

# Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2015

Pearson Edexcel  
Certificate in Digital Applications

DA201 – Developing Web Products

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## **Certificate in Digital Applications**

### **DA201 – Developing Web Products**

8,966 students were entered for the external examination unit - Developing Web Products, this series, which is the mandatory unit of the qualification worth 25% of the total assessment.

The examination paper is presented to students as a client brief and the client for the January 2015 paper was Crawdale Summer Sports, who required a website to promote a series of sports training camps. The most successful students were able to design a website that both informed parents about the benefits of the training camps and enthused their children to attend.

### **General Comments**

As in the previous two examination series, there are still a large number of students who produced web pages in inappropriate file formats such as unpublished websites, active server pages or template pages. It is essential that students save their web pages in .html format so that they can be viewed in a modern web browser.

Students also need to be clear on how to create an appropriate folder structure within their user area so that their sites function correctly. There were several instances of inappropriate paths, which meant that either links did not function or images did not appear as intended.

### **Administration**

Centres are reminded of the importance of reviewing the Instructions for the Conduct of Examination document prior to the examination window and of sending the examination pro forma to [ictschedules@pearson.com](mailto:ictschedules@pearson.com).

In most instances, the CDs containing the students' work were appropriately labelled with centre and candidate numbers and were dispatched to examiners promptly after the close of the examination window, which was supportive to the marking process.

Centres are also reminded that the attendance register should be included with the students' work.

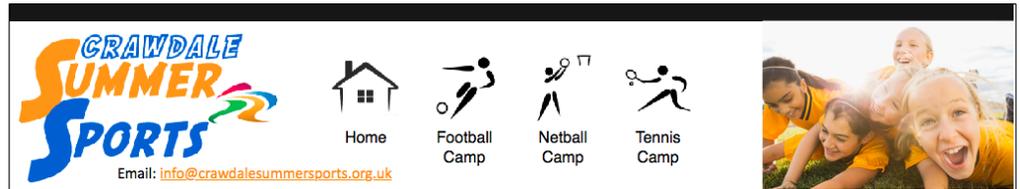
### **Activity One: Design, build and test the website**

#### **Page Template**

Although the majority of students attempted to create a banner, students rarely achieved all 3 marks for this component. The most common omission was to ignore the requirement to include a suitable image within the banner. This was the first time that an image other than a logo had been made a requirement of the banner and it is

essential that students read the client brief carefully if they are to meet the client's requirements, as shown in the example below.

Although the correct logo was usually included, it was often stretched out of proportion, which meant that the mark was not awarded.



Moreover, some students did not include the banner as a graphic, but simply coloured a cell in a table, rather than inserting a recognisable banner.

## Images

The majority of students were able to include the four icons within the navigation bar, many successfully integrating the icons within the buttons and adding effective rollover styles.

However, the requirement to crop the TRAINING\_CAMPS image to show only one of the three sports and create a link to the complete image in .png format was commonly misunderstood. Some students cropped the original image appropriately but either did not provide a link to the full image or did not include the image on the home page, whereas others did not link the cropped image to the full TRAINING\_CAMPS image but to a different one instead or added hotspots to the original image to link to different html pages in the site.

One of the least successful tasks was the requirement to create a suitable thumbnail image to link to the girls' football training camp page, as shown in the image below. The majority of students did not appear to know what a thumbnail was and included an image that was too large to be classed as a thumbnail. Heavily distorting the image



was another common problem and where this occurred the mark was not awarded, as it is not fit for purpose. The more successful students chose to crop an image to create a more effective thumbnail and it is worth noting that as part of their preparation for the examination, students need to be able to use appropriate software to edit, resize, crop, optimise and convert images from one format to another.

Students were required to highlight one of the three sporting venues featured in the website on the MAP image and many students edited the image appropriately using an image manipulation package as in the example on the right, whereas some students simply drew a vague circle on the map and although they were still awarded the mark, these responses were not particularly effective. However, the mark was not awarded to students who cropped one of the venues out of the map, as this rendered the map unfit for purpose. Where the venue was highlighted through an arrow or circle that was added to the original image in the web authoring software, only one mark was awarded because the client's requirements had not been only partially met.



Centres are reminded that in order to meet the requirements of the brief, students need access to appropriate image manipulation software during the examination.

## Links

Although some students were rewarded for adding a functioning email link to the site, many others simply added the text to the page with no link, failed to include the *mailto:* prefix or misspelt the email address, meaning that the mark could not be awarded. Similarly, many students did not attempt the external link from the advert to <http://tiptopsports.co.uk> or did not include the correct *http://* protocol.

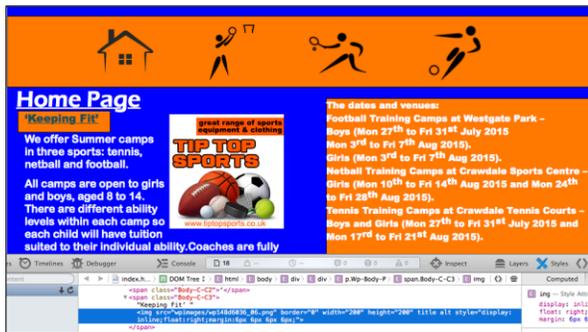
Most students provided an appropriate internal link on the football training camps page - either through text or an image. The mark was not awarded if the only way to access the girls' football training camp page was through the navigation bar, as this did not meet the client's requirements.

Centres are reminded that to be successful within this examination, students need to be able to include internal, external and email links within their pages.

## Other Content

The accuracy of student responses for the 'other content' components of the examination varied considerably. Although those students who included the required header, 'Keeping Fit', spelt it correctly, many students did not attempt this requirement, as they apparently did not know how to use an `<h2>` tag. Students were, however, generally more successful in setting the font colour to the specified hexadecimal code.

Although students were able to provide a column of text on the home page sized appropriately (at least 350px wide), only a minority of students was able to position the advert correctly, as shown in the example below where the student used the CSS



float property. To be fully prepared for the examination, students need to be able to produce content that demonstrates a sound awareness of both a specified audience and purpose and able to edit the HTML code directly in order to make simple changes to the code e.g. to change the colour of a heading or the positioning of elements on the page.

Most students were able to embed the animation within their site, although not all of those students could edit the parameters to prevent the animation from looping. Centres are reminded that students do need to know how to embed multimedia files onto their web pages, including video, audio and animation files and learn how to control their appearance on the page.

As in the previous examination series, only a minority of students were awarded the two marks for meeting the requirement for all of the images used within the site to be in .png format and less than 200KB. It is important that students are able to use compression formats and convert images from one file format to another.

## Structure and Functionality

The majority of students were able to meet the requirement to produce a five page website with four main pages and one child page. Although a small number of students included all five pages within the navigation bar, the most common error was to include a link to the girls' football camp page via a drop down menu, which did not fully meet the client's requirements as users were not required to drill down to the football camps page in order to access the girls' football camp page.

Some of the websites submitted this series were not fully functional e.g. containing broken or missing links and centres are reminded that students need to be taught how to carry out systematic functionality and usability testing to ensure that their site works as intended.

As already mentioned, many students failed to fully meet all of the Level 3 assessment criteria for 'structure and functionality' because they had not included all of the internal, external and email links.

## User Experience

It was pleasing to see that unnecessary horizontal and vertical scrolling was rarely seen within submissions for this examination series.

Unfortunately, only a minority of students added meaningful alt text to every image. Many students were inconsistent in their application of alt text or applied inappropriate alt text demonstrating little understanding of the importance and function of alt text in making their sites more accessible.

It should be noted that although many students presented black text on a white or pale background and adopted a clear font in size 12 point, this provided a high contrast by default rather than design and those students who created an attractive colour scheme with a suitably high contrast were more likely to meet the Level 3 assessment criteria for this component.

It should be noted that the consistent use of accessibility features is only one aspect of user experience and students should be encouraged to construct web pages with the purpose and intended user in mind, making it easy and pleasurable for the user to access the necessary information. In this examination series, students achieved marks in Level 3 where the elements on the page enhanced the user experience, such as in the example shown.



### Content Selection, preparation and presentation

Students should be aware that although they are provided with images and text that are to be used within their site, both the images and text should be edited to enhance their suitability for audience and purpose. A small number of irrelevant images will always be included within the images folder and it is up to the student to select the most appropriate images for inclusion within the site.

When selecting images, the majority of students could insert appropriate images onto relevant pages but only a minority of students enhanced the impact of those images through cropping, resizing in proportion, optimizing or manipulating the images.

Furthermore, only a minority of students was able to select appropriate content, prepare it fittingly and present it effectively. Most students copied and pasted the provided text onto a suitable page, however, to meet the mark band 3 assessment criteria students must take care to prepare and present the text to maximise its

effectiveness e.g. by editing the text to improve its suitability or including presentational features such as text alignment, line height, bullets, upper and lower case, boldening, varying the font, font size and colour to create a suitable hierarchy, coloured backgrounds, headings and sub headings.



The highest scoring students designed a website comprising effective combinations of assets across each page, producing a home page with a definite appeal

to parents and sports pages that would encourage children to take part in the training camps. In order to produce content that demonstrates a sound awareness of both a specified audience and purpose, students need a confident understanding of how to combine text and images, which can only be achieved through practice and experience.

### Overall consistency

Students were generally successful at creating a website with a consistent page layout in relation to the size and position of the banner and navigation bar. However, although most students maintained an appropriate colour scheme across each page, students' ability to format text appropriately and structure a page effectively was less evident.

Students need to be able to use design features and create consistently effective pages through techniques such as balance and contrast, visual hierarchy, using headings and sub headings to separate sections of text and the use of white space, such as the example on the right.



### Activity Two: Complete an evaluation of your microsite

Once again, the evaluations submitted by students were, on the whole, narrative accounts of what they had done in the examination. Although students often included a simplistic evaluative comment regarding one aspect of their website such as their choice of colour scheme, very few students could justify their important design decisions by explaining how effective the outcomes were with reference to the intended audience and purpose.

Moreover, students' suggestions for improvement were often those parts of the site requirements that they had missed out, such as adding a header using a <h2> tag, rather than a more considered range of improvements that were validated by a detailed description of how the suggestions would improve the overall outcome in relation to audience and purpose.

In summary, very few students included a reference to audience and purpose and it is clear that students need considerably more support and guidance if they are going to be able to meet the Level 3 assessment criteria for this assessment strand.

## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

