Examiner Report

June 2015

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. This was the first moderation series of the NG CiDA/DiDA qualification and the entry for DA101 was 405.

Students are assessed through a Summative Project Brief (SPB) and for the 0914 SPB, The Road to Fame, students were asked to produce a three page website to promote a band.

In the main, the work submitted for moderation only included file types and formats accessible through the Moderators' Toolkit, which was supportive to the moderation process. In general, students provided evidence of an appropriate engagement with the process of developing a web product and the vast majority of the websites produced by students met most, if not all, of the requirements of the SPB.

Strand (a) – Design a consistent page layout

There was some very detailed planning evidence, where students had clearly considered the band's style of music when designing the pages. Although most students produced designs for each of the three web pages that showed the layout of the assets on each page, there was considerably less evidence of a consideration of appropriate design features such as the colour scheme, fonts, font size and position of interactive features such as links, hotspots or rollovers.

The second aspect of this assessment strand is the consistent application of page layout and design. Aspects of page layout and design often varied considerably from page to page, such as the size and position of the banner and the navigation bar, the choice of font and font size and the colours used.

Generally, students would benefit from spending more time planning an appropriate page structure and design, which they could then apply to each page in the site to ensure greater consistency in relation to the structure and appearance of each page across the site.

Strand (b) – Select, prepare and present content

In many instances, students were generously rewarded for the extent to which the assets they prepared were appropriate for audience and purpose. Although many students gathered the required assets and prepared the images and audio file in appropriate formats, much of the content was not appropriate for the audience and purpose; for example, irrelevant text, unappealing images, low-resolution images, incomplete text and unrelated images, illustrations and graphics were all common.

Furthermore, most of the assets tables provided general, rather than specific, information about aspects of the development process, which was not always recognised by assessors. Annotated screen shots of key stages in the preparation of

assets, such as resizing, cropping or compressing assets, would provide further evidence of attainment for this assessment strand.

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

Although not every student submitted a website with three pages, almost every student produced web pages that combined text and images together. In the best examples, text presentational techniques such as headings, bullets and emboldened text were used, sufficient assets were included on the pages and the page design helped to communicate the purpose of the site: to get everyone talking about the band and its music.

However, it was also common to see images that had been distorted, blocks of text without any emphasis and a lack of balance between text and images. Students need to develop the ability to use web-authoring software in order to control the alignment of text and images, to resize images in proportion, to enhance text through appropriate presentation features and to manipulate colour if the are going to meet the assessment criteria for the top mark band in this strand.

Strand (d) – Produce a functional website

It was encouraging to see how many students were able to produce fully functioning websites and, on the whole, students were appropriately rewarded for the extent to which their websites met the requirements of the brief.

It was uncommon to see websites with broken or missing links, email links that didn't function, audio files that didn't play or pages with missing content. However, there were some instances where the demo track was not included within the website because the student had provided a hyperlink to an external site, which did not meet the requirements of the brief.

One area for development is the design of the links, mainly within the navigation bar, which were not always effective due to the choice of font, colour or graphic content.

Strand (e) – Review the website

There were some detailed reviews, which made meaningful comments about the functionality, usability and effectiveness of the final websites.

However, more commonly, the reviews lacked reflective comments regarding strengths and weaknesses of the websites, effective responses to feedback from users and appropriate suggestions for future improvements, which was not always recognised in the marks awarded by the assessors. Most students would benefit from further guidance regarding how to produce a review of their final website in relation to the intended audience and purpose.

DA102 - Creative Multimedia

Overall

This was the first moderation opportunity for this qualification. A small entry of 220 candidates submitted work for the 0914 SPB 'Clueless'. Over 75 % of these candidates achieved a C grade at Level 1.

The majority of the work submitted for moderation had been completed to an appropriate standard for this level.

Strand (a) – Design multimedia products

Several examples of design documents that appeared to have been produced in the minimum time possible were seen. The presentation of design work is one of the main areas for improvement identified from this series.

The most successful candidates produced designs that were carefully presented and demonstrated a coherent link between the proposals. These candidates identified most of the assets they would need for implementation and 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. 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

The assessment grid for this strand places due emphasis on, and provides high marks for, the production of appropriate 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 the standard of the assets used was not appropriate. In particular problems were noted with distorted images and poor quality of audio and video.

Strand (c) – Develop multimedia products

Observations, based on a limited number of examples, regarding the products for the 0914 SPB 'Clueless';

Presentation – several simple, text based, slideshows were seen. More successful examples made effective use of standard transitions and incorporated a range of images as required by the SPB.

Video screen test – centres need to consider the suitability of locations for recording e.g. background light and noise levels, and make available equipment such as tripods to improve quality. Audio levels need to be tested and adjusted for clarity.

Mascot animation – candidates should design and create their mascot with features that will enable them to demonstrate animation skills, including use of motion and shape tweens.

Team web page – the web page should be created using web-authoring software. The positioning and control of objects on the page and the development of text are areas requiring further development.

Strand (d) – Present work

The SPB requires candidates to create an index page for their work, a standard template should not be provided.

Most 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, although the use of appropriate file names remains an area for improvement. In some cases redundant files within folders, in particular 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 202 students were entered for the Get Fresh SPB.

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

It was noted that some students appeared not to have used suitable software packages, which would enable them to produce the level of work required for this unit.

To gain marks for strand (b) students must have demonstrated skill in using drawing and editing tools. Word processing and desktop publishing packages do not generally provide the correct range of tools to allow the student to achieve this.

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 students 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 students to use primary sources wherever possible and students must use primary sources where it is a requirement of the SPB to do so. Due to the nature of this unit, students do not necessarily need to use any secondary sources as they can create their own elements. However, where secondary sources are used, students 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 students arrived at the final design for their products. Students 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 students to demonstrate their ability to use graphic tools but some students failed to take advantage of the opportunities provided.

Students show evidence of using drawing and editing tools and provide information on their use. Students are expected to provide information on both drawing and editing tools to state which ones were used to create each graphical element.

Where information was provided it tended to be for the use of drawing tools and there was little, if any, on editing tools. There were instances where there was evidence of editing tools being used in the products but there was no information on which ones were used.

Strand (c) – Produce artwork and images

This strand allows students 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 students used the requirements of the SPB as a checklist rather than looking at the quality of the products created.

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 CiDA Moderator's 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 students 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

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

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

Marks recorded on the Assessor on the Centre Assessor Sheets must be checked to ensure the correct totals are included and these marks should then be transferred online, accurately.

DA104 – Game Making

Administration

A very small number of centres did not send the correct number of samples and/or did not send the highest and lowest marked samples.

Most centre Assessor Record Sheets were filled in accurately and with detailed comments which guided the moderator through the moderation process. However, there were a small number of centres where the comments on the Assessor Record Sheets were very brief and unhelpful. In some instances there were only two or three word statements which were of little help to the moderator.

Most games were produced using Scratch or GameMaker. For this unit only .exe files are permitted in addition to the file formats that are viewable using the moderator's toolkit. In some cases, candidates failed to export the authoring software project files into an .exe file.

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 documentation such as storyboards, assets table, and rules table are also required for this strand.

Some centres assessed this strand generously. Marks appeared to be awarded for the presence of evidence rather than the quality of it. It was disappointing to see that some centres had awarded high marks in this strand 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 a small number of cases centres had stipulated in their Assessor Record Sheets that they had seen the evidence and marks had been awarded as a consequence but that this evidence was not available in the eportfolio.

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.

Storyboards varied in quality. Some provided a clear indication of what the game would look like, with fairly detailed drawings of the levels of the game with annotations explaining the design decisions. Others were extremely basic. A number of storyboards were clearly retrospective, with some again, being merely screenshots of the final game, particularly those games which had been created in Scratch.

Storyboards should include features such as the layout of the level, navigation features, assets that will be used, interface (score, lives etc). Some candidates did not produce a storyboard as part of their design work.

All computer games have rules. In fact all games have rules. The rules determine what happens in the game. They have to be programmed into the software for the game to work. 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 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.

Strand (b) – Game functionality

The games seen during this moderation window were generally of good quality with some examples of excellent games for this level. They often worked as intended and were fun to play. 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.

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. There were some examples of excellent games seen where the player started off on a practice level which explained the rules and controls of the game and guided the player through some of the experiences they were likely to encounter throughout the game. They would then play the introductory levels which were fairly easy but engaged the player in the game. The levels then got increasingly more difficult through the game, with the final levels presenting a real challenge for the player. 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.

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. Candidates should be working independently and selecting the genre, style and type of game they want to create based on their proposal.

It is also important that candidates have the right level of skill to create the game. Some candidates could not produce fully functional games because they had not developed the appropriate level of game authoring skills prior to starting the project.

The rules tables often had four or five rules identified with everything indicated as working OK. Very little feedback had been gained to improve the quality of the games and ensure that it worked correctly. It is important that the process of testing and making changes and modifications to the game are well recorded.

The need for prototyping and testing cannot be overemphasised. Obtaining feedback through the development phase 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.

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. There were also instances where the transfer off a network seems to have created bugs within the game. Candidates should always test their game on a standalone machine off the network to ensure that it works as they would wish it to.

Some candidates used copyright assets within their games which were not acknowledged in their assets tables.

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 in Scratch were very simplistic in terms of layout and playability. They were often over very quickly and the game play was very repetitive.
- Some games showed no originality either in concept or assets used within the game. The candidates merely used the assets to be found within the software and created nothing of their own.

- 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.
- In some games the ending came and the player was unaware that they had either won or lost.
- In many instances there was a lack of 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 good but simplistic evaluative comments about the strengths of the game, often in bulleted format, but sometimes failed to provide a balance between the strengths and weaknesses of the game. However, the feedback from test users and also suggestions for improvement was weak, and in some cases, non-existent. Candidates should endeavour to gain feedback on their completed game and ask questions about how their game could be improved.

Strand (e) – Presenting work

Most candidates successfully created a working index page which provided access to all of 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.

DA105 – Coding for the Web

Overall

This was the first assessment opportunity for this unit and the entry was limited to a few centres.

This unit is a 30 Guided Learning Hours (GLH) unit. Centres must allow 10 hours for students to complete their Summative Project Brief (SPB).

There was only one scenario available in this window, 'Snap It', in which the candidates had to use their coding skills to create a two page website to inform the local community about a photographic competition.

The work produced by candidates was very encouraging and some excellent work was seen.

The majority of work seen was appropriate and gave the candidates good opportunities to meet the requirements of the SPB. Work was seen that covered almost the full range of marks.

Most assessors made appropriate comments on the Assessor Record Sheets which were helpful, and showed how the marks were awarded this often helps the moderator to agree the marks awarded by the centre.

Strand (a) - Plan, write and edit HTML

Wireframes
The candidates are required to produce a wireframe design for the pages; they should be encouraged to read the whole of the brief before starting so the design includes all of the required content.

The best work selected an appropriate page size for the website and indicated this on the wireframes. The size chosen should be considered carefully so as to ensure that the website is displayed to the best effect and without horizontal scrolling.

The level of detail seen on the wireframes varied, the best work indicated the nature and size of each page element, e.g. header (1024px x 75px), image slider (600px x 400px), text box (300px x 200px).

Candidates should state clearly at this stage the web browser that they intend to use to test their web pages.

Writing and editing HTML
The focus in this section is the writing and editing of HTML, evidence was usually found by examining the HTML code; evidence of candidates having edited the code included customised sections of code rather than default code generated by web editing software.

It is important that candidates demonstrate sufficient command over the HTML code in their pages to add internal and email links, create a table of information and manipulate the page structure to include page elements and assets such as headers, footers, text and images. The best work had evidence of editing these rather than default names.

Candidates are expected to record details of how they edit the HTML code in their test log, this was often overlooked making it difficult to see where the candidate had edited the HTML, in some cases this made it difficult to agree the assessor marks.

The best examples of work included screenshots to highlight the process and outcomes of the editing of the code.

Strand (b) - Write and edit CSS

In this strand candidates are assessed on their ability to write and edit CSS.

Best practice is for the student to record the process of writing and editing CSS in their test log, using screen shots where appropriate to illustrate the changes made and the effect of them.

The best examples used a variety of CSS rules to style text, images, links, tables and other elements, it was also clear that candidate was using the wireframe to ensure the desired outcome in terms of layout and style.

Strand (c) - Incorporate interactive elements through JavaScript

Candidates were required to use JavaScript to include an image slider on the home page and the majority of candidates completed this successfully. Most candidates used horizontal movement of images with manual control. On the whole the images were well chosen and appropriate to the scenario.

The better candidates included in their test logs the testing of the script and the editing needed to include the correct images.

Strand (d) - Create page layouts

The candidates should make it clear in their design which browser is to be used, as there was considerable variation found in how the pages were displayed in different browsers.

The best examples demonstrated good use of coding skills to create pages that clearly resembled the wireframes, this was supported by the test log entries testing the layout and viewing of the pages. There should also be an appropriate balance between the amount of text and images on each page and links should be clear to see.

Strand (e) - Test and review

On the whole this section was completed and assessed accurately.

Candidates should aim to produce a detailed review of the website commenting on the strengths of the site and some areas for improvement. The best work included feedback from their end-of-project reviewer and made specific suggestions for improvement.

General Administration

The sample should be sent to the moderator on a single CD which should contain all the candidates in the sample, the work of the highest and lowest scoring candidates should also be included as extras if not already in the sample selected.

Samples should be submitted with folders clearly labelled with centre numbers, candidate number and first 2 letters of surname and first of forename. It would help if the Assessor Record Sheet naming convention is the same.
[centre #]_[candidate #]_[first two letters of surname]_[first letter of forename].

The centre assessor should use the Assessor Record Sheets as an opportunity to help the moderator find the evidence required to agree the marks given.