
Coursework commentary 2018–2019

CO3348 Interaction design

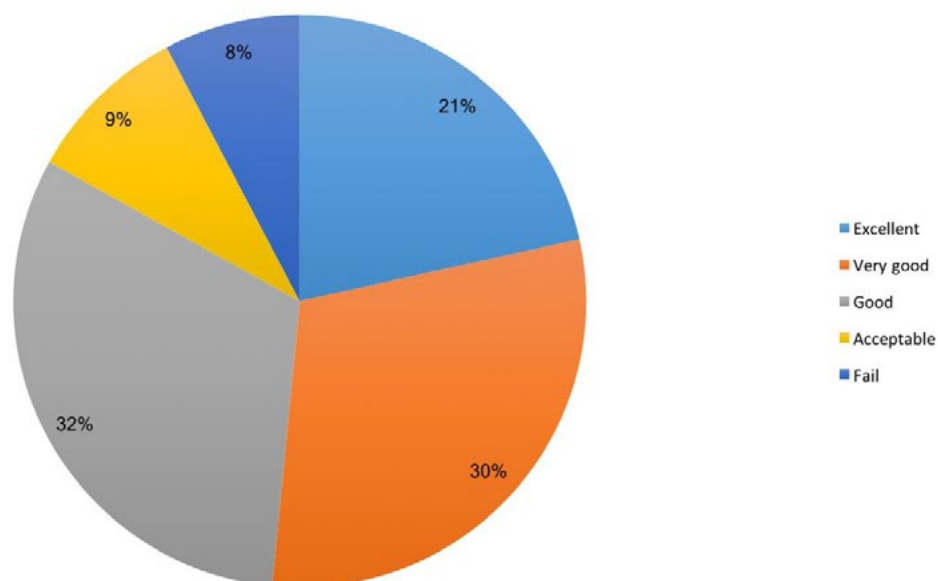
Coursework assignment 2

General remarks

This coursework assignment required students to identify three target users of two different smart domestic appliances of their choice, imagine the usage context for these users, develop personas and scenarios to illustrate those usage contexts and then prototype interfaces for those target users. Students were then required to reflect upon their initial proposals and critically comment on their ideas and work.

See the 2018–2019 CW2 cohort mark distribution below:

CO3348 CW2 Cohort mark distribution 2018-19



The proportion of students achieving excellent marks for this assignment fell by 10 per cent, with those achieving good or very good grades increasing by 10 per cent. This suggests that students are finding it more difficult to move from the theoretical and observation insights from the first coursework assignment to more practical design and analytical activities.

Comments on specific questions

The most prevalent weakness was that the scenarios and personas were quite stereotypical with generic assumptions being made; including, for example, that all young people would love smart devices because they love technology and all people over 50 would hate them because they were afraid of technology and couldn't remember how to use it. Technology seemed to be seen as a badge of wealth, and in support of a lazy lifestyle,

rather than meeting functional needs, and being designed accordingly. A number of the scenarios were quite trivial and seemed like advertising or marketing arguments, not a thoughtful analysis of users' needs and the role of technology in meeting those needs.

This perspective became problematic when there was an absence of critical evaluation of the appropriateness of some proposed solutions. For example, it is generally not recommended to leave a microwave oven unattended, so the idea that it would be wise to provide a service to control a microwave from outside a dwelling needs to be carefully contextualised, and should generally not be possible.

Submissions that were either too short or off topic were also marked down.

Other general faults included use of informal style, poor structuring (that is, poor use of sections and subsections), and poor grammar/spelling. Some submissions were penalised for poor practice on citation and referencing.

Many submissions received average marks as a result of students providing designs, but not providing strong or objective reasons (that is,, justifications) for their design choices.

Good answers included realistic and useful personas, original design scenarios informed by objective critique of existing services (see Coursework assignment 1), together with derived insights and mock-ups including wireframes, storyboards, screen flows with varied fidelity (low and high). High marks were given where mock-ups adhered to design principles (e.g. consistency) and were explained as part of the design justification, and where user interface considerations included layout and UI elements (e.g. icons, fonts, and so on).

Outstanding submissions were informed by a sound exploration of user needs in context and referencing wider reading. Many also included good diagrams of the user flow rather than just wireframes and mock-ups.