



Pearson

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel Level 1 Digital Applications
(CiDA/DiDA)

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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 candidates for this series: App Spotlight (Entry option B) and Freewheeling (Entry option C). December 2017 is the last opportunity for centres to enter candidates for the App Spotlight SPB.

In this unit, candidates are required to use web-authoring software, and other appropriate software tools, to create a website for the specific audience and purpose established in the Summative Project Brief (SPB).

Generally, candidates produced websites that met some, or all, of the specific content requirements listed in the SPB. However, only a minority of candidates effectively met the broader aims of each brief, which were to provide meaningful news, reviews and hints and tips on using apps for 11 to 13 year olds (App Spotlight) and to encourage secondary school candidates to cycle to school (Freewheeling).

Although it was encouraging to note that most of the work submitted for moderation was saved in file types and formats accessible through the Digital Applications moderators' toolkit, centres are reminded that candidates must save their web pages as .html files so that they can be viewed through a web browser.

Strand (a) – Design a consistent page layout

If they are going to meet the client's intentions, it is important that candidates extract key information from the scenario in the SPB about the purpose of the website, its intended audience and the client's specific requirements, before they begin to plan and design their website.

The design stage is an opportunity for candidates to generate ideas in response to the client brief and some students' design work was clearly influenced by the intended audience and purpose of 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 candidates created web pages that were consistent in structure and appearance, other candidates 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 candidates 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 audio advertisements recorded for the Freewheeling SPB were particularly impressive. However, many of the assets used

by candidates 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. Candidates should select self-generated assets and assets from secondary sources that are appropriate to the scenario and some of the more successful candidates used their assets tables to assess the relevance of each asset.

Preparing content is an essential part of the production process and although some candidates provided evidence of preparation techniques such as editing video files and optimising graphics, most candidates 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 candidates to prepare assets consistently and effectively.

Although some candidates provided specific details of how each asset was prepared in the assets table, most candidates 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.

Candidates 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 candidates 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 candidates 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, candidates 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 candidates designed navigation bars with fonts, colours and graphic content that were legible and matched the design of the site.

Assessors should be aware when assessing the evidence for this strand, that candidates must fulfil most of the requirements of the brief to meet the assessment criteria for the top mark band. This involves candidates not only including the specific content requirements listed in the SPB, such as news and reviews on the latest releases (App Spotlight) and a map of a safe cycle route to the student's school or college (Freewheeling), but also producing a website that includes relevant and interesting news, reviews, hints and tips on apps that are popular with the target audience of 11 to 13 year olds (App Spotlight) and content that inspires 11 to 16 year olds to join the Freewheeling campaign and cycle to school (Freewheeling).

Although candidates 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 candidates included feedback from users, this was often brief and candidates didn't respond to the feedback in any detail. Furthermore, most reviews contained few appropriate suggestions for improvement.

Candidates would clearly 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.

DA102 - Creative Multimedia

Overall

For the 0617 series, most candidates submitted work for the 0915 SPB 'iPies and Puds'. There was also a small entry for the new 0916 SPB 'i-Apply'. Most of the work submitted for moderation had been completed to an appropriate standard for this level.

Strand (a) – Design multimedia products

The design work required is identified in each SPB and, although similar in scope, does vary from one SPB to the next. For this series, many candidates produced designs that were carefully presented and identified most of the assets they would need for implementation. Several candidates included comments relating design decisions to the requirements of the brief. Some of the best designs were hand drawn, although some of these suffered from poor scanning where much of the detail had been lost.

Less successful candidates presented outline designs, which lacked coherence and gave only a rough indication of function and likely user experience. In these examples comments on design decisions were missing and few assets were identified.

As in all previous series, several examples of design documents that appeared to have been produced in the minimum time possible were seen and a small number of candidates produced design documents that were clearly retrospective and therefore should not have been awarded marks.

Strand (b) – Produce digital assets

Most candidates included an assets table with information relating to the assets gathered for use in their products. Many candidates correctly acknowledged their sources although search engines or 'The Internet' were often quoted as secondary sources.

Several candidates included information about the assets they produced, including video and audio assets in addition to images and covering the two original assets referred to in the assessment grid. Less successful candidates provided minimal information about the assets, although most candidates did produce some original work.

In some instances, marks in this strand were not agreed because of the poor standard of the assets used. In particular, problems were noted with distorted images and variable sound levels on videos.

Strand (c) – Develop multimedia products

The following observations, from the 0616 series, regarding products for the 0915 SPB 'iPies and Puds' remain relevant;

- Recipe Page – Several candidates used the recipe as an opportunity to demonstrate a range of features for the development of text, with examples of tabbed content, use of tables and bullet points. Accurate alignment of the recipe text tended to produce a successful page. The most successful candidates embedded the required video, provided suitable controls and turned off any auto play facility.

- Introductory animation – The more successful animations included audio assets and had been created using time-line based software. Where stop frame techniques had been used, these did not always include sufficient images to produce the required motion and the examples where video files had been edited to produce a stop frame effect did not work as intended.
- Presentation of ingredients – Generally well done, with good use of effects and the standard transitions available in presentation software.
- Video of critics – Candidates should be reminded of the requirement to optimise file sizes for on screen viewing when publishing their video work.

Observations, based on a limited number of examples, regarding the products for the 0916 SPB 'i-Apply';

- Title screen – Several effective title screens were seen, with most candidates producing a form of splash screen, using animated text, although few candidates included music, as required by the project brief.
- Navigation screen – Most candidates produced a functional navigation screen, with hot spots over images, as required. It was helpful when the screens also included introductory text.
- Talent animation – Some effective animations were seen, but several only achieved the suggested run time by looping the same content. The more successful animations included appropriate original assets and utilised motion tweens. Some effective stop frame animations were seen, although very few animations included background sound effects, as required by the brief.
- Ambition presentation – The slideshows seen addressed the requirements of the brief, although use of effects and transitions, for interest, was often limited.
- Fun time movie - Some effective videos were seen, with several candidates demonstrating good editing skills and achieving working transitions between still images and video clips. Most candidates included a separate sound track, as required, although some issues with audio levels and synchronisation were noted.
- Contact screen – Most candidates included an adapted version of their title screen, with added contact details, as required.

Strand (d) – Present work

At this level, candidates are required to create an index page for their work, a standard template should not be provided.

As in previous series, candidates created a functional index page with links to the products and supporting evidence. The more successful index pages were well organised with clear links arranged in a logical manner.

There were few moderators' toolkit issues arising and the use of appropriate file names was much improved. In several cases, redundant files within folders, raw video files, unedited audio files and pre-published animations had been retained. These significantly increased the size of the candidates' folders.

Strand (e) – Review the products

Most candidates were able to make some descriptive comments on the strengths and weaknesses of their products and many recorded interim feedback received during the development of the work.

Where full marks were agreed for this strand the candidates had included reflective comments and made suggestions for further improvement of the final products, based on ideas arising from their consideration of end user feedback.

DA103 – Artwork and Imaging

Overall

A total of 126 candidates were entered for the Fun to Read and Party Time SPBs.

In general, the work was generously assessed by some centres and the following points are put forward to assist centres to deliver the unit and assess students' work.

Copyright requirements mentioned in both SPBs and the Support Notes give clear guidance about how the requirements of copyright should be met. It is not sufficient to simply acknowledge the sources of any copyright images used, however it was not uncommon for candidates to use images which were clearly subject to copyright and to quote the source on the elements table.

In some cases, just the search engine was quoted as the source or it was stated that the image was primary, as it had been edited by the student.

Centres should encourage candidates to use primary sources wherever possible and candidates must use primary sources where it is a requirement of the SPB to do so. Due to the nature of this unit, candidates do not necessarily need to use any secondary sources as they can create their own elements. However, where secondary sources are used, candidates should use images with a Creative Commons licence.

Strand (a) – Design and develop graphic products

In order to access the higher mark bands in this strand it must be clear how the candidates arrived at the final design for their products. Candidates must include designs that give an idea of how the products will function and what the user experience will be. In general, design work was weak and rarely supported the marks awarded by centres. There must be comments on each of the designs describing what is expected in the final product.

Strand (b) – Create graphic elements

Each product in the SPB is designed to allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to use graphic tools but some candidates failed to take advantage of the opportunities provided.

Candidates must provide evidence of using both drawing and editing tools and provide comments on the individual tools used when creating each graphic element.

Where information was provided on tools it tended to be only for the use of drawing tools and there was little, if any, information on editing tools. There were instances where there was little evidence of any editing tools being used in the products.

The project allows candidates the opportunity to edit images to appear on their various products. Most candidates just inserted images without carrying out any form of editing.

Not only must candidates use the correct tools but they must also consider the quality of the finished products and how they fit the audience and purpose. There

were instances where although drawing tools had been used, the quality of the final products was weak.

Strand (c) – Produce artwork and images

This strand allows candidates to evidence the finished products. The products produced must be such that they not only meet the requirements of the SPB but are of a suitable quality and take into account the audience and purpose of each.

It appeared that some candidates used the requirements of the SPB as a checklist rather than looking at the quality of the products created. Candidates must not only use the correct tools but must also consider the quality of the finished products and how they fit the audience and purpose. The use of editing tools also comes into this strand when considering the quality of the finished products and simply placing additional images on existing images does not use editing tools sufficiently for this level.

Strand (d) – Present work

The recommended size for the eportfolio is 35MB as stated in the SPB, however it was not uncommon for centres to submit eportfolios that were significantly larger than this, in some instances eportfolios were over 150MB. In most cases this was the result of duplication of word processing and PDF files or image files, which had not been prepared correctly for inclusion in the eportfolio.

Some centres submitted eportfolios containing files that could not be accessed by the moderator. The Digital Applications moderators' toolkit specifies the file types that all moderators can view. It is each student's responsibility to ensure that their eportfolio only includes files in the listed formats.

Most candidates produced eportfolios with an index page including links to all evidence. Most were organised appropriately to showcase the final products and the supporting evidence.

Strand (e) – Review the products

Candidates need to provide comments on the strengths and weaknesses of each of their products and the assets used to create them.

Feedback provided to candidates should be suitable to allow them to offer suggestions for improvement. If weak products are given good feedback there is no room for candidates to improve their work.

Assessment

Centres are encouraged to hold an internal standardisation of students' work before submitting it for moderation, especially where there is more than one assessor for the unit.

Centres should also check that Centre Assessor Sheets and eportfolios are named according to the conventions listed in the Administrative Guidance for internally Assessed Units document.

DA104 – Game Making

Overall

A total of 65 candidates were entered for this unit, with 28 of these being entered for SPB02 and 37 for the new SPB 03. Several very good games were seen during the moderation process and most of the work submitted for moderation had been completed to an appropriate standard for this level.

Organisation

The presentation of the eportfolios submitted this series generally used the specified naming conventions for the eportfolios and Centre Assessor 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 Centre Assessor Sheets did not match what was available for viewing on the CD.

Assessor Record Sheets

Generally, centres provided detailed comments on the Centre Assessor Sheets. However, a small number of candidates had Centre Assessor Sheets that were not fully completed, or the comments provided were not beneficial to the moderation of the samples. In one instance, there were no comments on the Centre Assessor Sheet, which was not helpful to the moderation process.

Strand (a) – Design and development

The requirements for this strand are that candidates produce an overview/proposal for their game. Also, this strand is important because it shows the design and development process of the game. Key design documentations such as storyboards, assets table, and rules table are also required for this strand.

Some centres assessed this strand very generously. Marks appeared to be awarded for the mere presence of evidence rather than the quality of it. It was disappointing to see that some centres had awarded marks in the top mark band for what was almost entirely retrospective design work. Centres should also be aware that the moderator does need to see all the design work that the centre has based their assessment on.

In most instances the proposal/overview documents were completed reasonably effectively but on some occasions these tended to be very limited. It was disappointing to see that very few candidates showed evidence of obtaining approval from their teacher before carrying on. In some instances, the candidates needed teacher approval, as their games were either unsuitable for the stated target audience or didn't meet 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. Each storyboard should include some annotations to describe such things as the events on the screen, assets used etc.

A significant 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. Others were extremely basic with simple drawn boxes with

no annotation. The game could not be made from these designs. A small number of candidates produced no storyboards as part of their design work.

An initial set of basic rules needs to be created before candidates start to build 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 effectively but others often only had three or four rules identified.

Assets used in the game were often well recorded in an assets table, but there was little evidence as to what the candidate did with these assets, for example how they were edited or where they were used within the game. Some assets within games could have been edited more effectively, as there were often large size difference between sprites. Some of these large sprites made it difficult to navigate mazes or platforms without getting stuck.

Strand (b) – Game functionality

The games seen during this moderation window were generally of good quality for this level, however there were a number of games that did not function as intended. A small number of candidates did not produce games which were suitable for the target audience of the SPB or relate to the theme of the SPB. For example, in the SPB 03 'Platformer' some candidates did not create a platform game at all. In a small number of cases the games were just not appropriate for this level of work. For example, a character simply moving around a maze with no 'enemies', lives or scoring is not of suitable quality.

The best games seen during the moderation process had introductory screens, clear user instructions for the keyboard and/or mouse controls and explicit game objectives. The games had a number of levels which progressively got harder.

In some cases, the games could not be fully played and in others there seemed to be little differentiation in difficulty between different levels. In some games the ending came and the player was unaware that they had either won or lost.

Centres need to assess the final executable file on the CD sent for moderation, as some games came up with critical errors whilst playing them. This may be due to the conversion to an .exe file or on transfer to the CD sent to the moderator.

Whilst most candidates included user instructions either as part of the game or as a separate document, it was disappointing to see that a number of games still had no user instructions at all. Some of the best games had built in user instructions but also had a user-guide as a separate document.

It is important that candidates are exposed to a number of game authoring software packages before commencing the SPB so they are able to select the most appropriate to create their game based on their proposal. It was a disappointing aspect to see that all the candidates from some centres created the same type of game in the same authoring package, with the result that all the games looked very similar. This is not an acceptable approach. Candidates should be working independently and selecting the genre, style and type of game they want to create based on their proposal after reading the SPB thoroughly.

The need for prototyping and testing cannot be overemphasised. Obtaining feedback through the development process is vital in order to get a game that works from beginning to end as intended. Some candidates did not fully test their games to ensure that they worked as intended. The process of testing and making

modifications/changes/enhancements to games was also often inadequately recorded. In some instances, the testing evidence had only four or five tests identified with everything indicated as working 'OK'. It is important that candidates 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.

It was clear that in some instances the early levels of games were tested well but the final level(s) were not as rigorously tested, as in some examples the final level was almost impossible to complete, even by someone in the target age group.

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. Some games seen were excellent 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 endeavour 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.
- Some games created were very simplistic in terms of layout and playability. They were often over very quickly and the game play was very repetitive.
- Awkward control selection which made the games difficult to play.
- The candidates merely used the assets to be found within the software and created nothing of their own.
- Poor asset editing made the game difficult to play and often characters became stuck.
- In some cases, the game could not be fully played because of major errors or bugs in the game.
- Some games had very little differentiation between the different levels of the game.
- In some games, the ending came and the player was unaware that they had either won or lost.
- No feedback to the player to tell them how they were doing, for example, scoring and lives.
- The instructions for playing the game, for example key strokes, sometimes differed from the actual game.

In many instances, there was no explicit usability testing evident.

Strand (d) – Game review

Candidates in this strand were expected to produce a review of their game which includes:

- comments on strengths and areas for improvement

- suitability for target audience
- feedback from your game testers and game reviewer
- your responses to feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Candidates could generally provide relevant, but simplistic, evaluative comments about the game, which were often in bulleted format. However, these often failed to provide a balance between the strengths and weaknesses of the game. The feedback from test users and the suggestions for improvement was much better this series and some candidates did this very well. However, in some instances candidates had not gathered any feedback. Candidates should endeavour to gain feedback on their completed game and ask questions about how their game could be improved. Several candidates did not present a review as part of the eportfolio.

Strand (e) – Presenting work

Most candidates successfully created a working index page which provided access to all the evidence. File and folder names were appropriate in most cases. Only in a small minority of instances did links not work from the index page. Some centres on occasions harshly marked candidates in this strand. The SPB simply asks for a working index page which clearly links to all the evidence. Some centres expected candidates to produce a multi-page eportfolio with comments and in some cases multimedia linked to the game. Whilst this work is creditable and is nice to see, it is not required.

Other centres appeared to have offered candidates a template for this strand. This is an assessed strand and candidates should work on this independently. Some candidates also appeared to have been given templates which were completely inappropriate, for example old DiDA Level 2 templates.

