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Moderator's Report Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel Level 2 Certificate/Diploma
in Digital Applications (DA204)

Unit 4: Game Making

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DA204 – Game Making

Overall

A total of 1212 students were entered for this unit, with 1006 of these being entered for SPB 05 and 2006 being entered for SPB 06 . A number of excellent games were seen and the majority of the work submitted for moderation had been completed to an appropriate standard for this level.

Organisation

Not all candidates were entered for the correct SPB, this is an important procedure. Centres should ensure that candidates are entered for the correct SPB when submitting marks. A small number of candidates submitted work for an expired SPB. The presentation of the eportfolios submitted this series generally used the specified naming conventions for the eportfolios and assessment record sheets. Some centres did not include the eportfolios of candidates with the highest and lowest marks and had to be chased by the moderator. In some instances the detail on the assessor record sheets did not match what was available for viewing on the CD. In a small number of instances the work on the CD/DVD did not work as expected. Centres should be reminded to check the work on the CD prior to despatch to the moderator. Also in some instances there was addition errors on the strands marks giving an erroneous final total mark, and in some cases this was the mark entered online.

Assessor Record Sheets

Generally centres provided detailed comments in the assessor record sheets. However a small number of candidates had assessor record sheets which were not fully completed, or the comments they provided were not beneficial to the moderation of the samples. In a very small number of cases there were no comments at all which is not helpful for the moderation process.

STRAND A – Design and Development Work

The evidence seen this series for this strand is certainly improving. The method of providing relevant information about the complete development process from initial ideas through to the final game was often well documented by many candidates.

However, there are a small number of centres which are over-rewarding candidates in this strand. In particular some centres are awarding mark band three marks for insufficient evidence or detail on the development of the game from initial designs through prototyping to the final game with some centres being awarding marks for the presence of evidence rather than the quality of it. There was a marked decline in retrospective design work this series. However,

it was disappointing again to see that some centres had awarded high marks in this strand for what was almost entirely retrospective design work. Some centres still continue to use and give candidates the old DiDA documentation and scaffolding documents to use for this process. This is not acceptable. Centres must understand the CiDA/DiDA NG is a different qualification with its own requirements and they are no longer fit for purpose. Also candidates must create their own design documents and must not be given templates.

Some candidates opted for a diary type entry system for development logs. However, in many cases the entries bore little bearing on the developmental process, with comments such as; 'I made the assets table', 'I drew a storyboard' or 'I made a level'.

The best candidates tended to include their storyboards as part of their development log. They then used feedback from peers to develop the game from the storyboard and demonstrated the development of their levels with annotations and continued peer feedback to improve their game. Each part of this process was clearly documented supported by screenshots of the prototype and/or coding examples.

Part of the requirements for this strand are that candidates produce a moodboard and an overview/proposal for their game. Most moodboards seen this series were again much better than has been seen in previous series, clearly showing the inspirations for the game the candidates would like to develop. These clearly demonstrated some research around their game idea and had annotations to illustrate how they would develop these ideas. However there were some moodboards which merely had one or two images on a PowerPoint presentation representing an aspect of the game such as genre or style with little or no annotation showing the development of ideas. Some candidates took photographs of their paper moodboards which were either too small or too blurred to see any detail on them.

Some centres had produced sophisticated character and level designs together with some extensive annotation as moodboards. This was clearly assessed by some centres as part of the moodboards. Whilst credit was given for this work, they were not considered as moodboards because they were not a source of the inspirations, but an outcome of them. Candidates, as part of the design and developmental process, should have these fairly refined character and level designs as part of the evidence available in this strand.

In most instances a proposal/overview document was completed reasonably effectively but on some occasions these tended to be very limited. It was disappointing again to see that very few candidates showed evidence of feedback during this stage of the process or gaining teacher approval. This is considered to be a very important step in the process of creating a game which

is suitable for audience and purpose. This is of particular importance when the game either relied on extensively copyright material or the game was unsuitable for the target audience. In many occurrences the games often did not match the abilities of the target audience given in the overview nor of the requirements of the SPB.

Candidates should have created a sequence of drawings (either hand drawn or electronically), that show the levels of the game or the different scenes and goals. The best candidates produced detailed storyboards of each level of their game which included annotations to describe such things as the events on the screen, assets used, rules and any important design decisions. However, a number of storyboards were clearly retrospective, with some again, being merely screenshots of the final game. These make no contribution to the game design process.

An initial set of basic rules needs to be created before commencement of building the game. Rules should not be created as the game is built but pre-planned and therefore the candidate also has a test plan to work to later in the process. Some candidates did this very effectively and created an extensive general rules table with specific rules associated with different levels of the game. They also made it clear in their evidence where these rules had changed in the final game because either the original rule hadn't work or different elements had been added to the game which had necessitated a change. These often being accompanied by effective screenshots of the game or coding. Some candidates had created their rules table retrospectively as they had the activators identified as objects. Some candidates only provided screenshots of the rules within the game software.

Some candidates had produced sophisticated character designs which was excellent to see. Candidates, as part of the design and developmental process, should have these fairly refined character designs as part of the evidence available in this strand. However some candidates simply gathered assets and made no attempt at preparing or repurposing them for the game, for example making all sprite characters a standard size. As such, some player characters were too large and often got stuck in mazes. This not being picked up by any functionality testing. In many instances assets from secondary sources seemed to have been used in their entirety, with only basic cropping and resizing having taken place. Generally evidence of producing and/or editing assets was also often poorly recorded.

STRAND B – Game Functionality

SPB 05/06 General Comments

The games seen during this moderation window were again of generally of good quality with some excellent game being seen. The very best games were almost exclusively made in either Gamemaker or Multimedia Fusion, however there were some excellent games created in Construct2. This is software used by candidates which we have not seen before.

The games produced for this series were on the whole better produced and developed than in previous series. There appeared to be an equal spread of games between the different scenarios in SPB 05. Some candidates however nearly changed the whole of the scenario selected to support their game ideas. Whilst minor alterations to the scenario are acceptable the candidates should always seek teacher approval at the overview stage before carrying on to ensure this does not happen.

Games often worked as intended and were fun to play. A small number of candidates however did not produce games which were suitable for their target audience, or relate in any way to the scenario or the back story. In a number of occasions the games exhibited critical errors either at the start of the game or whilst playing them. It is important that centres assess the work on the CD given to the moderator. In some circumstances it was clear from the assessor record sheets that the games had been marked in the game authoring software and not as the exported version.

Overall games created for the 06 SPB 'Gaming for Grandparents' were very disappointing, with a few notable exceptions. Despite the SPB stating that the game should not be a quiz, a large number of candidates did exactly this. A number of centres clearly pointed candidates at a Gamemaker template for a memory game as all that changed was the images within the game. Centres should note that candidates should arrive at a suitable game after reading the SPB. This should not be a class based approach. This will be monitored during futures series. Also the tutorial level, which was a requirement of the SPB was absent in most games.

In this strand instructions should go further than just the controls, they should, for example, include how to play the game, e.g. how many lives, who are the enemies, how to win, etc. Some of the best games had built in user instructions but also had a user-guide as a separate document. Some candidates produced excellent user instructions, both within the game and also as separate booklet, many of which looked very professional with the presentation matching the theme of the game.

However, the quality of the user instructions varied greatly, and it was disappointing again to see that a small number of games had no user instructions at all. This was again particularly apparent in some Scratch games.

Whilst there were some very good examples of testing evidence seen this series generally the process of testing and making modifications/ changes/enhancements to games was again poorly recorded this series by many centres. Some candidates provided little evidence of the process of creating their game and sorting out any glitches, bugs and problems they had encountered. In some instances the testing evidence consisted of a small number of tests identified with everything indicated as working 'OK'. Very little feedback had been gained to improve the quality of their games and ensure that it worked correctly. Also some candidates had no explicit evidence of testing. In some cases the games could not be fully played as there were serious errors or bugs which actually stopped the game play, such as the player character getting stuck in the maze or on a platform. Some centres continue to use and give candidates the old DiDA test log to use for this process. This is not acceptable, centres must understand the CiDA/DiDA NG is a different qualification with its own requirements. Candidates should use the 60 guided learning hours to learn how to keep a record of progress in developing games, including recording the key development decisions that they make throughout the process. It is important that students not only record the summative testing at the end of the game but also the formative testing – that is, how they corrected errors themselves as they built the game. It may be helpful to include 'before and after' screenshots to show what they did to solve a problem.

Some games created, particularly some created in Scratch, had far too simplistic game logic for the standard of work required at level 2. Some of the games encountered, were over very quickly.

It was again disappointing again to see that some centres appeared to adopt a 'class based approach', particularly for SPB 06. The games were very similar in construction and style apart from the content. This is not an acceptable approach. Candidates should read the SPB and then individually come up with a game solution based on their interpretation of the SPB. Centres should again be reminded that they should use the 60 guided learning hours to teach game authoring skills and then allow 30 guided learning hours for candidate to complete the SPB individually under controlled conditions. This aspect will continue to be closely monitored.

STRAND C – User Experience

Not only does the game have to work correctly it has to provide the player with a positive experience. There are many aspects which can make a game play well and be enjoyable for the player. A good game was sufficiently long enough with a number of levels which got progressively harder. The controls were easy to use and intuitive and if you failed you wanted to go back and try again. Whilst in others there seemed to be little differentiation in difficulty between different levels or there were errors which spoil the game play, such as characters getting stuck.

Some games seen were very good in that they provided the player with a good user experience and you wanted to try and get to the end of the game no matter how long it took. They detailed your progress throughout the game with a score, lives, health or a combination of these. Some had high score tables at the end where you could endeavor to beat your own score or that of a friend.

The following aspects were noted during this moderation series:

- A number of games were very short indeed and consisted of only one very brief level where the game was over very quickly.
- The game provided very little challenge for the player, even as part of the target audience.
- The game was far too difficult for the target audience.
- Lack of instructions or misleading instructions made the game tricky to play, also awkward control selection made some games difficult to play.
- The game was very repetitive in terms of challenge and also the graphics and layout of the levels.
- Lack of difficulty progression throughout the levels.
- Some games created in Scratch were very simplistic in terms of layout and playability, also the game play tended to be very sluggish.
- Some games created in Scratch had assets which had clearly been created by the candidate but they were inconsistent in size which not only made the game look very odd but also on occasions made the game difficult to play.
- In some cases the game could not be fully played because of major errors or bugs in the game. Therefore it was difficult to judge the user experience in these cases.
- Some games had very little differentiation between the different levels of the game. Either they were very difficult from the outset and the player soon lost interest or the game was very easy throughout the levels and therefore the player would be unlikely to want to play the game again.
- Lack of feedback throughout the game either through a scoring system, lives, health, etc. made it difficult to know how well the player was progressing through the game.
- Lack of an end screen made it hard to know when you had completed the game.

Explicit usability testing (playability, interactivity) was weak in many candidates portfolios and completely absent in a significant number. Ideally, candidates need some of the testers to be part of the target audience. Feedback from testers needs to be documented and any changes made as a result. They should also acknowledge when a change was suggested but ignored, and give the reason. The moderator should be able to see explicit usability testing documentation.

Some candidates adopted a questionnaire based approach to usability testing. Whilst this approach does have some merits, the design of the questionnaire is extremely important that it elicits evaluative feedback which the candidates can use. Asking questions such as 'do you like my game', is of no value to the process. Also some candidates produced numerous graphs of their results. Whilst this work is commendable, often there was nothing evaluative which could be used to improve the game.

Strand D – Promo

For this strand, candidates are required to create an onscreen Promo, such as a flash intro or movie trailer/advert to promote their game, attract interest and encourage people to want to play.

Promos continue to improve in quality and some excellent promos were seen this series effectively not only using assets from their games to create their promotional product but also adding effective content. The best promos had good screen captures from their game, appropriate titles and captions to promote their game and also a soundtrack/sound effects to enhance the mood or genre of the game. In the very best examples not only did the transitions between scenes work well but also the addition of well chosen or created supplementary content add to the notion of persuading people to play the game

A number of candidates also used copyright music in their promos which should be discouraged. Also a number of candidates created leaflets, game cover inserts or posters for their game. Whilst the content of some of these was very good they did not meet the requirements of the SPB which asks for a digital product and also restricts the use of presentation software for this task.

Strand E – Game review

Candidates in this strand were expected to produce a review which was suitable for publication in an on-screen computer games magazine. There were again some very detailed reviews seen this series with candidates making comprehensive evaluative statements about the strengths and weaknesses of the game and also thorough feedback from others written in a game review style.

Most candidates could generally provide some evaluative comments about the strengths of the game, but sometimes failed to provide a balance between the strengths and weaknesses of the game. Some candidates merely had a few short bullet points for both strengths and weaknesses, a review written in a magazine style would be expected at level two.

Whilst many candidates did include feedback from others in their review some of it was not well chosen as required by mark band 2. The mark grids also require that feedback is from players, so a single short comment is insufficient. A small

number of candidates clearly made this feedback up as they stated it had come from celebrity players.

Some candidates produced a review which did have some evaluative comments on the game and also feedback from others but the review did not look like a review which was suitable for on-screen publication.

Some candidates produced a detailed review, which in essence was a narrative of the process of creating the game. This is not required.

