REJECTION isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, as far as Ptolemy Oberin is concerned, being rejected was the best thing that happened to him in his working life.

The 23-year-old RMIT graduate is now having the time of his life working as a computer games programmer.

He may not be making the fortune that most information technology students have in mind when they start their degree, but as Oberin points out: "I get more money than I can spend and I'm having a great time."

Yet it wasn't plain sailing for Oberin on graduation.

After finishing his degree two years ago, he made the usual approaches to financial institutions with his mind set on a career in commerce or application programming. Much to his surprise the offers failed to fly in.

It was then that an obsession with video games came into its own.

In the third year of his computer science degree at RMIT University, Oberin had taken two electives in video games programming. His work was good enough to feature at the 2003 Australian Game Developers Conference.

It also gave his folio the depth to secure a job with video games development company Firemint.

Now Oberin gets paid to play games. "It is work, but it's a lot more fun than commerce or application programming because you do have to test the games and play them," he says.

Oberin says the area is a growth industry, with the Australian sector commanding a good international reputation.

But he warns that competition to enter the industry is tough, and suggests students think laterally and enter fields such as medical imaging.

"Medical imaging uses a lot of the same concepts, it's just that instead of running around shooting things you are imaging skeletons and bodies," he says.
Meanwhile, Oberin has become something of a poster boy for RMIT, which this year launched a three-year games graphics programming course through its creative media and computer science schools.

Its streams include digital art, games graphics design and games graphics programming.

Oberin sees the main benefit of the RMIT course as giving students the chance to build up a portfolio with which to lure prospective employers.

Although the games industry is the main employer of 3-D graphics programmers, it is a field that can take graduates into areas as diverse as the medical and film industries.

If Oberin’s experience is any example, his path is one that’s definitely worth looking at.