Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel

Level 1 Certificate/Diploma in
Digital Applications

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DA101 - Developing Web Products

Overall

DA101 is a mandatory unit for both the Level 1 CiDA and DiDA qualifications. Two SPBs were available to students for this series: The Road to Fame (September 2014 SPB) and App Spotlight (September 2015 SPB). December 2016 was the last opportunity for centres to enter students for The Road to Fame SPB.

In this unit, students are required to use web-authoring software, and other appropriate software tools, to create a web product for a specified audience and purpose. The Road to Fame SPB required students to produce a website to promote a band and the App Spotlight SPB focused on a website to review apps popular amongst young people aged 11 to 13.

Centres are reminded that the work submitted for moderation should only include file types and formats accessible through the Digital Applications moderators' toolkit. It was encouraging, however, to note that all students entered for this series saved their web pages as .html files, which meant that they could be viewed through a web browser.

Strand (a) – Design a consistent page layout

Each SPB is written as a client brief and it is important that students read the whole SPB carefully to develop a clear understanding of the intended purpose, audience and specific requirements for the web product.

The design stage is an opportunity for students to generate ideas in response to the client brief and some students' design work was clearly influenced by the intended audience and purpose for the site. There were several examples of very detailed planning evidence that included the size and position of the assets on each page, how the page will look and, where appropriate, how the assets will function.

However, some students' page designs only gave a rough indication of the layout of the assets on the page and contained limited annotations to highlight design features such as the colour scheme, fonts, font style and font size.

Similarly, although some students created web pages that were consistent in structure and appearance, other students produced web pages where the page size, the size and position of the banner, the navigation bar, colour scheme, footer, fonts and font sizes varied considerably from page to page.

Overall, most students would benefit from further experience in planning an appropriate page layout and design and applying it consistently to each page in their website.

Strand (b) – Select, prepare and present content

There were some examples of websites where the student had gathered and created a range of assets that were appropriate to the purpose of the site and appealing for the intended user; some of the screen recordings of hints and tips for using specific apps for the App Spotlight SPB were particularly impressive. However, many of the assets used by students were not suitable for the intended audience and purpose; for example, unappealing or unrelated images, low-resolution images and incomplete or unsuitable text were all common in responses to both SPBs. Students should select assets from primary and secondary sources that are appropriate to the scenario and some of the more successful students used their assets tables to assess the relevance of each asset.

Preparing content is an essential part of the production process and although some students provided evidence of preparation techniques such as editing video files and optimising graphics, most students would benefit from further guidance on how to prepare assets. Practicing techniques such as creating buttons, editing text, cropping and re-sizing images and compressing files would better enable students to prepare assets consistently and effectively.

Although some students provided specific details of how each asset was prepared in the assets table, most students who used the assets table to show the asset preparation process offered general, rather than specific, information about the development process. Annotated screen shots proved to be a more effective way to evidence key aspects of the development process.

Strand (c) – Create web pages using web-authoring software

There were several examples of web pages where the web-authoring software had been used to effectively insert, position and present the content on the page. In these examples, text presentational techniques such as headings, bullets and alignment were used, images were undistorted and the page design helped to communicate the purpose of the site. However, it was also common to see pages with very little content, distorted images, blocks of text without any emphasis, links that hadn't been styled and little balance between the text and images on the page.

Students need to develop the ability to use web-authoring software to control the alignment of text and images, to resize images in proportion,

to enhance text and images through appropriate presentation features and to manipulate colour effectively if they are going to meet the assessment criteria for the top mark band in this assessment strand.

Strand (d) – Produce a functional website

Most students were appropriately rewarded for the extent to which they produced a functioning website that met the requirements of the brief. Where the links did not function as intended, this was generally recognised in the marks allocated by the assessor.

The multimedia content was generally incorporated within the site effectively and most students added controllers to support the user experience.

The email and external links did not always function appropriately and centres are reminded that to be fully prepared for the task, students need to be able to create different interactive components, such as navigation bars, internal, external and email links, rollovers and hotspots. It was, however, encouraging to see that most students designed navigation bars with fonts, colours and graphic content that were legible and matched the design of the site.

Although students do not need to provide evidence of testing, appropriate testing clearly helps to highlight issues such as broken links, overlapping text and images and missing content.

Strand (e) – Review the website

Although nearly all the reviews contained comments regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the websites, most of the comments were descriptive, rather than reflective. Similarly, although students included feedback from users, this was often brief and students didn't respond to the feedback in any detail. Furthermore, most reviews contained few appropriate suggestions for improvement.

It is clear that students would benefit from further guidance on how to produce a focused review that contains meaningful comments about the functionality, usability and effectiveness of the final website in relation to the intended audience and purpose, how to utilise the feedback from the end-of-project reviewer and make appropriate suggestions for further improvements.