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**PROGRAMME: COMPUTER SCIENCE**

**COURSE: WEB PROGRAMMING CONCEPTS**

**COURSE CODE: ICS 222**

**TITLE: ASSIGNMENT 2**

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**Steps taken in order to create a website for a company.**

When approached to design a website for a company, I will use the following 7 steps:

1. **Goal identification**: Where I work with the client to determine what goals the new website needs to fulfil.

In this initial stage, I, as the designer will need to identify the end goal of the website design, usually in close collaboration with the client or other stakeholders. I will use the following questions in this stage of the design and website development process:

* Who is the site for?
* What do they expect to find or do there?
* Is this website’s primary aim to inform, to sell ([ecommerce](https://webflow.com/ecommerce)), or to amuse?
* Does the website need to clearly convey a brand’s core message, or is it part of a wider branding strategy with its own unique focus?
* What competitor sites, if any, exist, and how should this site be inspired by/different than, those competitors?

If these questions aren’t all clearly answered in the brief, the whole project can set off in the wrong direction.

I will also use the following tools in the website goal identification stage

* Audience personas
* Creative brief
* Competitor analyses
* Brand attributes

1. **Scope definition**: Once I know the site's goals, I can define the scope of the project. This includes what web pages and features the site requires to fulfil the goal, and the timeline for building those out.

One of the problems I might face during my project is scope creep. The client sets out with one goal in mind, but this gradually expands, evolves, or changes altogether during the design process and the next thing I know, am not only designing and building a website, but also a web app, emails, and push notifications.

Although it isn’t necessarily a problem in terms of executing its design, it can often lead to more work. But if the increased expectations aren’t matched by an increase in budget or timeline, the project can rapidly become utterly unrealistic.

I will use a timeline visualization e.g. a Gantt chart, which details a realistic timeline for the project, including any major landmarks, can help to set boundaries and achievable deadlines. This provides an invaluable reference for both designers and clients and helps keep everyone focused on the task and goals at hand.

I will use the following tools **for scope definition**

* [A contract](https://webflow.com/blog/how-a-design-contract-can-help-you-manage-clients)
* Gantt chart (or other timeline visualization)

1. **Sitemap and wireframe creation**: With the scope well-defined, I can start digging into the sitemap, defining how the content and features we defined in scope definition will interrelate.

Below is a sitemap for a simple website. Note how it captures page hierarchy

Home

About

Store

Contact

Gallery

Products

Services

The sitemap provides the foundation for any well-designed website. It will give me a clear idea of the website’s information architecture and explain the relationships between the various pages and content elements.

The next step is to find some [design inspiration](https://webflow.com/blog/web-design-inspiration) and build a mockup of the wireframe. \*Wireframes provide a framework for storing the site’s visual design and content elements, and can help identify potential challenges and gaps with the sitemap.

Although a wireframe doesn’t contain any final design elements, it does act as a guide for how the site will ultimately look. It can also act as [inspiration](https://webflow.com/blog/wireframe-ui-kits) for the formatting of various elements. One can use Webflow to create wireframes but I personally like to go back to basics and use paper and pencil.

I will use the following tools **for sitemapping and wireframing**

* Pen/pencil and paper
* Sketch
* Webflow

1. **Content creation**: Now that I have a bigger picture of the site in mind, I can start creating content for the individual pages, always keeping search engine optimization (SEO) in mind to help keep pages focused on a single topic.

Content serves two essential purposes:

Purpose 1. Content drives engagement and action

First, content engages readers and drives them to take the actions necessary to fulfil a site’s goals. This is affected by both the content itself (the writing), and how it’s presented (the typography and structural elements).

Dull, lifeless, and overlong prose rarely keeps visitors’ attention for long. Short, snappy, and intriguing content grabs them and gets them to click through to other pages

Purpose 2: SEO (search engine optimization)

Content also boosts a site’s visibility for search engines. The practice of creation and improving content to rank well in search is known as [search engine optimization, or SEO](https://webflow.com/blog/website-seo).

This involves getting my keywords and key-phrases right is essential for the success of my website. I might use Google Keyword Planner. This tool shows the search volume for potential target keywords and phrases, so I can hone in on what actual human beings are searching on the web. Google Trends is also handy for identifying terms people actually use when they search.

Some content creation tools

* Google Docs
* Webflow CMS (content management system)

Handy SEO tools

* Google Keyword Planner
* Google Trends

1. **Visual elements**: With the site architecture and some content in place, I can start working on the visual brand. Depending on the client, this may already be well-defined, but I might also be defining the visual style from the ground up.

Finally, in this Stage I will create the visual style for the site. This part of the design process will often be shaped by existing branding elements, colour choices, and logos, as stipulated by the client. But it’s also the stage of the web design process where I can really shine.

Images are taking on a more significant role in web design now than ever before. Not only do high-quality images give a website a professional look and feel, but they also communicate a message, are mobile-friendly, and help build trust.

Visual content is known to increase clicks, engagement, and revenue. But more than that, people want to see images on a website. Not only do images make a page feel less cumbersome and easier to digest, but they also enhance the message in the text, and can even convey vital messages without people even needing to read.

The visual design is a way to communicate and appeal to the site's users.

Tools for visual elements

* The usual suspects (Sketch, Illustrator, Photoshop, etc.)
* Visual style guides

1. **Testing**: By now, I’ll have all my pages and defined how they display to the site visitor, so it's time to make sure it all works. Combining manual browsing of the site on a variety of devices with automated site crawlers to identify everything from user experience issues to simple broken links.

Once the site has all its visuals and content, the testing can begin. I will thoroughly test each page to make sure [all links are working](https://validator.w3.org/checklink) and that the website loads properly on all devices and browsers. I will identify all errors here and fix them accordingly.

Have one last look at the page meta titles and descriptions too. Even the order of the words in the meta title can affect the performance of the page on a search engine.

**Website testing tools**

* [W3C Link Checker](https://validator.w3.org/checklink)
* [SEO Spider](https://www.screamingfrog.co.uk/)

1. **Launch**: Once everything's working beautifully, it's time to launch my site.

This involves the choosing the domain name and hosting preferences. Although this is the client’s task myself as the designer can aid in choosing catchy domain names. As the designer as well how my website is hosted also affects the website’s performance therefore I will also aid the client in subscribing for a hosting service that provides the best performance platform for my site.

An XML sitemap

At its core, an XML sitemap is essentially just a list of the individual pages that make the website. It shows the URL of each page, the date each page was last updated, and how important each page is in the overall structure of the site. Search engines (like Google) will use the XML sitemap to find and index all the stuff that lives on your website.

An SSL certificate

SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) is a security protocol that allows the audience to establish a safe, encrypted connection between their browser and your website.

An SSL certificate helps ensure that any data submitted through your website whether that’s a visitor’s login credentials, information sent through a contact form, or even a credit card transaction is secure.