

Moderators' Report

January 2014

Certificate in Digital Applications

DA201

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Certificate in Digital Applications

DA201 – Developing Web Products

January 2014 was the first examination series for unit 1, Developing Web Products. The entry was 4,103 candidates. Unit 1 is the core unit of the qualification and worth 25% of the total assessment.

It is important for students to understand the nature of the examination; candidates must create a website for a specified audience purpose. The examination paper is presented as a client brief, which details the site's requirements. In this paper, candidates were required to create a microsite for the Recycle Drive – a national campaign aimed at encouraging schools and colleges to recycle paper and waste.

General Comments

Most candidates produced functional websites that met many of the client's requirements. However, a small number of candidates produced web pages that could not be viewed in a web browser; these included unpublished websites and template files. Centres are reminded that it is part of the examination that candidates are able to save their sites in a way that can be accessed through a web browser.

Candidates also need to be clear on how to create an appropriate folder structure within their user area so that their sites function correctly both during the examination and when copied onto the CD to be sent for external assessment. There were several instances of inappropriate paths, which either rendered the pages without images or did not function as the candidate intended.

Although most candidates were able to create an appropriate site structure, many did not: embed the video, add functioning external and email links, format text appropriately, prepare and position images as directed by the client brief, create a consistent page layout or include suitable accessibility features. These are essential skills without which there were a considerable number of marks that candidates could not access.

It is also important that candidates read the client brief carefully; otherwise they will be unable to create a site that meets the client's requirements and there were many instances where students failed to pick up marks because they had not fully understood the site requirements e.g. a significant minority of candidates ignored the requirement to create a graphical link from an edited version of the TOP_TIPS image to the original, to be included on the home page, and created a text link to the original image that were often not placed on the home page.

Administration

Centres are reminded of the importance of reviewing the Instructions for the Conduct of Examination document well prior to the exam and of sending the examination pro forma to ictschedules@pearson.com.

Candidates' work was copied onto the CDs provided by Pearson Edexcel and marked on screen by the examining team. Work from a small number of centres arrived with examiners very late. Work should be dispatched as soon as possible after the close of the examination window to support the marking process.

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

Activity One: Design, build and test the microsite

Forty-four marks were available for Activity One. Twenty marks were awarded for the extent to which the candidate complied with the requirements of the client brief and 24 holistic marks were awarded on a best-fit basis against level descriptors for:

- Structure and functionality
- User experience
- Content selection, preparation and presentation
- Overall consistency.

Page Template

The page template had to include a banner that was the full width of the page - 1024 pixels - without any horizontal scroll. A number of candidates did not create a banner but regarded a cell or a row of cells as a banner and simply inserted an image with a typed message, which often varied from page to page. Banners also varied considerably in size. The mark was awarded for banners between 960 and 1050 pixels in width, but students need to be able to create a banner with a suitable, fixed height that spans the full width the page at the required resolution.

Where candidates understood the need to create a banner, they generally included the required elements - the logo and appropriate text, as shown in the example on the right - and were able to access the marks with ease. Too many candidates, however, distorted the logo, which should have retained its original proportions. More generally, in order to be properly prepared for the examination, students need to be able to work with images: resizing in proportion, cropping, optimizing and creating and using thumbnails.



A large number of candidates were not able to add a hyperlink to the logo. Numerous candidates linked the whole banner to the main site (www.therecycledrive.gov.uk), whereas only the logo should have been linked. Where hyperlinks were added, many were missing the required protocol, which was not given as part of the instruction.

The client brief required candidates to include three icons within the navigation bar. Many candidates had difficulty in presenting all three images at the required size. It should be noted that students need to have sufficient command over their chosen software application to include a rollover state for their buttons, which may have to incorporate graphical elements. Many candidates did not follow the instructions in the examination paper relating to the navigation bar and subsequently lost all of the associated marks.



Images

As part of their preparation for the examination, students need to be able to use appropriate software to edit, optimize and convert images from one format to another. It was surprising how few candidates were able to: add the logo and suitable text to the LANDSCAPE.bmp image, convert it into a .png format, compress it to less than 300KB and include it on the benefits of recycling page. Too many candidates inserted the image onto a different page or where they

did insert it onto the benefits of recycling page, the text was often added directly onto the page rather than the image itself. Candidates who edited and compressed the image appropriately, as in the example on the left, were awarded two marks for the task.

The TOP_TIPS image had to be cropped and link to the original, or a suitably edited version of the original. Where students acted appropriately on the instructions, they generally met the requirements of the brief and were awarded all of the marks for this component. However, as already mentioned, some candidates provided a text link to the original image, which was not the requirement.

Links

The functioning internal links were included on the recycling page by the vast majority of candidates, either through images or text, but a large number of candidates were unaware of how to include a correctly functioning email link. To be successful within this examination, students need to be able to include internal, external and email links within their pages.

Other Content

Only a minority of candidates picked up all three marks for embedding the video within the site. Many candidates did not embed the video onto one of the pages but included a link to the video, which opened in another window. A small minority of candidates embedded the video at a size that could not be viewed, but most candidates correctly displayed the video in a 4:3 ratio. However, the least successful aspect of the task was the requirement for the video to play only on click. Most candidates did not include an appropriate parameter. Centres are reminded that candidates do need to learn how to control how users view multimedia assets.

Although the Moderator's toolkit only applies to Units 2, 3 and 4 of the qualification, in future examination series only file formats that are included within the Moderator's toolkit will be included within the assets folder. This will enable centres to prepare students to embed multimedia files, control their appearance, select and use appropriate compression formats and convert assets from one file format to another (listed in the Moderator's toolkit).

Although most candidates could insert the COMPOST.png image within the composting page without any difficulty, the vast majority of candidates could not wrap the text around the image. Using coding to position images is covered within section 1.8 of the unit content and students do need to learn how to edit the relevant code directly to change colours or position elements on the page. They should also understand how to use both hexadecimal and RGB colour values.

Very few candidates met the requirement for images to be in .png format and less than 300KB. Students need to be better prepared to use compression formats such as jpg, png and gif and to convert images from one file format to another.

Structure and Functionality

The majority of candidates produced a site with the required five pages – three main pages and two further pages that were accessible from the recycling page. However, a significant minority of candidates produced a navigation bar with five pages, with no need to drill down to access the child pages, a structure that did not meet the client's requirements. Some students created sub menus from the recycle page, which was an appropriate site structure in relation to the requirements of the brief.

Many candidates failed to fully meet all of the Level 3 assessment criteria because they had not included all of the internal, external and email links.

User Experience

Many candidates used one or more accessibility features appropriately, such as scalable text, high contrast colours or alternate text. It was, however, disappointing to see so many candidates insert images into their web pages without adding alternate text.

User experience is much broader, however, than just the simple use of accessibility features. Pages should be constructed with the purpose and intended user in mind, making it easy and pleasurable for the user to access the necessary information. In this examination, candidates achieved marks in Level 3 where the elements on the page helped the user to understand the message of the campaign and encouraged them to take part, as in the example on the right.



Content Selection, preparation and presentation

Only a small number of candidates were able to select, prepare and present content that communicated the campaign message with any real effectiveness.

Firstly, in relation to content selection and preparation, many candidates simply copied the text that was provided for them onto their pages. Although the text was generally copied accurately and in most cases pasted onto a relevant page, only a minority of candidates edited the text to improve its suitability. Where this was the case the impact was considerable.

Furthermore, many candidates selected images that had little relevance to the page content, for example, pictures of a car or wind turbine on a page about paper recycling or composting. Moreover, there was surprisingly little evidence of images being effectively prepared for inclusion within the site. Although once again, those candidates who had been equipped for these aspects of the examination were able to select, optimise, crop, adjust, size and position images to good effect, as in this example.



Similarly, only a minority of candidates was able to present their chosen content in a way that provided a clear, effective campaign message for the chosen audience with appropriate emphasis. This was mainly achieved through the use of headings and sub headings and the effective combination of edited text and images, which demonstrated a good understanding of audience and purpose.

Although candidates produced sites with an appropriate colour scheme in relation to

the recycling theme, the appropriate selection, preparation and presentation of content that is suitable for audience and purpose is an area that needs further reinforcement within centres.

Overall consistency

On the whole, candidates maintained a consistent colour scheme throughout their site, which did reflect the environmentally friendly theme. It was also common to see the consistent use of page components such as the navigation bar. Many candidates, however, were not consistent in relation to the size of each page, banner height and width, internal and external hyperlinks and the page layout and design.

The most successful candidates also made consistently effective use of text formatting and page structure. In those instances where candidates had selected an appropriate font, size, style and colour for headings, sub headings, body copy and links and formatted the text on each page consistently, the information was communicated more effectively. Furthermore, those candidates who employed design concepts such as balance and contrast, visual hierarchy and the use of white space and applied them consistently to each page were better able to fully meet the Level 3 assessment criteria, as in the example shown on the right.



Candidates need to be able to create page templates that not only include the components stated in the client's brief but they also need to be able to apply a page layout that is consistently effective in relation to the common design features described in the unit content.

Activity Two: Complete an evaluation of your microsite

Although most candidates were able to link their choice of colour scheme to the theme of recycling, the majority of candidates produced evaluations that simply provided a narrative of what they had done. Candidates who performed better, were able to discuss the features of their web pages in the light of the target audience and the purpose of the campaign.

Centres should encourage students to justify their outcomes and design decisions in relation to audience and purpose rather than focusing on the process of production. In short, candidates need to explain 'why' rather than simply describe 'how' they designed the site in the way they did, which should lead to a consideration of possible improvements to their site. Suggested improvements should also be closely related to audience and purpose, in order to substantiate their validity.

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