NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Creative Studies: Interactive Media (600/6906/5)

Assessment window: 05 September–25 November 2016

This report contains information in relation to the external assessment from the Chief Examiner, with an emphasis on the standard of learner work within this assessment window.

The aim is to highlight where learners generally perform well, as well as any areas where further development may be required.

Key points:

- administering the external assessment
- standard of learner work
- referencing of external assessment tasks
- evidence creation
- interpretation of the tasks and associated assessment criteria (AC)
- planning in the external assessment.

It's important to note that learners shouldn't sit the external assessment until they've taken part in the relevant teaching of the unit to ensure they are well prepared for the external assessment.

Administering the external assessment

The external assessment (both preparatory and timed period) must be independent from the teaching of the unit. Work completed during the teaching of the unit cannot be used in the external assessment. Any stimulus materials used by the centre during the teaching of the unit cannot be used in the external assessment. Learners must complete all of the tasks independently.

The completion of the preparation tasks must be supervised by the Teacher and can be sat in a normal classroom environment. The tasks within the preparation period do not need to be invigilated. However, the preparation tasks must be treated independently from the teaching of the unit and learners must complete all tasks independently. This means the preparation tasks must not be Teacher led.

The completion of the timed tasks must be invigilated and sat in accordance with the Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment - V Certs. It's important that the external assessment is sat in accordance with the specified conditions.

Standard of learner work

The standard of work for this marking window was mostly satisfactory, however there were many entries below the level that is consistent with this qualification.

There were some good examples of creative work submitted during this marking window; however, Examiners expressed considerable concern regarding the general standard of work and the general lack of understanding of interactive media design and processes.

Higher achieving learners demonstrated excellent skill development within their design work and technical application and final outcomes were clearly individual. This was supported by well justified annotations or design/technical notes.

As in previous windows there were also some entries that seemed to be less focused on the design of new interactive media products and used existing products to review or edit, therefore not entirely producing their own work.

This qualification is a combination of visual design and technical ability and many submissions were not seen to be at the creative or technical standard which is consistent with the level of the qualification. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the unit content is delivered in its entirety before learners sit the external assessment, this allows learners to interpret the brief independently and provide the opportunity to achieve across all 5 assessment criteria.

There was significant evidence of all tasks not being completed in their entirety and this often did not allow all Pass assessment criteria to be achieved, resulting in an overall Not Yet Achieved (NYA) for an individual assessment criteria or the overall unit. Learners must be advised that all parts of a task must be attempted.

In addition, it is the centre's responsibility to ensure learners are recruited with integrity at the correct level.

Referencing of external assessment tasks

Most learners labelled their work effectively per task, however there is continuous concern regarding learner evidence and referencing. Teachers must ensure learners fully understand how to reference their work correctly per task to ensure Examiners are fully aware for which task evidence has been submitted.

This window introduced 4 tasks (1, 2, 4 and 5) that required evidence to be printed, not all learners did this and location of evidence for these tasks sometimes proved problematic to locate, in particular if this evidence was not referenced and just submitted with other electronic evidence (eg a pen drive).

For tasks submitted digitally (3 and 6), not all folders were labelled effectively or contained accurate or in some cases, any evidence.

Learners should be encouraged to check all work is labelled regardless of the format to aid the examination process.

This wasn't seen to be consistently or reliably applied across the evidence during this marking window. Failure to follow this requirement may have significant implications for the awarding of learner grades. If Examiners are not easily able to identify which evidence relates to which task then a NYA grade may be awarded.

Learners should be instructed to attempt all tasks in the paper, and these should be clearly referenced. Any tasks not attempted or not referenced cannot be rewarded and a grade of NYA will be awarded. This will result in an overall grade of NYA for the external assessment unit.

Learners should check that their work is correctly saved prior to submission. Once the work has been transferred to a suitable storage device learners should check that their work can then be opened. In the case of a website, for example, the product should be tested to ensure full functionality.

Centres should be aware that the demonstration of learners testing the product is a mandatory requirement of task 6.

The acceptable file formats are clearly stated in the external assessment instructions provided for each marking window. If a file type is not on the list of acceptable file formats as detailed in the external assessment instructions document, it will not be accepted. This is because Examiners may not be able to open certain file types. The learner would be disadvantaged, as the work may be marked as NYA.

Evidence creation

In this unit, centres are required to deliver 30 hours of teaching and learning guided by the unit content. This must be done prior to learners sitting the external assessment.

The brief and the tasks in the external assessment are to provide a context. It is therefore important that during the teaching of the unit, learners understand the assessment criteria and the grading descriptors. The tasks are to guide the learners to complete the assessment criteria and if the tasks are not completed fully then the assessment criteria might not be achieved and a grade of NYA would be recorded.

The use of templates within the assessment is not permissible. Learners must not be given templates or prescribed instructions that have clear Teacher input. The use of templates was evident in this window, if templates simply indicate the task number these are permissible, no further information such as prompts regarding types of content or questions to the learners is permitted.

The initial planning requires evidence of individual interpretation of the design brief and an individual response to the constraints of the design brief. Many learners applied too much focus on reviewing existing products within their planning evidence and this is not assessed, this type of research must have a clear and valid impact on their own idea development.

Many learners also combined evidence for tasks 1 and 2 and the requirements for each of these tasks are quite different. There are also 2 parts to each of these tasks and many learners did not differentiate or reference these effectively.

The preparation of assets and creating the product also proved difficult to examine for some learners as they did not separate the preparation work from the final production work. Screen-grabs are potentially very useful evidence. Screen-grabs should be annotated to explain what the learner is showing by providing the screenshot. This is often the best way to evidence the development process. Teachers need to ensure learners are fully aware that the final interactive product is not evidence of the process of developing it, nor is submitting a folder of assets without explanation of how and why they have been used/created.

Assessments of the development process were mostly good and in some cases very detailed written evaluations. Learners responded well to task 5 and demonstrated a good awareness of process and personal performance at various stages of development.

Evidence of testing the product and allowing for the product to be cross-platformed proved challenging for learners. Weaker learners focused on writing about content and how their product would be viewed whilst more successful learners interpreted the task more effectively and clearly stated/illustrated how their product can be saved/published/exported across the 3 different platforms stated in the design brief.

Interpretation of the tasks and associated assessment criteria

Task 1 AC 1.1

There was a substantial amount of evidence submitted for this task by most learners; however some learners provided irrelevant evidence based on research of existing products that had no reference to their own development work. Product reviews are not required for this task and are not assessed. Learners responded well to the theme and demonstrated some good creative application of their ideas and realised these effectively.

There was some good interpretation of this task and most learners provided evidence that demonstrated careful planning of resources, possible products and required technique and processes. The most effective evidence was annotated visual representations of interface design ideas and layout plans. Other evidence included written accounts and screenshots of development work and these were also successful.

Weaker learners did not complete all requirements of both parts of the task or provided limited planning by submitting underdeveloped visual representations, limited annotation of designs or basic lists with minimal relevance to the brief or the intended product.

Task 2 AC 1.2

There was a substantial amount of evidence submitted for this task by most learners; however some learners simply repeated planning work from task 1 and this is not appropriate. Evidence for this task should be a consistent continuation of the planning in task 1 but should demonstrate significant progression of the idea development and a selection process.

Most learners submitted sufficient evidence for this task and representations of ideas at this stage did inform final products.

Stronger learners considered alternative designs, plans and navigation structures.

There was some limited planning for the navigation of the interactive product and some evidence, if created by hand, was difficult to read. Learners should be encouraged to use the most appropriate resources to represent the navigation structure of their potential product.

Some very basic navigation structures for quite simple products proved quite difficult for learners and this is a mandatory element of this task. Any format of evidence that demonstrates an understanding of how a user can navigate the product is permissible.

Task 3 1st part AC 1.3

This task requires learners to demonstrate their ability to prepare assets for the final product, the preparation of assets should relate clearly to their final product platform.

Most learners did this effectively using annotated screenshots that demonstrated choices made within software packages to save assets in appropriate formats.

Weaker learners simply saved assets in a folder with no indication of purpose or how they would be used. In these cases, evidence included screenshots of a folder structure or a folder of images.

Learners must be aware that as well as producing a final interactive product they must also clearly demonstrate the process undertaken to prepare assets to achieve a Pass.

Task 4 AC 1.5

There was a significant improvement with the evidence submitted for this task in this window.

Most learners submitted some good and valid evidence for this task, however there is still too much focus on how the products are viewed rather than how the product could be cross-platformed.

Learners are required to describe how their product can be adapted (saved/published/exported) for 3 different interactive media platforms. Many learners did not do this and this was one of the constraints of the brief that must be adhered to.

Successful learners used annotated screenshots that demonstrated preparing their own product for the 3 different platforms, this included screenshots of software options, preparing save/export/publish software settings and final file types.

Weaker learners demonstrated very limited understanding of what cross-platforming is, how different platforms differ and how their product can be accessed. Many of these learners simply focused on the actual content of their product or how the product will be viewed.

Task 5 AC 1.4

Most learners submitted well written evaluations for this task, many of which were very detailed and reflective of the development process. Stronger learners illustrated their evaluations with specific examples and this was highly effective.

However, some learners simply listed or described the stages and activities they undertook, this is not an assessment of the whole development process and this is a mandatory requirement for the assessment criterion. At this level an assessment should be an evaluative account of the process and the success or otherwise of the development process and this involves more than a sequential list of tasks completed.

Task 6 2nd part AC 1.3

Evidence for this task was mostly digital in the form of the final product and screenshots of creating and testing the product.

Most learners submitted some very good work for this task and final interactive products demonstrated creative application and technical competence at this level.

Successful learners supported their final products with detailed evidence of creating pages/screens/levels using annotated screenshots or design and technical notes.

Although weaker learners provided screenshots of creating the product, they demonstrated a very limited understanding of authoring an interactive media product or the use of their chosen software.

Learners must ensure they are not dependent on their product being the only evidence for this task, in addition evidence of testing the product is a mandatory requirement of this task.

Planning in the external assessment

Centres are reminded to be aware of the assessment windows of the external assessment. It's not advisable for learners to sit the external assessment early in their course. It's far more appropriate to enter learners once they have taken part in the relevant teaching to ensure they are well prepared. Centres would be in a better position to prepare their learners for the external assessment following the support of an external quality assurance visit for the internally assessed units.

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