

Unit 35: Digital Graphics for Interactive Media

Unit code:	F/600/6622
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of the unit is to introduce learners to the basic tools and techniques of digital graphics software used to produce images for interactive media products. Learners will develop skills in using digital imaging software by producing digitally manipulated visual material. They will experiment with graphic styles used to set mood and theme in interactive media products and reflect critically on their own work.

● Unit introduction

Anyone considering a career in the interactive media industry needs to be aware of various disciplines and skills relevant to the industry which may be outside their own particular interest or career goals. For example, anyone involved in interactive media production must be familiar with the creation of digital images, digital graphics being the basis on which interactive media products are sold. The creation of digital graphics is relevant to all aspects of design and these skills are highly sought after in media industries. Those who aspire to work in this industry should therefore gain basic practical experience in the production and development of digital graphics for use in interactive media in order to communicate ideas or develop a specialism.

In this unit learners will become familiar with the basic tools and techniques of the digital graphics software used to produce images for interactive media. These techniques form the basis of the development of graphics for adverts, magazine pages, websites, DVD interfaces, animations, in short for all print and screen design. This unit is therefore fundamental to the development of digital design skills.

The digital graphics process includes enhancing or transforming digitally captured images by means of specialist image editing software. Learners will have the opportunity to develop skills in using digital imaging software by producing digitally manipulated visual material.

It is important for learners to develop appropriate skills in using digital graphics software and this unit provides knowledge, understanding and practical experience through a basic awareness and experience of commonly used software tools. Learners will have opportunities to experiment with graphic styles used to set mood and theme in interactive media products.

Since this unit encourages learners to express imaginative skills, it is appropriate that some critical self-reflective practice is undertaken. This professional skill will encourage a habit of life-long value in any future career.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Understand theory and applications of digital graphics technology
- 2 Be able to generate ideas for digital graphics for an interactive media product
- 3 Be able to create digital graphics for an interactive media product following industry practice.

Unit content

1 Understand theory and applications of digital graphics technology

Applications of interactive media graphics: navigation, eg rollover buttons, navigation bars, navigation menus; animated graphics, eg animated gifs; web banners; logo graphics; screen icons; backgrounds; texture graphics

Pixel: picture element, image resolution, intensity

Raster images: compression (lossy, lossless); file extensions, eg bmp, png, gif, tiff, jpg psd

Vector images: points; lines; curves; polygons; file extensions, eg eps, ai, fla

Bit depth: sampling; bits per pixel (BPP); monochrome; 256; highcolour; truecolour

Colour space: greyscale; RGB (red, green, blue); YUV (luminance and chrominance); HSV (hue, saturation, value)

Image capture: scanners; digital cameras; resolution (pixels per inch); storage (memory, file size, asset management)

Optimising: target destination; bit depth; resolution; dimensions; intended image output, eg screen, worldwide web

2 Be able to generate ideas for digital graphics for an interactive media product

Stimulus: eg client brief, own brief, from market research

Ideas: brainstorming; moodboards; thumbnail sketching

Legal and ethical considerations: copyright; ethical issues, eg confidentiality, representation (race, gender, religion, sexuality), decency, libel; intellectual property rights

Interactive media graphics: navigation, eg rollover buttons, navigation bars, navigation menus; animated gifs; web banners; logo graphics; screen icons; backgrounds; texture graphics

Graphics specification: client needs; audience; thumbnail sketching; visual style, eg colour, style, composition; typography; technical considerations, eg file format, file size, optimisation, intended output

3 Be able to create digital graphics for an interactive media product following industry practice

Plan: asset management (file storage and retrieval, naming conventions); workflow (scheduling, efficient time management); deadlines (production milestones, deliverables, quality assurance)

Software interface: eg work area, tool box, status bar, file information, window control, floating palettes, palette docking and tabs

Asset management: export filepath; file format; compression; file naming conventions; file backup

Workflow: eg slicing images, optimising (bit depth, resolution, dimensions)

Menus: open; save; new; import; export; edit; view; help

Image settings: size; resolution, width; height; colour mode; background; transparency; aspect ratio, file name

Drawing tools: tool options; brush; pencil; duplicate; clone; fill; text; line; stroke; shape; zoom; guides and rulers; grid; snap; palettes, eg colour, gradients, layers, object, brushes, history, actions, size, resolution; layers, eg copying, saving, arranging; flattening; colour selection, eg foreground, background, colour swatch, eyedropper

Editing tools: selection, eg marquee, lasso, magic wand, magnetic lasso, deselect; transform, eg scale, rotate, skew, flip; cut; copy; paste; crop; trim; erase; undo; fill

Advanced tools: effects, eg layer effects, filters, channels; image adjustments, eg brightness and contrast, hue and saturation, colour balance, gradients, transparency, invert; masks; paths, eg vector paths, converting text to paths; image slicing

Image capture: scanner; digital camera

Interactive media graphics: rollover buttons; navigation bars; gif animation; screen icons; logo graphics; backgrounds; menu screens; texture graphics; digital photograph manipulation and editing

Production stages: original development files; final flattened optimised image for client

Aesthetic qualities: composition; colour palettes; typography; creation of meaning

Industry practice: reflect on finished product (compared with original intentions, fitness for purpose, technical qualities, aesthetic qualities); production skills (ideas generation, graphics specification, workflow and time management, technical competence, teamwork)

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 describe theory and applications of digital graphics technology with some appropriate use of subject terminology [IE]	M1 explain theory and applications of digital graphics technology with reference to detailed illustrative examples and with generally correct use of subject terminology	D1 comprehensively explain theory and applications of digital graphics technology with elucidated examples and consistently using subject terminology correctly
P2 generate outline ideas for digital graphics for an interactive media product working within appropriate conventions and with some assistance [CT, SM]	M2 generate detailed ideas for digital graphics for an interactive media product with some imagination and with only occasional assistance	D2 generate thoroughly thought-through ideas for digital graphics for an interactive media product with creativity and flair, working independently to professional expectations
P3 create digital graphics for an interactive media product following industry practice, working within appropriate conventions and with some assistance. [CT, SM, RL]	M3 create digital graphics for an interactive media product to a good technical standard following industry practice, showing some imagination and with only occasional assistance.	D3 create digital graphics for an interactive media product to a technical quality that reflects near-professional standards following industry practice, showing creativity and flair, working independently to professional expectations.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participants
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

In this unit learners should be encouraged to produce designs for a range of interactive media purposes. For example, learners could produce digitally manipulated images for web banners, logo graphics, animated gifs or interface elements for web pages and DVD menus – the possibilities are extensive.

Directing learners to create graphics for a range of purposes will create a context for their technical investigations. Understanding the difference between bitmap and vector graphics would have much greater meaning if they were comparing the results from a photo editing programme and a vector drawing programme when designing logos. Comparing file sizes and quality is much more meaningful when learners are investigating the reasons for optimising graphics for interactive media products.

These examples show that an active experimental approach is required to encourage learners to broaden their technical understanding. Equally, they should be encouraged to be experimental creatively. Interesting examples of professional work should be made available for discussion, which can inspire learners in their own work. An important foundation to any digital graphics project is ideas generation and planning, so time spent on this away from the computer will pay dividends. Learners must be encouraged to think about how ideas are generated and to apply techniques such as brainstorming and mood boards. Learners should be encouraged to undertake visual research by examining existing professional products related to their client or own brief and by looking at existing artists and designers for inspiration.

Workshops and demonstrations are recommended when teaching software applications. Learners should then be encouraged to apply these software techniques to their own assignment work. It is useful for learners to monitor and review their work during the production, creating a quality control process enabling them to improve technical and creative decisions thus enabling them to assess their successes in both the production processes and in relation to the qualities of their finished products.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way of planning the teaching and assessment of this unit.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities
Introduction to unit and unit assessment.
Introduction to digital graphics techniques.
Learners will receive lectures, hold discussions and demonstrations to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• examine the applications of interactive media graphics• examine pixels and image resolution and their relationship• explain raster and vector images and their associated file extensions• explain graphic file extensions and their relationship to file compression• explain bit depth and colour space• explain how to capture an image when using a scanner and a digital camera• explain how to optimise an image for an indented image output.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities

Assignment 1 – What is Digital Graphics Technology?

Learners have been commissioned to write an article on digital graphics technology for an online digital graphics art ezine. They must cover the technology behind digitally generated images and associated compression and optimisation techniques that can be employed for a particular image output.

Learners will:

- investigate the applications of interactive media graphics
- investigate picture element and image resolution
- investigate types of digital graphics used to create digital images
- investigate file extensions used in digital graphics, file compression and optimisation
- investigate image capture, image output and storage of image assets
- generate log/report during investigations of relevant digital graphics technologies used to create digital graphics for interactive media products.

Introduction to ideas generation.

Learners will receive lectures, hold discussions and demonstrations to:

- examine methods to assist with ideas generation
- explain how to develop ideas
- explain how to develop a graphics specification.

Assignment 2 – Ideas Generation for Interactive Media Graphics

Learners receive a brief from college management to create digital graphics for the DVD interactive navigation menu for a new media course.

Learners will:

- generate ideas for rollover buttons, navigation bars, animated gifs, banners, logos and icons for an interactive media product
- generate log/report of the ideas generation process
- generate graphics specifications.

Introduction to creating digital graphic images for interactive media products using digital graphics software and hardware.

Learners will receive lectures and demonstrations, and hold discussions to:

- examine file types and screen image resolution
- examine digital imaging creation tools used for interactive media products
- examine techniques used in the creation of rollover buttons, navigation bars, animated gifs, banners, logos and icons for an interactive media product
- examine image output options
- explain the importance of reviewing finished production work.

Topics and suggested assignments and activities

Assignment 3 – Digital Image Creation for Interactive Media

Learners create graphics based on ideas developed in Assignment 2.

Learners will:

- generate rollover buttons, navigation bars, animated gifs, banners, logos and icons for an interactive media product digital graphics from developed ideas and graphics specifications produced in Assignment 2
- generate log/report reviewing the finished digital images, comparing them with original intentions and their technical and aesthetic qualities.

Assessment

Evidence for assessment

The grading criteria for learning outcome 1 require that learners ‘demonstrate understanding.’ This can be done through a verbal statement in written or oral form (such as a report, presentation, or a structured audio or audio-visual statement) or through learners’ investigations into and experimentation with digital graphics technologies. Notes from lectures, research from the internet, books and periodicals can all contribute to the evidence. Reports based on learners’ experiments will allow them to demonstrate their understanding and to come to their own conclusions on such issues as which resolution to use for which purpose.

Alternatively, understanding can be demonstrated through the application of the relevant concepts or procedures in a practical context. In this case, in order to achieve the merit grade, learners will need to explain, with reference to specific aspects of their work or examples of what they have done, why they have acted as they have. In order to achieve the distinction grade they will need to show precisely how this exemplification demonstrates the application of the concept or procedure, and will be able not only to explain but to justify their actions. Evidence for the achievement of the higher grades might be in the form of audio or audio-visual recordings of conversations between a tutor (or assessor) and the learner. If the conversations are recorded in writing (as witness or observation reports) care must be taken to ensure that at least 50 per cent of such assessments are subject to internal verification.

Tutors should note that it is possible, of course, to combine verbal description of some elements of the content with practical demonstration of others.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 2 could be learners’ notes on the creative process, including storyboards and sketches, and the planning process, including schedules and minutes of meetings.

Evidence for the achievement of learning outcome 3 should be generated in response to a given brief. Evidence could be made up of notes accompanied by digital documents showing work in progress and finished images, tutor observation of software use and a formally written evaluative review of their finished images.

For some elements of this unit, and for some learners, a formal viva voce assessment might be appropriate. When more than one learner in a cohort is assessed in this way care must be taken to ensure that all learners are asked equivalent questions, and that all are given equal opportunities to expand or clarify their answers. Interviewers must also ensure that questions are not phrased in such a way as to provide or suggest an answer. Formal vivas should be recorded for the purposes of internal and external verification and at least 50 per cent of such assessments must be internally verified.

Application of grading criteria

When applying the grading criteria tutors should follow the advice given below. Please note that any examples of evidence given here are indicative only. This advice is not inclusive and the examples need not be included in a learner's work in order for that learner to achieve the exemplified grade.

Pass

To achieve a pass grade, learners must achieve all the criteria at pass level. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

P1: learners will describe correctly, and with substantial but not necessarily complete coverage, the key characteristics of digital graphics technology. They will be able to accurately identify technical issues such as resolution, colour space and optimisation. Alternatively, they will be able to demonstrate the application of these techniques though they will be unable to explain how they have been applied in their own work. Evidence will show a basic understanding of technical terminology but learners will generally be unsure about this vocabulary and will make fairly frequent mistakes when they do use it.

P2: learners will originate and design a digital graphics project which uses some of the key characteristics of digital graphics in simple and conventional ways, but the conventions applied will be appropriate to the form or genre within which they are working. There will be limited evidence of the development process, such as basic visualisations.

P3: learners will have achieved some finished images working with basic digital graphics software techniques, but the outcomes will not be particularly successful. Work on the production will have been purposeful and the outcome will have some shape, some sense of design, or the deliberate application of some technique behind it. Following industry practice, learners will be able to review their finished digital graphics work in such a way that they move beyond merely describing it. They will make evaluative comments upon what they have done but these comments will be assertions that are not supported by evidence or exemplification.

P2 and P3: when engaged in practical activities, learners will need frequent assistance and support, though they will take note of and make use of this help when it is given. If they are in frequent need of such help but fail to make positive use of it they should not be considered for a pass grade for this unit.

Merit

To achieve a merit grade, learners must achieve all the pass and all the merit grade criteria. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

M1: learners will explain the key characteristics of digital graphics technology through detailed illustrative, relevant examples which show how particularly technologies are used. However, learners will not elucidate these examples to show fully how they illustrate the point they support. Learners will be able to accurately discuss technical issues such as resolution, colour space and optimisation using technical vocabulary for the most part correctly, though they may make mistakes or be unsure about usages at times. Demonstration in a practical context will be competent and learners will explain how they have used the relevant techniques, pointing to instances of where they have done so in their work.

M2: learners will originate and design a digital graphics project which combines the key characteristics of digital graphics in an imaginative way, making use of conventions but not slavishly copying them and reflecting in their ideas an understanding of the form. Learners will still be working within recognisable generic conventions, but there will be some imaginative thought behind the work so that codes and conventions will be employed with some inventiveness.

M3: learners will have achieved competently produced finished images working with digital graphics software techniques, showing some confidence in the application of skills. The successes of the outcomes will reflect a facility for digital graphics production. Work will be approached methodically, processes undertaken with care and, generally speaking, thought will be put into the work. Following industry practice, learners will be able to review their work through explanation of what they have tried to accomplish and how they have worked to try to achieve what they have set out to do. They will be able to explain decisions made and will be able to exemplify these explanations through relevant and detailed reference to their own work.

M2 and M3: when engaged in practical activities, learners will need occasional support, particularly when dealing with more complex technology or trying to apply more sophisticated techniques.

Distinction

To achieve a distinction grade, learners must achieve all the pass, all the merit and all the distinction grade criteria. For each of the criteria learners must present evidence that addresses each italicised sub-heading of the content for the learning outcome.

D1: learners will be able to analyse in depth the characteristics of digital graphics technologies through examples which illustrate clearly the breadth of technologies used in digital graphics. They will draw out of each example precisely what it is about it that exemplifies the point it illustrates. Learners will be able to fully explain technical issues such as resolution, colour space and optimisation, and they will justify points made using supporting arguments or evidence. Technical vocabulary will be secure and used correctly and confidently at all times. The fuller and more extensive explanation, provision of supporting argument to support points made, and the higher quality expression will all discriminate between this grade and the merit. Demonstration in a practical context will be to a very high technical standard and learners will give detailed explanations of how the techniques have been applied, exemplifying these explanations with fully elucidated instances of where they have done so in their work.

D2: learners will originate and design a digital graphics project which combines the key characteristics of digital graphics not just in an imaginative way but with ingenuity, using codes and conventions with occasionally surprising results.

D3: learners will have achieved high quality finished images working with complex digital graphics software techniques showing technical excellence in relation to skills. That they have reached 'near-professional standards' does not mean learners have to achieve actual professional standards, that would be unrealistic at Level 3. The word 'near' means that technical and production skills bear comparison with and are beginning to approach the professional standard. Following industry practice, learners will be able to review their work by making an accurate and critically objective assessment of their own achievement with detailed reference to examples taken from that work.

D2 and D3: learners will work autonomously and effectively, being able to work on their own initiative with full commitment. They will be able to work positively and cooperatively with others and meet deadlines. In other words, they will have the kind of self-management skills that would be expected of them in a professional context.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Pearson assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Assignment 1 – What is Digital Graphics Technology?	Article on digital graphics technology for an online digital graphics art ezine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collated research data.• Research log.• Ezine article.
P2, M2, D2	Assignment 2 – Ideas Generation for Interactive Media Graphics	Brief from college management to create digital graphics for the DVD interactive navigation menu for a new media course.	Development log containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• all ideas notes, mood boards, thumbnail sketches• graphics specifications.
P3, M3, D3	Assignment 3 – Digital Image Creation for Interactive Media	As above.	Project portfolio containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• all stages in the creation of the digital images• finished images• personal review comments on the finished digital images.

Essential resources

Centres should develop their own library of up-to-date resources to include print and digital images (from interactive media products, websites, image libraries or professional journals, for example). Because of the practical nature of this subject learners need to have access to the appropriate hardware and software. At this level hardware and software used should reflect that used in industry.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should develop links with local interactive media production studios which could be approached to provide visiting speakers, study visits or samples of typical products.

Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the creative media sector, has a substantial section of its website dedicated to careers, including job descriptions.

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	carrying out research into the theory of digital graphics technology carrying out research to develop ideas for their digital graphics work
Creative thinkers	generating ideas to be used in the creation of digital graphics for an interactive media product trying out different ways of creating their digital graphics, following ideas through to complete a digital representation of their developed ideas adapting their ideas as circumstances change
Reflective learners	reviewing and reflecting on their digital graphics work and acting on the outcomes to modify and improve their work setting goals with success criteria for their digital graphics work inviting feedback on their own work and dealing positively with praise, setbacks and criticism evaluating their learning and experience to inform future progress
Self-managers	creating and developing digital graphics to be used in an interactive media product seeking out challenges or new responsibilities and showing flexibility when circumstances change deal with competing pressures, including personal and work-related demands responding positively to change, seeking advice and support when needed.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Team workers	if working in a group, to produce digital graphics for an interactive media product, taking responsibility for their own role managing their personal contribution to and assimilating information from others in discussions, and reaching agreements that achieve results.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	using digital graphics systems to create their digital graphics
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	managing assets for their digital graphics
Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	using digital graphics systems to create their digital graphics
Troubleshoot	using digital graphics systems to create their digital graphics
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	sourcing assets for their digital graphics
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	researching types of digital graphics and compression techniques to use in the creation of digital graphics
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • text and tables • images • numbers • records 	building and presenting their project portfolio showing their interpretation of their brief, their generation of ideas, documenting the management of their chosen assets and reviewing their own work
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	
Evaluate the selection and use of ICT tools and facilities used to present information	preparing a report on tools used in the creation of their digital graphics and reviewing their own work
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	gathering feedback on their digital graphics as part of their review

Skill	When learners are ...
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	studying manufacturers' manuals to research digital graphics software
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	creating their project portfolio, ideas, notes, production documentation and review comments
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	gathering feedback on their digital image as part of their review.