
Examiners' commentary

2017–2018

CO3348 Interaction design – Zone B

General remarks

This examination aimed to test candidates' general understanding of the syllabus, involving application of knowledge to a variety of scenarios. It is important to read and answer questions carefully. Only **three** out of five questions should be answered and if you answer more, only the **first three** are marked.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Design scenario

This question aimed to test candidates' ability to demonstrate understanding and apply knowledge to this specific design scenario.

For Part (a), good answers chose appropriate prototyping methods and described them in detail. It was desirable to highlight the iterative nature in which these methods should be applied. Excellent answers also showed how these methods should be specifically applied in the given scenario.

Part (b), good answers included well-designed mock-up sketches (for example, wireframes, storyboards, user flow diagrams) as well as useful descriptions. Excellent answers also described in detail how the prototypes adhered to specific design principles and in particular how these differ in the cases of websites and mobile sites.

For Part (c), candidates generally showed a poor understanding of the cognitive walkthrough method, in particular confusing it with heuristic evaluation. Good answers would highlight that in general this is an expert form of evaluation and would explain the process, including at least three questions asked at each step, namely:

- Will the user try and achieve the right outcome?
- Will the user notice that the correct action is available to them?
- Will the user associate the correct action with the outcome they expect to achieve? If the correct action is performed, will the user see that progress is being made towards their intended outcome?

Question 2

Evaluation

This question required a good general knowledge of evaluation methods.

For Part (a) candidates were required to describe in detail the specific technique and explain how it is often used to provide a simulation of the behaviour of a system. A good answer would explain that in this case a simulation of the system, including the network aspects might not correctly model the change in behaviour of the system and might therefore not elicit the same response from the user as when using the system with a real network connection. This would

demonstrate an understanding that the user response and user experience might not be an accurate reflection of the UX when using the system itself.

Part (b) was a test of understanding, as answers should clearly explain that a heuristic evaluation, where usability experts rather than end-users examine the suitability of the design and implementation of a user interface to a system, would not point to the role of the network in the user experience. The UI might be appropriate in design and functionality but the UX might be unpredictable if the network performance changes. Answers should have explained this and provided a different answer from that of (a) above.

For Part (c) candidates should be able to demonstrate a good understanding of fitting an evaluation method to the context by describing conducting user testing within a controlled environment where the network performance in a system can be varied and the user response observed, measured and discussed.

Question 3

Essay

This question required candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the concept “Participatory Design” within the domain of HCI. Some attempts were poorly answered, with the most common faults being:

- a very short essay
- incoherent argument.

Good answers were written in essay style, with a coherent structure (for example introduction, discussion with balanced argument and finished by drawing conclusions). Excellent answers also showed evidence of wider reading, particularly highlighting the roots and reasons for the adoption of participatory design within the techniques available to those working in the domain of HCI.

Question 4

Usability

This question required knowledge of common design concepts and the associated usability concepts.

For Part (a) candidates were expected to identify criteria such as learnability, memorability and constraints. In particular, it is useful to assess the relative importance of these issues within different potential user demographics as considered under the principle of constraints. Excellent answers would illustrate these principles with concrete descriptions based on experience of the use of devices such as mobile phones and others where this marketing philosophy is evident, such as TVs and microwave ovens.

For Part (b), candidates were expected to identify criteria such as consistency, affordance and mental effort. Excellent answers considered the relative importance of these issues within different potential user demographics.

Part (c) required concrete knowledge of the consequence of different disabilities on usability in the context of this scenario. Weak answers gave superficial scenarios but excellent answers explained why, for example, people with learning difficulties would be disadvantaged by this type of design approach.

Question 5

Design scenario

This question aimed to test candidates' ability to demonstrate knowledge of design scenarios, prototyping techniques and evaluation methods, and apply this knowledge to a specific task.

Part (a) required candidates to create realistic and plausible scenarios focusing on the use of the device (for example, describe how a person would interact with the system to perform tasks and achieve goals). Good marks were achieved where the scenario reflected the story of the user and activity (that is, it focused on user needs, expectations, actions and reactions). **Two** scenarios were required; where only one scenario was provided, this immediately cost half the marks available.

For Part (b), good answers included well-designed mock-up sketches (for example, wireframes, storyboards, user flow diagrams) and useful descriptions and justification for the design choices. Excellent answers also detailed how the prototypes adhered to specific design principles (e.g. consistency, feedback, affordances and so on).

Part (c) required an outline of an evaluation plan including users, a timetable, methods, and metrics in the description. Good answers provided detail and realistic sequencing. The evaluation method should be appropriate for the task and the choice should be fully justified. The description of users should include the number of users, and how they would be found, together with a brief description of their characteristics. Answers should also mention the data to be collected, and how it would be analysed, as well as the performance measures to be used.