Principal Moderator Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel
Certificate in Digital Applications

DA204 – Game Making

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Certificate in Digital Applications

DA204 – Game Making

Overall

A total of 502 students were entered for this unit, 498 for the 0113 SPB and 4 for the 0913 SPB.

It was a very small entry for this unit this series. Most games were produced using Scratch, Multimedia Fusion and Game Maker. There were a small number of instances were only project files had been submitted by students. Also it is important that students, if using Scratch, submit the .sb or.sb2 file as evidence rather than merely just uploading it to the Scratch website.

In most cases, the samples of work arrived on time and in appropriate packaging.

Organisation

The presentation of the eportfolios submitted this series generally used the specified naming conventions for the eportfolios and assessment record sheets. All centres included the eportfolios of students with the highest and lowest marks.

Assessor Record Sheets

Generally centres provided detailed comments in the assessor record sheets.

Strand (a) – Design and development work

Part of the requirements for this strand is that students produce a moodboard and an overview/proposal for their game.

Whilst there was some very good examples of moodboards seen this series it was clear in some of the work seen that a number of students did not understand the notion of a moodboard. The moodboard is merely a way of collecting together initial ideas and inspirations for the game and presenting them graphically. Most moodboards seen this series were quite weak with little evidence of research around their game idea. Also some moodboards 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 students took photographs of their paper based moodboards; whilst this is entirely acceptable as evidence, in some instances the photographs were so blurred or small that the nature of the content of the moodboard could not be determined. Some centres had produced sophisticated character and level designs together with some extensive annotation as moodboards. Whist 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.

In most instances a proposal/overview document was completed reasonably effectively but on some occasions these tended to be very limited. It was again disappointing to see that very few students showed evidence of feedback during this stage of the process. Some students would have benefitted from constructive feedback at this stage, particularly those who stated they were going to use copyright characters in their games.

This strand is also important for the key design documentation such as storyboards, assets table, rules table and test plan. Some centres assessed this strand very generously. Marks in some instances 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 for this aspect of the strand for what was almost entirely retrospective design work.

A number of storyboards were clearly retrospective, with some again, being merely screenshots of the final game. Particularly those students who opted to use Scratch. These make no contribution to the game design process. Some storyboards were hand drawn and had clear annotations on them to show not only the layout or design of the level but how the level would function including decision decisions such as why a particular font or colour would be used.

The process of testing games was poorly recorded again this series with students providing little evidence of the process of creating their game and sorting out any glitches, bugs and problems they had encountered during development. In some instances the testing evidence consisted of four or five tests identified with everything indicated as working 'OK'. Very little or no feedback had been gained to improve the quality of their games and ensure that it worked correctly. Nevertheless, there were examples of work where the testing process was extremely thorough and students had guided the moderator through the development process of the game with annotated screenshots of game levels showing what had been changed, or screenshots of code showing what had been altered to remedy a problem.

Evidence of editing assets was also often poorly recorded in the assets table. Some students were again using Sprite Sheets. Many of these are 'rips' of assets from early console games, which are still in copyright.

Strand (b) – Game functionality

The games seen during this moderation window were again of generally good quality, with some excellent examples, and were an improvement on the previous series. They often worked as intended and were fun to play. A small number of students continue to produce games that were not suitable for the target audience, or relate in any way to the back story. Whilst it is acceptable to change the characters names, genders etc, the basic premise of the back story should be retained.

In this strand instructions should go further than just the controls used in the game; they should, for example, include how to play the game, eg, 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, which were proficiently presented

with design work representing the theme of the game. It was however, disappointing to see that a number of games had no user instructions at all. This was particularly apparent in some Scratch games.

Effective testing is an important element in this stand to ensure that the games work as intended. In some cases the games could not be fully played as there were serious errors or bugs which actually stopped the game play. In some instances it was also clear that the games had not been tested/assessed off the centre network as there were serious discrepancies between the assessor's comments about the game and what the moderator played.

There were again a small number of students who submitted game project files which could not be viewed via the moderator's toolkit.

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 that 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 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.
- Some games created in Scratch were again far too simplistic for the standard of work required at Level 2. Some of the games encountered, were over very quickly. There was one level which lasted only for a few seconds even for a novice game player.
- 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. It was clear that some levels had been tested but the continuity between levels had not been fully tested.
- 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.

- Some of the games had very confusing instructions, stating one set of keys should be used whilst in reality a different set in the game was used with the player having to work these out for themselves.

Nevertheless, there were some excellent examples of games that were very engaging and made you want to play them repeatedly, either to beat your high score or to get to the next level.

Strand (d) – Promo for the game

For this strand, students 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.

Some good promos were seen effectively using assets from their games to create their promotional product. They had good screen captures from their game, appropriate titles and captions to promote their game and also a soundtrack to enhance the mood or genre of the game. There were also some excellent examples seen which included assets from the game, animations and live actions scenes.

Unfortunately a small number of students are still using copyright music in their promos, which should be discouraged.

Strand (e) – Game review

Students in this strand were expected to produce a review which was suitable for publication in an on-screen computer games magazine. There were some very detailed reviews seen this series with students 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 students 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 students merely had a few short bullet points for strengths and weaknesses, which would not allow students to access the higher mark band within this strand. A review written in a magazine style is expected at Level two.

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