L3 Lead Examiner Report 1906





Level 3 National in Creative Digital Media Production Unit 3: Digital Media Skills (31670H)

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Grade Boundaries

What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we set the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade, at Distinction, Merit and Pass.

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the external assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries – this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark is for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to ensure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

Variations in external assessments

Each external assessment we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries for each assessment, because then it would not take accessibility into account.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, are on the website via this link: http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html

Unit 3: Digital Media Skills (31670H)

| Grade | Unclassified | Level 3 | | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------|----|----|----|
| | | N | Р | M | D |
| Boundary Mark | 0 | 13 | 25 | 37 | 49 |

Introduction

Summer 2019 was the first assessment series for the reformed Unit 3 Set Task.

Unit 3: Digital Media Skills is mandatory for all Tech Level Extended Certificate and Diploma qualifications and the Applied General Extended Diploma qualification. It is a synoptic unit that provides learners with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to use digital media skills to construct a media product in response to a client brief. There is one assessment opportunity each year for this unit.

To be fully prepared for the Unit 3 Set Task, learners need to have a robust understanding of the digital media skills and techniques included in the unit content that relate to their chosen sector.

The assessment period lasts eight weeks and comprises:

- a 5-hour preparatory period (under monitored conditions)
- 5 hours for Activity 1 under supervised conditions
- 15 hours for Activity 2 under supervised conditions.

The preparatory period is for learners to conduct independent research and source assets for their media product.

The appropriateness and use of the sourced assets are assessed as part of the final product. During the preparatory period, learners should create an index of all sourced material, including the name and location of each sourced asset and any conditions attached to their use, such as copyright, acknowledgments, permissions and clearances. Learners should also be encouraged to reflect upon the appropriateness of their sourced material during the preparatory period, as they will not be able to acquire further assets from secondary sources during the 20 hours of supervised assessment.

Learners do not need to submit their index of sourced material for assessment, although these should be retained by centres until after the results have been issued.

Although learners should be encouraged to engage with the pre-production processes they have employed within the internally-assessed units in their qualification, as it will help them to produce a more effective final product, learners should not submit any evidence of research activity or pre-production documentation.

To clarify, learners are **not required** to submit evidence of:

- research activities undertaken during the preparatory period
- pre-production or production documentation
- the assets/material gathered from secondary sources during the preparatory period
- their index of sourced material (although these should be retained by centres).

During the 5 hours for Activity 1, learners are expected to create assets/material for their digital media product. Although Activity 1 is conducted under supervised conditions and learners are not allowed to collaborate, they are allowed to communicate with other people because it says in the Instructions to Teachers/Tutors that, 'learners may enlist the help of others to create material, for example as an interviewee, as a model, in an acting role.' In other words, a learner could give instructions to an interviewee, model or actor (this sort of communication is permitted), whereas the learner and the interviewee, model or actor cannot discuss how to improve the lighting or sound recording because this would be viewed as collaboration.

Learners **are required** to submit the assets/material they created during Activity 1. The assets should be saved into a folder called Activity 1. The assets/material should be saved in an appropriate format and organised in a logical way.

During the 15 hours for Activity 2, learners will use the assets/material created and sourced to construct a media product in response to their chosen brief.

Each brief includes a set of specific requirements that are tailored to each brief and that will change for each assessment. Digital media skills underpin most of the vocational projects that learners will be routinely undertaking throughout their qualification. Learners are expected to draw on their understanding of media production processes, skills and techniques from across the qualification and apply transferable and specialist knowledge and skills to complete the Unit 3 externally assessed practical task.

Learners must submit an annotated digital portfolio (with a maximum of 15 pages) that includes evidence of:

- how the assets/material were created during Activity 1
- how the assets/material were prepared, manipulated and edited together
- how the media product was constructed/built
- a justification for the decisions taken throughout Activity 2.

Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

The Unit 3 Set Task takes the form of a client brief, which means that learners need to understand how to read a brief to extract key information about the intentions of the client, the target audience and the purpose of the required media product.

The 2019 Set Task Brief required learners to create a news-based media product for 14 to 19-year-olds based on one of these themes:

- the benefits of cycling to school, college or work
- the potential for virtual reality and/or augmented reality within the media industry.

Learners responded well to the brief and only a minority of learners did not interpret the brief in an appropriate way. Both themes proved accessible to learners and provided learners with opportunities to create interesting and imaginative assets/material to use within their media products.

Media products were submitted in response to all five of the briefs. The highest achieving learners were able to make their chosen theme interesting to the target audience, incorporate the specific requirements for their chosen brief and make creative use of the codes and conventions of their media sector.

The best performing learners clearly used the preparatory period to:

- research their chosen theme
- develop a good understanding of relevant codes and conventions
- explore how the client's specific requirements have been used in existing media products
- gather a range of assets/material from secondary sources.

Those learners who were clear about the evidence that was required for submission produced the most coherent and focused submissions. For example, most learners submitted the assets/material they had created during Activity 1 as part of their evidence for assessment. However, some learners were more selective about the assets/material they chose to submit for Assessment focus 1: Create Assets. These learners submitted a small selection of assets/material, which demonstrate the quality of the assets/material and the skills used to create them. This helped to reduce file sizes and still enabled the learner to access all of the marks available for Assessment focus 1.

Many learners did not provide sufficient evidence of the process of creating assets/material and this is an area of development for learners. The most effective annotated digital portfolios for Activity 1 included:

- annotated photographs of camera, lighting and audio recording set ups from a video shoot/photo shoot
- screen shots of the production skills and techniques used
- an explanation of how the assets/material created relate to the requirements of

the client brief

• annotated screen shots of how the assets/material were organised into a logical folder structure.

Most learners did, however, include suitable evidence in their annotated digital portfolio for Activity 2, such as:

- how they prepared assets/material for inclusion in their media product
- how they edited together a TV or audio news package
- how they built their website, digital e-newspaper or digital game
- a justification for the decisions made throughout Activity 2.

The most effective media products combined self-generated assets/material with assets/material from secondary sources, as specified in the brief. Although learners must create their own individual product in response to one of the five briefs and cannot work as part of a group, many learners successfully enlisted the help of others to create material, such as models, actors and interviewees.

However, centres are reminded that learners must not collaborate on their productions, as this is an external assessment. For example, learners must not work together to shoot footage and then use this same footage in their individual projects, as this will be treated as malpractice.

In summary, those learners who were confident with using the equipment and software tools available to them and who understood the process of developing a media product in their chosen medium, were in the best position to synthesise their ideas into a creative media product that met the specific requirements of the brief and engaged the target audience of 14 to 19 year olds.

Individual Questions

Activity 1: Creating assets/material

To fully meet the assessment criteria, learners must demonstrate comprehensive skill, knowledge and understanding to create and organise imaginative assets/material that relate directly to their chosen brief.

Brief 1: TV news package

Learners were required to write a voice over for their TV news package. While some learners developed an engaging narrative that provided an effective structure for them to demonstrate their digital media skills, other learners constructed a narrative that simply helped to move the media product along.

When creating assets, the best performing learners approached the client's requirements as an opportunity to demonstrate creativity in the use of specific production techniques.

For example, when approaching the requirement to shoot an interview in medium close-up with at least two cutaways, this learner made effective use of framing and depth of field to focus attention on the interviewee.

The following extract from a learner's portfolio describes how they made use of camera position, shot



composition, mise-en-scene, and camera movement when shooting their cutaways.



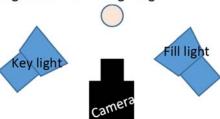


To meet the brief, whilst Max was talking I will place these cutaway shots over the interview that he is giving. The first cutaway shot is a POV shot using a go pro. For this shot I strapped a Go Pro to a chest mount and asked him to ride down the cycle path. The shot is great as it makes the production more engaging as you feel like you are riding the bike. The second and third cutaway are both close up shots however the second is a low down shot. Both of these shots are nice because the natural lighting has formed subtle shadows making the footage a lot more interesting creating the chiaroscuro effect.

This learner makes good use of *before and after* screen shots and a diagram to demonstrate their use of a two-point lighting setup. Learners should be reminded to use their annotated digital portfolio to provide evidence of their skill, knowledge and understanding of how to create imaginative assets/material in their chosen sector.

For the medium close up interview scene I created a 2-point lighting set up. Here you can see the before and after. I used battery powered LED lights, one acting as the main key light, which is the primary light source used to illuminate the subject. The secondary light on the right hand side acted as the fill light, which helps fill shadows and brighten highlights. This is very flattering on the interviewee and makes her clear, well lit and visible so the viewer can focus on her dialogue. It is a professional set up used a lot in conventional news broadcasts as it is easy to put up, portable and creates flattering and consistent lighting.







Only a minority of learners made effective use of a well-executed zoom. More skillful use of camera movement techniques, such as pans, tracking shots and focus pulls, together with appropriate use of video stabilisation equipment, would generally help to improve the effectiveness of learners' footage.

Brief 2: Audio news package

As with the TV news package, the best performing learners used the *Takeover News* scenario to demonstrate their creative use of audio recording and editing techniques.

There were many examples of clean audio recordings but only a minority of learners took the opportunity to locate themselves in the story by recording absorbing interviews with interesting people and ambient sound in unusual locations.

Although most learners wrote their script first and then recorded audio to fit their narrative, some learners selected the most compelling audio they had recorded, such as clips from an interview and wild track recordings on location, and then scripted the package around the audio. These learners used the script to highlight and explain the audio, rather than using the audio to support the script.

The best audio news packages had a concise script where every sentence had a purpose and every sentence had impact. When writing audio scripts, learners should be encouraged to consider their mode of address, how to hook the listener, how to use persuasive devices and how to be succinct. Revising and improving scripts is an essential step in the production of an audio news package.

Learners who achieved the highest marks not only made clear audio recordings but also provided evidence of the audio recording techniques they adopted. For example, this learner took steps to reduce reverberation, and used a pop filter to reduce plosives.

MICROPHONE



When capturing audio, especially for radio, the microphone really makes a difference when it comes to quality. I used a RODE microphone, connected to the mixing desk with XLR cables, this microphone was equipped with a pop filter which helps reduce the harshness of 'p' and 's' sounds during recordings. The microphone also had a soundproof foam enclosure, this helps reduce or prevent a reverberation that may occur when the subject is speaking into the microphone. The talent was also given headphones so that they could hear my instructions from the mixing desk, as well as

their own voice. While jarring at first, this helps the talent regulate their voice and better deliver their performance with more confidence.

Learners should be encouraged to provide photographs of their recording set ups, annotated with notes to explain the recording skills, processes and techniques used, any revisions made to the recording set-up and how those revisions improved the outcome.

Brief 3: Website

The *Takeover News* brief provided learners with different opportunities to make effective use of the skills and techniques listed in the unit content when creating original assets.

When creating assets for websites, learners should be encouraged to adopt a wide range of practical skills and techniques, which include:

- creating vector, bitmap and scalable vector graphics (SVG)
- CSS animations
- digital photography
- image editing
- editing audio and video files.



This learner made appropriate use of composition techniques when taking this photograph and image editing tools and techniques, such as layer styles, transform tools, color adjustments and gaussian blur to create an image with greater impact.



Once I changed the colour of the text, I then wanted to give the text the look as if it was written on the floor. To do this I went into filter < blur < gaussian blur - this changed the writing's effect. I then changed the layer style to one that suited the photo better.

Learners who achieved the highest marks not only created imaginative assets but also provided annotated screen shots to evidence of their skills and understanding of the process of creating assets for web design.



After that, I put the logo on my website, I realised that the text was see-through and hard to see. Therefore, I went into adobe Photoshop, selected all of the text using the selection tool and used the gradient tool to fill the text in with a light to dark blue gradient. Then I saved it as a PNG so the background is transparent.

Brief 4: Digital e-newspaper

To be fully prepared for the Unit 3 Set Task, learners need to be able to write and edit text, create graphics, take photographs, edit and manipulate images, and edit audio and video assets.

In response to the *Takeover News* brief, learners were required to write original copy between 400 and 420 words on their chosen theme. The most effective articles used the active tense, which is faster and more immediate, and clear, short, direct sentences. Credit was given to learners who:

- wrote an opening paragraph that engaged the reader and summarised the story
- amplified the story through detail, explanation and short quotes
- developing an appropriate mode of address to speak to the target audience of 14 to 19 year olds
- held the reader's attention to the end.

However, most learners would benefit from further proofreading to check the accuracy, readability and length of their copy.

The client's requirements also included an original masthead, at least two original photographs with appropriate image manipulation and an embedded video from a secondary source.

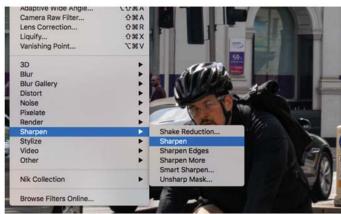
In the following examples, the learner used their digital annotated portfolio to illustrate their skills and understanding of creating assets for digital publications.



Once I had put all the clips next to each other in a well-flowing order, I added video transitions between clips to smoothen out the video and avoid the jittering. I used different transitions to prevent repetitiveness, these include; Wipe, Push, Cross-Dissolve, Flip Over and Iris Round. In addition to this I added a dissolve at the beginning and end to signify the opening and finishing of the video.

EDITING ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS (IMAGE MANIPULATION & OPTIMISATION)





The editing process for the original images was very simple, I didn't want them to have an unrealistic look, so, I stuck to adjusting exposure and very little colour corrections. The main process was to balance the exposure, I did this by lowering the really bright highlights and increasing the shadows. This helped raise the quality of the image as the subject was very dark and difficult to see, which wasn't helped by the really bright ground shining up on this sunny day. In addittion to this, I increased the clarity and sharpness to bring out more detail and slightly moved the vibrance and saturation around to set the perfect amount of colour in the image.

Once this was done, I simply exported a 'Version 2' of the image as a .png. The same adjustments were made to the other image, just slightly different due to varied brightness in the original image.



The final addition was the grid-like lines. I used the Elliptical tool to create a circle at different sizes with no fill and a black stroke, and used the Scissor tool to cut off the ends. I then inserted it into the circle and made final adjustments to each one. For the vertical lines, these were not cut and were simply circles squashed down.

Brief 5: Digital game

In response to the digital game brief, learners who achieved the highest marks produced some imaginative original assets, including a character sprite or model of a news reporter and graphics or objects for the parts of a newspaper (for the reporter to collect).

In these examples, the learner used their annotated digital portfolio to demonstrate their skill and understanding of developing assets for a 2D game, including an explanation of animating the character sprite and how the player interacts with the fire hydrant graphic.

sp_NewsMan:

This is the main sprite which is also the playable sprite, it uses the controls [←] to go left [→] to go right and [SPACE] to jump. These may be very simple controls but they are effective for the environment of the game. The character's design is very simple but effective, I was looking to create a retro style game and he way I have done it here is with the character being heavily pixilated. He wears a suit and tie like any news/weather man would. He has a beard instead of hear as I wanted his facial features to be more obvious. His red tie also makes him stand out in game.



With the animation, I tried to add as much detail as I could with him running. I attempted to mimic a real man running with one leg up and one arm then vicar versa. Due to the coding there are some bugs with the animation but it still works well.

Whilst the player is stationary, sp_NewsMan will bob his head up and down creating emersion.



The animation works as follows:

WHEN [←] DOWN: Set horizontal speed to -5; set friction to 0.5; set scale to -1,1

WHEN [←] PRESS: Set sprite to sp_NewsManRunning; Set animation speed to 1

WHEN [←] UP: Set sprite to sp_NewsMan

WHEN [→] DOWN: Set horizontal speed to 5; set friction to 0.5; set scale to 1,1

WHEN [→] PRESS: Set sprite to sp_NewsManRunning; Set animation speed to 1

WHEN [→] UP: Set sprite to sp_NewsMan

sp Button:

The button is a very simple design. It's just a red button with a simple animation. If and when the player interacts with the button, the red button will go down as if someone or something has

pressed it. The button will then trigger the Fire Hydrant to activate. I chose to use the colour red as it makes it very obvious o the player that the button needs to be interacted with.



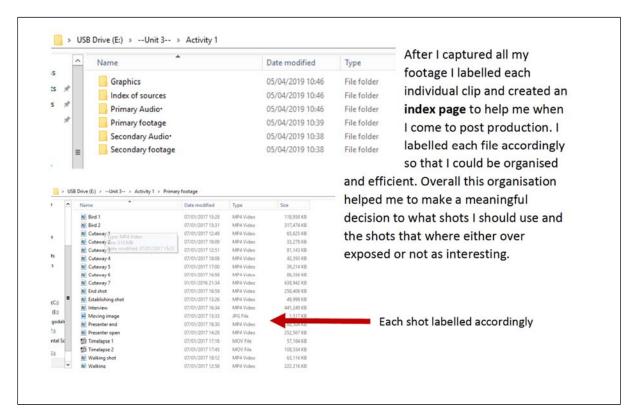
The button is actually built to be attached to a wall but I decided to rotate it so the player can basically jump in it. This is due to the button being so big. As mentioned before, if the player presses the key [E], the button will change to it looking as if it's been pressed and the fire hydrant will activate.

Learners can create a 2D or a 3D game in response to the digital game brief. In future assessments, the brief will state that 3D models and textures or 2D character sprites and graphics will meet the requirements of the brief, to ensure that learners who have been creating 3D models, environments and games have an opportunity to draw upon the skills, knowledge and understanding gained throughout their qualification.

Organising assets/material

There was a considerable improvement in the number of learners who provided appropriate evidence of the logical storage of assets/material, which included logging or naming assets/material with appropriate file names and saving them in an appropriate file format into an organised folder structure.

Those learners who logged footage for video or audio productions as part of the digital workflow or organised their assets into an appropriate folder structure as part of the workflow for producing a website, e-magazine or digital game, only had to take screen shots of these internalised processes as evidence of the clear and logical organisation of their assets, as shown in the example.



However, some learners did not create an appropriate folder structure within their user area, which often meant that their media products did not function correctly. For example, where learners included inappropriate paths, links did not function and assets did not appear as intended.

Activity 2: Build/create a media product that meets the requirements of the chosen brief.

There were accomplished and coherent media products submitted in response to each of the briefs that used sophisticated technical skills, met the specific requirements of the brief and sustained the interest of the target audience.

Although examiners can credit the skills and techniques evident in the final media product, the only way to ensure that the examiners are aware of the full range of skills and techniques that the learners have adopted is if the learners provide evidence of those skills and techniques. The mark scheme requires learners to provide evidence of the decision-making process and to fully justify their decisions when adopting different skills and techniques in the chosen software.

The following responses to each brief are examples of the effective use of digital media skills and techniques to combine and refine the assets and material created and obtained from secondary sources.

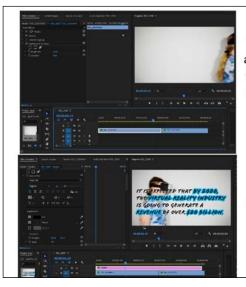
Brief 1: TV news package

The most effective TV news packages used a multi-layered soundtrack that combines several sound sources to enhance the final product.



Within this section I have manipulated the audio to create a more dramatic introduction (page 1, second image). I have slowly layered each clip on top of one another adding more layers as the cuts of the clips get quicker till the section finally cuts to black. For the first two news report I decided not to overlay the audios so that I can build it up. To overlay the audios I right clicked on the footage and pressed unlink, highlighted to the left. After the audios where unlinked I then dragged out each audio and cut them all at the same time just before the black cut changed to the next shot. Underneath the audios I placed a SFX called tension riser. This added to the dramatic introduction making it even more engaging and intense.

Although some learners created imaginative titles, captions and graphics, as shown below, this is generally an area for improvement for most learners.



To create this firstly I imported the fotage of my sister walking across the screen. I adjusted the brightness and contrast as I felt the video had to look quite sharp as it was apart of the opening graphic. I adjusted the brightness to 10 and the contrast to 15.

Then I added the graphic/text I wanted to reveal as she walks.

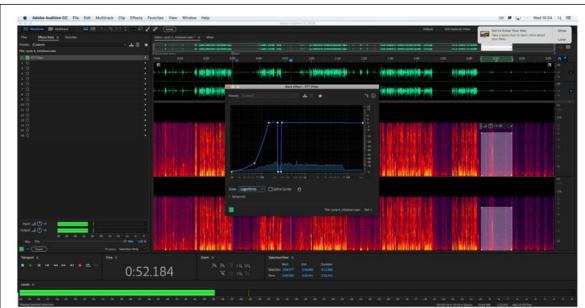
Positioning it and changing the scale as necessary.

I then clicked on the pen under opacity to reveal the mask section. I created the box and positioned it so it showed the amount of text I wanted, then key frame by frame I adjusted what text I wanted in as my sister walked by clicking the double lined triangle button on the mask path line. I continued to do this until the very end so when played the text reveals itself as she walks.

Brief 2: Audio news package

There were several examples of well-crafted audio news packages that made purposeful use of sound effects and wove ambient sound throughout the edit.

Although most learners made effective use of noise reduction and restoration techniques, learners did not always make full use of audio effects, such as filters, delay, reverb, chorus, distortion, pitch transposers and compression.



Also, there was some buzz or hum that I isolated on a section without audio and fine-tuned my EQ to isolate it out. I also got used a roll-off on the low-end frequencies because no human can speak that low normally so it just cleaned it up a bit.

Brief 3: Website

The highest achieving learners designed a home page comprising effective combinations of assets throughout each section of the page.

The effective use of design concepts such as balance, contrast and visual hierarchy helped learners to create an effective page composition.

Page layout techniques such as white space, colour, columns, headings and subheadings to separate content are all techniques used to good effect by only a minority of learners.



Learners were required to add

a *news in brief* section with tabbed content and working with JavaScript to add interactivity to web pages, such as image slideshows, modal boxes and popups, is

an area of improvement for most learners.

Brief 4: Digital e-newspaper

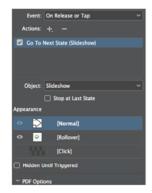


Learners were required to include an image slideshow and adding image effects, such as image slideshows, sequences, pinch and zoom and panorama, is an area of improvement for most learners.

There were several examples of e-newspapers that included all of the client's requirements within an effective page layout and design.

Aligning the assets on the pages, the use of white space and emphasis all helped learners to create an effective page composition.

Text was generally well presented through carefully chosen fonts, font styles and leading. In addition, those learners who used character and paragraph styles were able to style their text consistently across each page in their newspaper.





I then used the Buttons and Forms settings to enable my arrows to be used. I set them both to buttons that would go to the next/previous state and highlighted the object Slideshow to be connected. Now my arrows can be used to change between slides, however, I added further customisation to the arrows to ensure they were visually appealing and easily seen by viewers. I used a white fill with a black stroke to give it a strong contrast and ensure it was visible on both dark and light backgrounds, and for when the arrow is rolled over with the cursor, it would light up green, which was done with an outer glow effect.



Brief 5: Digital game

Most learners were able to create a functioning game and used their annotated digital portfolio to explain how they used their chosen game engine to build the game.

Tree Collison Mask:

The black rectangle is the collision mask for the tree and each tree has roughly the same mask where it only covers the bottom of the trunk. I did this because this make the game look more three dimensional, it allows the player to go behind the tall leave of the tree but blocks the player at the trunk as if tree was physical there, I think this is really effective as it allows me to hide collectable and paths behind the trees.



However, only a minority of learners met all of the client's requirements, which included onscreen user instructions, a timing system and scoreboard to indicate how many parts of the story have been collected. In order to fully meet the Band 4 assessment criteria, the game must comprehensively meet the requirements of the brief.

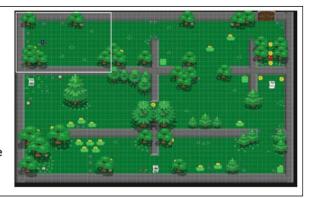
At the top of the screen at all times as long as the player is in a playable level they will be multiple pieces of information relating to the game, the brief required to specifically have a timing system to show how long the player has left (on the right, 180 seconds or 3 minutes) and a score board to indicate the amount of stories in the level (on the right). I have also decided to add other bit of information such as the amount of heats the player has left as well as their score per each level.



The client's requirement to include characters or objects that obstruct the news reporter was an opportunity for learners to add challenge to the game. Learners should be encouraged to consider how to add sufficient challenge to improve the playability of their game for the target audience.

Level 2:

Even though level 2 has more open areas and more room for the player to move I decided to balance out the difficulty buy put obstacles directly on top of the newspapers so that the player would either have to time the collection or take it slowly so they don't die. I think that this level is slightly harder than the first level but I have also only added one extra life in this level, the player should not die more than twice on this level.



Saving the final media product

Although most learners were able to save, export or publish their media product in an appropriate file format, there were still some learners who submitted a final product in a file format native to specific software applications, which could not be opened without access to that software.

Although learners will not be able to conduct any formal testing under supervised conditions, they should be encouraged to check the functionality, usability and accessibility of their media product.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, learners should:

- use a broad range of sector specific skills and techniques when creating assets/material (as published in the <u>specification</u>), rather than repeating the same processes to create similar assets/material
- combine self-generated assets/material with assets/material from secondary sources, as specified in the brief for their chosen medium
- organise their assets/material into a clear and logical folder structure
- provide suitable evidence of the digital media skills and techniques used to create assets/material, edit the assets/material together and create their media product, such as annotated screen shots and photographs
- meet all the specific requirements of their chosen brief
- develop a media product that is tailored to the specific audience and purpose established in the brief
- save, export or publish their final media product in an appropriate file format.







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