlling, it makes one feel powerless and incompetent, decreasing intrinsic motivation” (Hanus and Fox, 2015, p. 153). In this study’s gamified orientation day, if students successfully complete a station task, they receive a reward that is a clue to achieve the goal of the game. Furthermore, when handing in their definitive answer, students receive a university goodie bag. This reward is for all students, not only those who got the answer right (social comparison and destructive competition are avoided, cf. Section 2.1). One week after the orientation day, during class time, the winning team is announced.

## **2.7 Safe environment**

Gamified learning should provide students with a safe environment, allowing them to make mistakes without consequences or judgement (Faiella and Ricciardi, 2015). This freedom to fail entails that students are more engaged and perceive less pressure to perform (Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe, 2013; Hanus and Fox, 2015). A safe environment is especially relevant for orientation activities, as first-year students typically enter university with socio-emotional and practical insecurities (Conley *et al.*, 2014). Orientation activities should facilitate a welcoming environment and informal contacts with approachable staff members (Vinson *et al.*, 2010). This study’s gamified orientation day aims to enable a safe environment, considering both the game purpose and the orientation purpose.

Considering the game itself, there is no pressure to perform, and all teams start on equal grounds. The difficulty level is attainable, making students feel competent and motivated. Moreover, staff members are present throughout the game to help students. Fun prevails over performance, reducing nervousness. Regarding the orientation purposes, learning goals are set to reduce insecurity with first-year students and to prepare them for their weeks at university. The different stations offer students information and tasks crucial to their university adjustment. Staff members (e.g., professors, assistants, student counsellors, library staff) and senior students are omnipresent during the orientation days, creating a sense of community. Following different learning tasks, students will feel well prepared to start their university journey and will have more certainty on what to expect during the first weeks. Therefore, they will feel less “lost” in the first weeks at university, as they already know the faculty building and some peers.

## **2.8 Sense of mastery**

Gamification enables players to obtain a sense of mastery by successfully completing challenges, which “has a positive impact on the user’s self-esteem, offering them feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment” (Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe, 2013, p. 68). Similarly, Kapp (2012) argues that a sense of mastery should be central to gamified learning: a focus on mastery of the goal is imperative, players should be visibly recognised for their accomplishments, and this recognition should only depend on player’s own achievement, not of others. The ‘sense of mastery’ element is also closely related to the need for competence (feeling of ability and progression) in light of the SDT (Bai *et al.*, 2020; Manzano-Léon *et al.*, 2021; Sailer *et al.*, 2017).

This study’s gamified orientation day aims at strengthening students’ sense of mastery regarding both the game, and their university transition. First, regarding the game objectives, the difficulty level makes it attainable to find the right solution. As staff members offer continuous feedback and affirmation across the different stations, students gain self-confidence on their game performance. Second, the orientation day aims to ease students’

university transition, facilitating their adaptation to the educational environment and the student community. The orientation day enables students to start their university journey more confident, as they get to know fellow peers, faculty buildings, and university staff, while actively processing information on the academic expectations and procedures.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Participants

This study took place in different first-year undergraduate study programmes at the Faculty of Economics at a large Western European university. The orientation day was organised for the faculty's different undergraduate study programmes: business administration (SP<sub>1</sub>), business economics (SP<sub>2</sub>), and public administration (SP<sub>3</sub>).

The orientation day was organised and studied during two consecutive years (Y<sub>1</sub> and Y<sub>2</sub>). Each session was organised on campus in the week before the semester starts, for max. 300 students, and takes approximately 2.5 hours. Table X presents the number of students who participated in the orientation day. Furthermore, data was collected through a survey at the end of the orientation day. This survey contained several close-ended and open-ended questions. In total, 1806 students completed the survey and therefore evaluated the orientation day. Although completing the open-ended questions was voluntary, 1326 students filled in at least one open-ended question, and thus provided qualitative data to evaluate the orientation day. Consequently, this sample of 1326 students will be further examined in the qualitative data analyses. Table 1 depicts several figures: the number of students participating in the orientation day, the number of students filling in the survey (open-ended and/or close-ended questions), and the number of students filling in at least one open-ended question (i.e., sample size of this study). The response rate comprises the sample size in proportion to the participating students. In total, 63% of the students who participated in the gamified orientation day, provided qualitative data through the survey.

Orientation day participation is not obligatory for first-year students; no evaluation is linked to their orientation day performance. Nevertheless, official university communication strongly recommends all enrolling first-year students to participate. Therefore, most students are assumed to have participated.

**Table 1:** Sample composition

Year		SP <sub>1</sub>	SP <sub>2</sub>	SP <sub>3</sub>	Total
Y <sub>1</sub>	Participants	454	469	63	986
	Filled in survey	392	445	60	897
	<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>697</b>
	Response rate	65%	75%	81%	71%
Y <sub>2</sub>	Participants	562	483	77	1122
	Filled in survey	406	427	76	909
	<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>629</b>
	Response rate	46%	63%	90%	56%
		SP <sub>1</sub>	SP <sub>2</sub>	SP <sub>3</sub>	Total
Total	Participants	1016	952	140	2108
	Filled in survey	798	872	136	1806
	<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>1326</b>
	Response rate	54%	69%	86%	63%

#### 3.2 Data collection and data analysis

Data were collected and analysed in Y<sub>1</sub> and Y<sub>2</sub> of the study. At the end of the orientation day, students were requested to fill in a survey with several close-ended and open-ended questions. The latter resulted in qualitative survey data, by which the orientation day can be evaluated. The open-ended questions explicitly asked students

what they liked and disliked about the orientation day. All data are anonymous. Qualitative data are inductively analysed using NVivo, following the thematic analysis methodology (Braun and Clarke, 2006), by two independent researchers.

#### 4. Results

Inductive thematic coding revealed the main advantages of the gamified orientation day, and suggestions for improvement. In total, 1195 students (90% of the sample) mentioned one or multiple positive traits (advantages) of the gamified orientation day, whereas 546 students (41% of the sample) mentioned a negative trait or suggestion for improvement. Themes raised by less than 40 individual students will not be further discussed. Note that one individual student can have addressed multiple advantages or suggestions. Figure 1 presents the most common advantages.

First, 467 students (35%) explicitly stated that they found the orientation day a nice and welcoming experience: “The gamified orientation day was nice and pleasant. It reduced my stress level” (S1580), “I feel good, I now have more clarity on what will be expected of me at the university” (S608). Second, 382 students (29%) expressed that everything was well explained and that they perceived the orientation day as very informative and useful: “The different stations with information were excellent, the explanation was very clear” (S3). Third, 315 students (24%) appreciated the social aspect of the orientation day: meeting peers and working together: “Very fun way to get to know new people” (S1234), “It’s like a small team building to get to know your peer students better” (S1419). Fourth, the game aspect was acknowledged by 285 students (21%): “The game was certainly an added value for the orientation day” (S153), “Lovely that the ‘boring’ administrative tasks were incorporated in a game” (S674). Another advantage, described by 185 students (14%), is exploring the campus: “Pleasant way to discover the faculty” (S1731). Moreover, 134 students (10%) valued the originality and novelty: “I didn’t expect it to be such a great and interactive orientation day. I’m pleasantly surprised” (S1759). Furthermore, 134 students (10%) acknowledged the framing of the game and the game components (e.g., task per station, quest). Additionally, 97 students (7%) expressed their satisfaction on actively participating, rather than just having to listen to a plenary presentation. 67 students (5%) explained that the orientation day was very well organised, and 66 students (5%) appreciated the crew’s support and feedback. More generally, 60 students (5%) mentioned to perceive the orientation day as a ‘good introduction’, and 50 students (4%) described to ‘appreciate the idea’. Finally, 57 students (4%) enjoyed meeting the student associations and student unions at the orientation day.

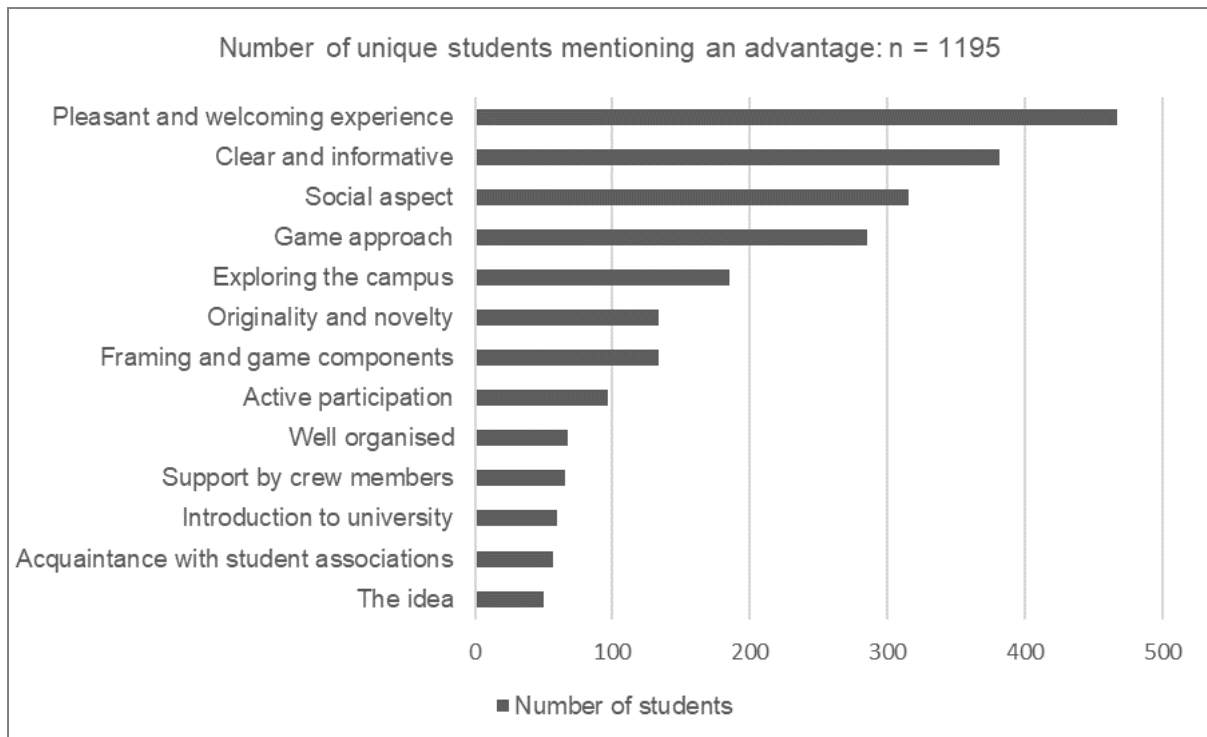


Figure 1: Student-expressed advantages

Figure 2 presents several themes of suggestions, by which students feel like the orientation day can be improved. Primarily, 241 students (18%) mentioned that the orientation day took rather long: “It took quite a while, but we enjoyed it nevertheless” (S107). This suggestion was driven by the sometimes inaccurate communication regarding the timing: “Provide more time and indicate this correctly in advance” (S70). Moreover, 98 students (7%) expressed that they sometimes had trouble knowing what was exactly expected: “Sometimes it was a bit unclear, but there were many crew members to help us out” (S559). Additionally, 65 students (5%) found the game aspect rather unnecessary: “The framing of the game was nice, but no added value” (S407). Furthermore, 54 students (4%) mentioned that they would have appreciated more detailed explanation on the course of the game, especially at the start. Finally, 46 students (3%) found that the orientation day focused very little on informing students regarding the factual information on the university.

Note, that students predominantly offered suggestions in addition to perceived advantages. Moreover, although the survey explicitly tried to elicit suggestions, 223 students – 17% of the sample – answered that they did not want to change anything about the gamified orientation day.

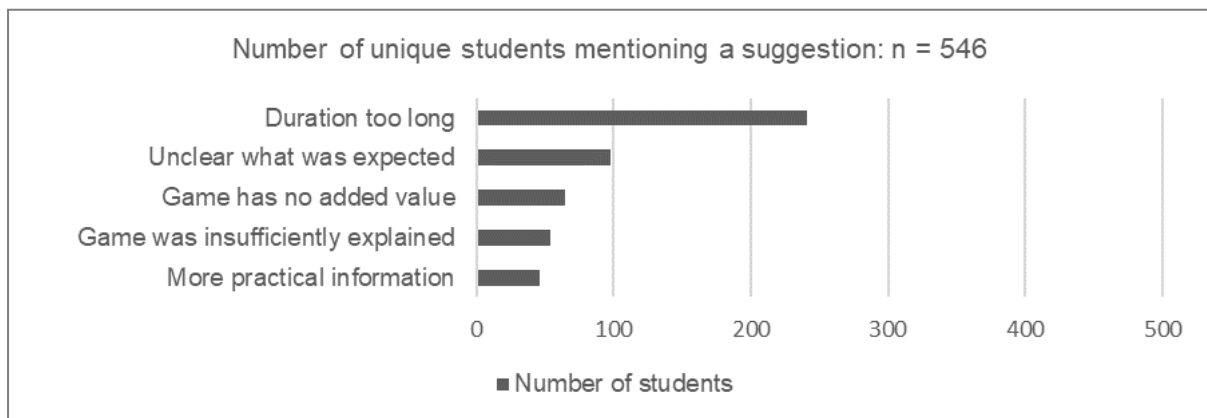


Figure 2: Student-expressed suggestions

## 5. Discussion

This study offers a strategy to facilitate students’ transition to higher education, by presenting a theoretically founded gamified orientation day. The results indicate that this orientation day enables students’ social and academic integration. Students are very enthusiastic about the gamified orientation day, resembling the conclusions of, among others, Bai, Hew and Huang (2020). An essential benefit of the gamified orientation day is that it stimulates students to collaborate and create social connections. Costa, Viana and Raleiras (2021) also confirmed that students have a strong ‘desire for sociability’ and particularly appreciate peer collaboration during gamified learning settings.

The identified strengths of the gamified orientation day relate to the aforementioned features of Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe (2013); these entail the principles on which the orientation day was designed. Generally, the game approach was highly valued, implying the interplay between the eight features of Apostol, Zaharescu and Alexe (2013). Other student-expressed advantages can be linked to particular features. First, students find the orientation day a pleasant experience; the *story* might create engagement, a *safe environment* makes students feel welcome and secure, and a *sense of mastery* enables confidence and satisfaction. Second, students positively perceive what is explained, and the expectations towards them. This might be due to the *rules*, the stations in which *problem solving* is central, and the staff offering continuous *feedback* and a *safe environment* to ask questions. Third, students appreciate the social aspects of meeting peers and working in teams, which are clearly related to the *players* feature. Fourth, students are encouraged to explore the faculty as part of the *game’s goal and clear outcome*, and the ensuing *problem solving*. Moreover, the faculty serves as a *safe environment* to the students. Fifth, the framing and creativity of the game design relates to the *story*. Finally, students were satisfied on the staff’s support and the presence of student associations, which again concerns the *safe environment* and *feedback*.

The data comprised more positive than negative feedback; nevertheless, the students’ suggestions should also be discussed. Several students would prefer the orientation day to take up less time; others perceived the

explanations insufficient, or felt uncertain about what was expected. Correspondingly, Costa, Viana and Raleiras (2021) recommend that ‘the rules of the game’ should always be explicit and clear, to avoid practical uncertainties or inaccurate assumptions of participants. Furthermore, the criticism on the game not being an added value to the orientation day, relates to the findings of Bai, Hew and Huang (2020): notwithstanding students’ general enthusiasm on gamification, a minority does not believe in its additional utility.

The current study contains some conceptual and methodological limitations. First, this study does not include an experimental design (with control group) to evaluate the effect of the orientation day on students’ university transition, which is interesting to further explore. Second, to ensure the novelty effect, students were not offered the possibility to choose between a gamified and a traditional orientation day. However, research has demonstrated that gamification is even more engaging and motivating when students have actively chosen to participate in the gamified learning setting, in line with students’ need for autonomy (SDT) (e.g., Sailer *et al.*, 2017; Bai, Hew and Huang, 2020). Third, this study’s data analyses demonstrated students’ overarching evaluation of the gamified orientation day. Nevertheless, some authors recommend to “investigate specific elements of gamification rather than as an overarching concept so that the effectiveness of different mechanics can be parsed out” (Hanus and Fox, 2015, p. 160). Therefore, it would be interesting to additionally capture students’ evaluations by, either more focused quantitative data to assess the effectiveness of the different gamification features, or in-depth interviews to understand students’ perceptions in more detail. Despite several opportunities for complementary research, this study provides compelling insights on the gamification of an orientation day and intends to inspire other universities in rethinking their orientation strategies to ease the transition of first-year students.

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