

ETA Week 4

The Session in Review

We began this session a little differently to most. We went straight into a video that, without giving you any hints, tested your powers of observation. As a group you picked 3 of the 4 changes. That's quite unusual, most groups fail to pick up one change. You did exceptionally well. What did we learn from this video? Primarily if you focus on a specific thing other changes can be taking place and you won't see them. This is particularly relevant in testing as we want to be aware of things going on not just a narrow focus on one thing.

The homework from week 3 was to estimate the number of barbers in Melbourne. The number that falls out of the end of the process was not that important, it was all about the assumptions and things you learn along the way. We discussed how it's OK to make assumptions, we do it all the time, but you must be able to talk about those assumptions. We also saw use of evidence such as Google maps and dictionaries to provide information. Even then we saw that a dictionary definition can be challenged by actual experience. Sometimes a single source of information is enough, at other times you need to look for more evidence. This was a very good discussion. Lee and I are confident you all got the point of the exercise.

We had a quick revisit of some of the ideas around waterfall (which we spoke about in week 3). Then we moved on to white box and black box testing. You can remember these quite simply. If you can see the code and you are getting information directly from it, it's white box. If you are testing from an interface or command line, cannot access or see the code for testing purposes, it is black box. If it's black box you can't see what's inside.

We then moved onto static testing. We defined static testing as testing that does not require execution of code. For testers this often means examining documentation and looking for things such as possible errors, ambiguities and missing information (to name just a few possibilities). We applied our critical thinking and observation skills to part of a specification. Some excellent observations made and questions posed. While we used a specification document static testing can be applied to screen mock ups, flow diagrams and any other documentation that might be produced when developing a product.

Test requirements, dimensions of the software that we might want to test. Paul spoke about that while many people use the term test requirements he prefers to use the phrase "test ideas". Traditionally test requirements are taken from the specification document. This document talks about the way things should work. Danger lurks here if you focus on these types of requirements. As a tester you need to consider the claims we have made (we said we would deliver something specific, we need to check those claims) but we also need to test ways in which those claims might not be true. The specification won't tell you about ways the software might not work as desired.

We moved onto test cases, went through a very formal definition and also ways you might see test cases written in the "real world". We discussed the idea of could we test without test cases. We eventually agreed that we had been testing in every week of the course but had not written a single test case. Paul and Lee are not saying don't write test cases, we are saying think about what is appropriate to the testing you need to execute. Often the test practice you work with will dictate the type and style of test cases to be written. In such cases you follow that process but you can also talk to people and attempt to influence towards other practices which might include test cases with less detail or no test cases and capturing test information in other ways.

We closed out the evening with a discussion about the importance of attempting any homework set. We cover a lot of information in the time we are together on Mondays. The homework is a way for you to understand aspects of testing that we have discussed. Remember you don't need to have full or complete answers, you just need to have had a go at completing. Come in with some ideas noted down so we can discuss what you understood, what was difficult, things need further explanation to help you understand. You can also contact Lee and Paul through our class e-mail address epic.testability.academy@gmail.com

It was another fun session in which you all participated and added some very interesting ideas. We look forward to catching up again next Monday.