



Application of the EQF Predict optimum models in education practice

The EQF Predict virtual pilot on a web content management course

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Preliminary remarks

The EQF Predict pilot activities have been implemented in order to test the EQF-adaptation optimum models developed and reviewed in the other project workpackages framework and as they are presented on the EQF Adaptation Support Portal (www.eqf-support.eu). They have been implemented into a practical context involving education practitioners who would also work on such issues outside of project settings on the examples of

- an in-company human resource development programme with VW Service Deutschland on a car mechatronics training programme related to the German IVET scheme for car mechatronics
- a public distance learning course implemented by Fastrak (UK) on web content management

It has been the major aim of the two EQF Predict pilots to test how the EQF requirements on education practice as they are described within the EQF predict optimum models of EQF-adaptation can be applied within education practice and by education practitioners.

This paper describes the EQF Predict pilot implemented in the framework of a distance learning course on web content management. This pilot had its focus on the actual course implementation and on the assessment of learning outcomes.

(1) Development of the course

The overall pilot course has been based on the already existing results from the Leonardo Web Content Manager project and from the Embedding Standards project. The curriculum for the course has its origins in the Leonardo Web Content Manager project. This project helped to define the Web Content Managers role what is a relatively new and ill-defined role in web development. A job description for a web content specialist is included as Appendix 1. This work was further developed in the Embedding Standards project. The job description was used as the basis for a curriculum/ profile prepared according to EQF guidelines (shown in Appendix 2). This curriculum was in turn used as the basis for the pilot. This was conceived as a blended online programme using a wide range of methods and media. A description for the course is included as Appendix 3.

The EQF compatible profile developed within the Embedding Standards project describes the web content manager profile in terms of "Knowledge", "Skills", "Autonomy and Responsibility", "Learning Competence", "Professional and Vocational Competence". Although the optimum models of EQF adaptation developed within EQF Predict recommend the use of the EQF descriptors, this is not the case for this description of learning outcomes. It has nevertheless been used in this pilot because the EQF descriptors are also not necessarily applied in the already existing or currently established qualifications frameworks in Europe. The approach applied will not be further discussed here, since this pilot's focus has been put on the actual implementation of the course and the assessment of the learning outcomes.

The blended online course has been developed based on the already available material from the previous projects. In the overall development of the course special attention has been paid to the application of training/teaching methods/approaches that avoid the development of inert knowledge and facilitate the development of "professional competence to act" in order to reflect the different categories of learning outcomes. This has been ensured by applying a strongly student-centred training approach and a variety of self-directed, task- and problem-based learning methods such as case studies, group work to elaborate a defined problem, provision of peer feedback to other participants' work or the continuous work on an own web content project (see also annex 3 for further information). The usage of such methods did not only ensure the development of "professional competence to act", but has also been chosen in order to support the development of the learning outcome assigned to the categories "Autonomy and Responsibility", "Learning Competence" and "Professional and Vocational Competence" such as "Formulates responses to abstract and concrete problems" or „Makes suggestions for improvements to outcomes."

The course has been led by two facilitators being specialists in both web content management and instructional design. This set of competences has been chosen because the implementation of the methods described above requires very good subject related as well as pedagogical abilities in order to develop a learning environment that allows the participants to make optimal use of the course and to develop the learning outcomes as they are assigned to the related certificate on web-content management.

Special attention has been paid to the assessment of learning outcomes as well because those had to address the different categories of abilities as they are described in the profile. This means they had to address not only "Skills" or even "Knowledge" but also the remaining categories "Autonomy and Responsibility", "Learning Competence" and "Professional and Vocational Competence". Assessment has been arranged around the methods already applied within the training course by applying the following approaches:

- The quality of the work submitted by the participants group (30%)
- The quality of the final assignments (which brought together the individual assignments that a participant has worked on throughout the course) (50%)
- The feedback provided by the participant in the forum to the work of other groups and individuals (20%)

This combination of approaches allowed an assessment that considered the majority of learning outcome categories and has been very closely to a practical context due to the methods applied. The work results have been assessed by the two course tutor/facilitators. Successful students were awarded a certificate indicating the learning outcomes achieved in the course.

(2) Course implementation

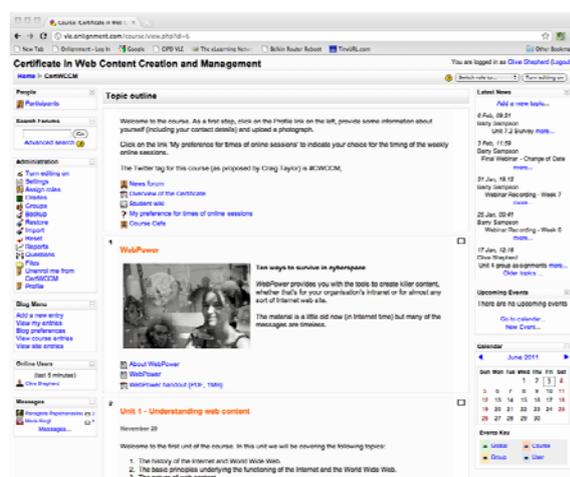
There was considerable interest in the course when it was first announced via Twitter in the UK and many applicants had to be turned down. Anecdotal evidence suggests that applicants were excited by the prospect of a pan-European learning experience and were impressed by the fact that the course had been designed in accordance with the EQF – although they were probably unaware of what exactly this was. In other countries, nominations were made through personal contacts of the EQF Predict project partners.

The participant list was made up as follows:

Romania	1 started	1 completed
Greece	6 started	2 completed
Austria	8 started	4 completed
UK	6 started	5 completed

The fact that the course was free probably contributed to a high initial drop-out rate. Another contributing factor may well have been language difficulties. Those that made a start on the course did, in most cases, make it through to completion. This was in spite of the fact that the course demanded a lot in terms of group and individual work. The need to judge completion on the basis of competence made it essential that there was a great deal of practical activity. Groups were allocated according to nationality on the basis that this would allow groups to collaborate in their own language. This was successful to some degree but a number of participants commented that this also reduced the opportunities for interaction across national boundaries.

Different kind of media has been used for the course implementation. Live online sessions have been implemented by using WebEx a web conferencing system. The course itself has been hosted on the virtual learning environment Moodle. This open-source platform supports all major languages. It allowed participants to communicate using blogs and forums and provided a means for submission of final assignments. The participants received access to additional content via the highly-interactive e-learning course called WebPower.

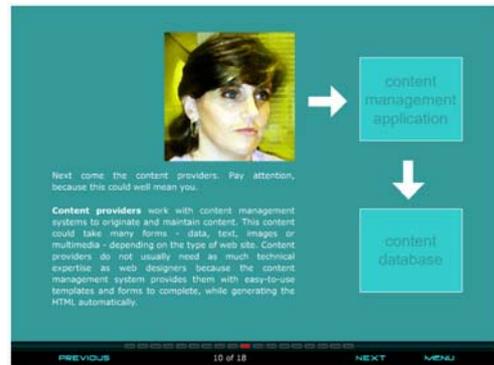


The course was hosted on the Moodle virtual learning environment.

The following images give an indication of the make-up of the course:



Specialist content was provided through a highly-interactive e-learning course called WebPower.



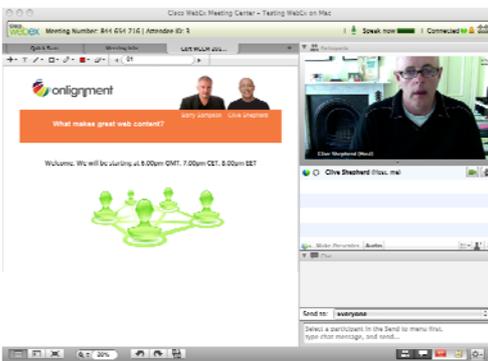
WebPower included technical content in text and graphics.



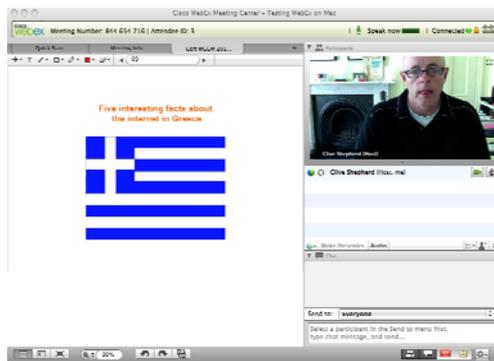
The course also included case studies and other practical activities.



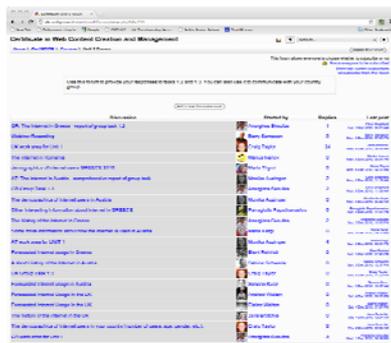
The course was based on ten key 'rules'.



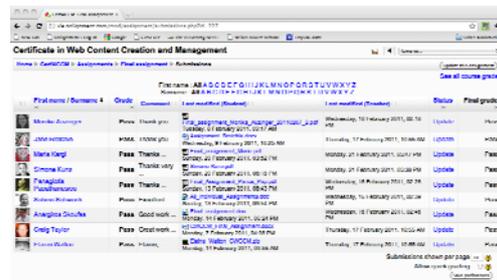
Participants also had the opportunity to meet up regularly using the WebEx video conferencing system. These sessions were used to bring out lessons from the previous week and lay out plans for the following week.



WebEx allows communication using a wide variety of media, including voice, video, slides, text, polls, document sharing.



The discussion forums in Moodle allowed for asynchronous communication within and between groups.



Students submitted their assignments and received gradings within Moodle.

(3) Conclusion

Testing of the EQF Predict optimum models on EQF-adaptation has been the major aim of this pilot activity. Since the web-content manager is not a complete qualification that can be assigned to a qualifications framework level or an equivalent qualification, these testing possibilities have, however, been limited and had to be reduced to those features applying to the specific case of this course.

Some major elements elaborated as crucial within the optimum models such as the work process reference via a job profile and learning outcomes definitions have already been available prior to this pilot course, since they have been developed within previous project work. The relevant results are available in annex 1 (the job description of a web-content manager) and 2 (the related curriculum/ learning outcome description). Both elements have proven to be essential for all further considerations in an EQF application context. They enable the development of a course design that is supposed to enable participants to develop abilities that can easily transferred into a real working situation and the related assessment procedures assessing a variety of learning outcomes necessary to perform the related work tasks. This is especially important because current assessment practice reflects that learners within training measures normally learn and trainers/teachers often train/teach in order to cover the issues formulated within the curriculum/training programme. This means that the best way to provide for learning outcomes relatable to the EQF is to based curricula/ course designs but also assessment on previously defined learning outcomes drawn from the actual work tasks/ processes.

The experience from the pilot course underlines the necessity to work with a strongly learner-centred training approach and a variety of task- and problem-based training/teaching methods such as project work (as it has been the case within the pilot course) or e.g. work placement in order to enable participants to develop the whole spectrum of learning outcomes meaning knowledge, skills and competences. This cannot be reached with teacher-centred methods such as lecturing. The pilot, but also many other vocational training examples from different European countries and different institutional frameworks, show that it is possible to comply with these requirements. But it has high demands on education personal. They have to be subject matter and pedagogical experts at the same time in order develop and implement such learning environments for their learners or rather facilitate the learners learning process. It can therefore be concluded that, although this is not in the focus of the EQF predict optimum models that focus on key educational elements (occupational profiles, curricula and assessment procedures), the EQF with its learning outcome orientation does have strong effects on the actual course/ training design in order to respond properly to the overall learning outcome approach. It needs to be further explored how big these effects are on educational practice in the different countries. The EQF Predict results already provide some starting points for further analysis work in this regard.

Just as outlined above also the applied assessment approach has been strictly oriented on the previously defined learning outcomes by applying a mix of methods in order to assess the different learning outcomes categories. The most challenging aspect has been the assessment of learning outcomes other than knowledge. For this reason the assessment procedures have been developed by applying a problem-based approach simulating as far as possible a real-work environment. For efficiency reasons the assessment has been linked to the actual learning process, however, if it is agreed that the same learning outcomes can be achieved in various ways (informal, non-formal and

formal), with no preference for institutional frameworks (like educational/VET institutions), then this is not recommendable for EQF application in practice. It makes rather sense to provide assessment procedures which are not that closely related to the learning context as it has been the case in this pilot. Therefore it makes at any rate sense to implement assessment procedures independently from courses. The applied assessment method that equals a portfolio approach with some additional assessment elements does, however, present a possible approach for EQF-adapted assessment procedures as it could be and is already applied in education practice as different examples from Europe show. Such as the learner centred methods in the course design also this kind of assessment does, however, require special competences from the assessors. They also need to be subject matter experts, but they also must be able to assess based on different categories of learning outcomes that require different kind of methods in order to be addressed and assessed properly.

List of references:

EQF Predict optimum models of EQF adaptation available at www.project-predict.eu (Downloads) and in the EQF adaptation support section (principles and optimum models of EQF-adaptation) of the EQF Adaptation Support Portal (www.eqf-support.eu)

Annexes:

Appendix 1: The Web Content Specialist – Job Description
Appendix 2: The Web Content Specialist Curriculum 1.0
Appendix 3: Certificate in Web Content Creation and Management

For further information on the project please consult:

www.project-predict.eu or
www.eqf-support.eu

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Appendix 1: The Web Content Specialist – Job Description

Purpose of the role

The Web Content Specialist (WCS) is responsible for creating and/or acquiring content for websites, email newsletters and other online communications media such as podcasts.

The nature of online content

Online content can take many forms, including plain text, links, database content, still images (illustrations, photographs, diagrams), animation, audio, video, interactive devices (forms, forums, chat rooms, polls, questionnaires, etc.). The main responsibility of the WCS will be for the creation or acquisition of verbal content (primarily textual but also audio), although a close relationship with other media specialists, such as graphic designers, will almost certainly be required.

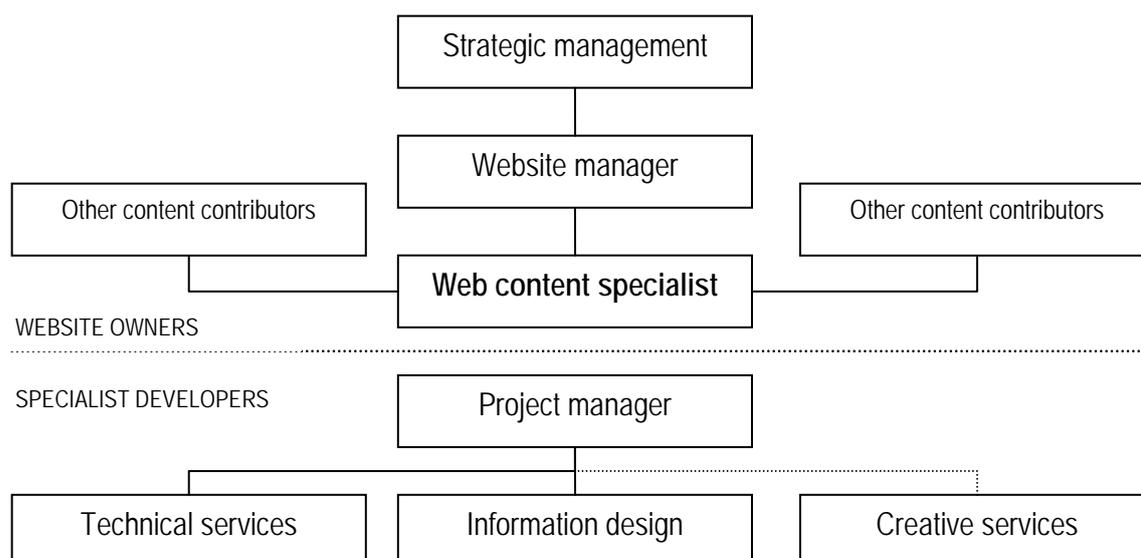
Parties in a website project team

There are two main parties in a website project team – website owners and specialist developers:

- **Website owners** are typically responsible for strategic direction, audience research, editorial policy and content ownership.
- **Specialist developers** are typically responsible for project management, information design, providing creative services (graphics, sound, video, etc.) and providing technical services (systems design, programming, etc.).

The overall project may comprise a single, integrated team or, more usually, a customer/supplier relationship, using internal or external specialist services.

Reporting relationships



The most usual reporting relationship for the WCS will be within the team of the website owners, reporting to the website manager / editor. In some circumstances, the website owners may outsource some or all aspects of the role to the specialist developers.

The WCS role may be full or part-time. It may be combined with other duties within the team of the website owners or the specialist developers. For example, the responsibilities of WCS may be integrated within a more general role such as marketing specialist or journalist, or be extended to include some technical or creative responsibilities (such as website authoring or graphic design).

For the purposes of this job description, we will assume that the position of WCS is full-time and has not been extended to include any other responsibilities.

Other content management responsibilities

The role of the WCS is complicated by the fact that all members of the website team have some content management responsibility:

<i>Role</i>	<i>Content management responsibility</i>
Strategic management	Forming editorial policy
Website manager	Co-ordinating all activities Acting as overall editor
Website content specialist	Implementing editorial policy Creating and sourcing content
Other content contributors	Supplying additional content
Project manager	Co-ordinating the development team
Information design	Defining the structure of content
Creative services	Creating graphical and audio-visual content
Technical services	Creating / sourcing content management solutions

Work elements

1. Design and development

[Note: The WCS is unlikely to be primarily responsible for design and development. They will, however, contribute an important user-orientated perspective to the process.]

- Contribute to audience research as a basis for design of the site.
- Contribute to the top-level and detailed design of the website (or e-newsletter, etc.), with a particular focus on the ways in which the goals for the site and the needs of users can be met through the provision of appropriate content.
- Contribute to the process of information design, to ensure that content is appropriately structured to meet the goals for the site and the needs of users.
- Contribute to documentation of the design.
- Contribute to the selection or design of appropriate content management software.

2. Co-ordination and planning

[Note: The WCS is more likely to be responsible for implementation of editorial policy than its formation. However, they may still have a degree of latitude in scheduling content creation/acquisition, in managing the work of additional content contributors and in working within agreed budgets.]

- Schedule the creation/acquisition of content in accordance with editorial policy.
- Allocate tasks to additional content contributors.
- Manage the creation/acquisition of content in accordance with the schedule.
- Manage costs within agreed budgets.

3. Content creation

- Prepare textual content for websites (including feature articles, advertising copy, database content, links, FAQs, etc.).
- Prepare textual content for e-newsletters.
- Design web forms.
- Prepare textual content for distribution as SMS messages.
- Prepare scripts for audio voiceovers, for downloading from the site or distribution as 'podcasts'.
- Specify the multimedia content needed to support or work alongside textual content.
- Locate and select appropriate, existing multimedia content, including still images, animations, music and video.
- Liaise with multimedia specialists in the creation of any new multimedia content.
- Edit copy received from additional content contributors.
- Clear copyright for the use of any existing content.

4. Website promotion

- Use metadata and other methods to optimise search engine positions.
- Communicate with other site owners in order to maximise incoming links.
- Ensure the site is listed in relevant indexes and directories.

5. Communication with users

- Respond to user enquiries, comments and suggestions.
- Moderate forums.
- Moderate chat sessions.
- Edit and/or approve content contributions made by users.

6. Content maintenance

- Update and maintain time-sensitive material.
- Maintain menus, indexes and directories within the site.
- Archive and backup content (where this is not automatic).

7. Evaluation

- Conduct or commission ongoing audience research.
- Compile and analyse website usage statistics.
- Obtain and analyse user feedback.
- Recommend changes in editorial policy and site design.

Appendix 2: The Web Content Specialist Curriculum 1.0

Suggested ECVET credit points: <20

Prerequisites

Knowledge:

- Knowledge of the specialist subject areas addressed by the content.

Skills:

- Native language skills.
- English language skills.
- Spelling correctly.
- Using grammar and punctuation correctly.
- Basic operation of personal computers (Windows or Macintosh).
- Use of Microsoft Office tools, i.e. Word, Excel.
- Basic report writing.

<i>Unit 1: Understanding web content</i>

Weighting: 5%

Learning outcomes

Knowledge:

- The history of the Internet and World Wide Web.
- The basic principles underlying the functioning of the Internet and the World Wide Web.
- The nature of web content.
- The purpose of the web content specialist.
- Parties in website development and management.
- The place of the web content specialist in the website project team.

Skills:

- None

Autonomy and responsibility:

- Not applicable

Learning competence:

- Demonstrates self-direction in learning.

Communication and social competence:

- Not applicable

Professional and vocational competence:

- Not applicable

Study programme

Telephone interaction with tutor (0.5 hours):

- Welcome
- Resolve any technical problems
- Uncover any practical constraints
- Discuss individual learner goals

Chat session (0.5 hours):

- Induction to the course
- Meet other participants
- Answer any questions

Interactive self-study modules (1 hour):

- *WebPower*: About this course
- *WebPower*: 'There once was an ugly web page'
- *WebPower*: Rule 1: Know the Web
- *WebPower*: Rule 3: Come to terms with content

Group research assignments (1.5 hours):

- The history of the Internet in your country/countries
- Internet demographics in your country/countries
- Forecasted Internet usage in your country/countries

Individual assignment (1.5 hours):

- Gathering and reporting information on the Internet or intranet website on which you will be working, including how content will be created and by whom; how the content will be stored; where/how the content will be hosted.

Participating in forums (1 hour)

Total hours: 6

Unit 2: Website design and development

Weighting: 10%

Learning outcomes

Knowledge:

- The role of the web content specialist as a contributor to the design process.
- Techniques for audience research.
- Effective practices in audience research.
- Elements in top-level and detailed website design.
- Key principles of information design.
- Key elements in design documentation.
- Principles underlying the design of content management systems.
- Required features of content management systems.

Skills:

- None

Autonomy and responsibility:

- Contributes to the process of design and development, without assuming overall responsibility.

Learning competence:

- Demonstrates self-direction in learning.

Communication and social competence:

- Uses communication skills to influence decisions of managers and specialists.

Professional and vocational competence:

- Contributes to problem solving by integrating information from specialists.

Study programme

Chat session (0.5 hours):

- Overview of the unit

Interactive self-study modules (1 hour):

- WebPower: Rule 2: Focus in on your targets
- WebPower: Rule 4: Design for users

Group research assignments (2 hours):

- Identifying and comparing available content management systems.
- Identifying the key principles in information design.

Individual assignments (1 hour):

- Identifying the goals for the Internet or intranet website on which you will be working.
- Describing the important characteristics of the target audience for the above.

Participating in forums (1 hour)

Total hours: 5.5

Unit 3: Managing web content

Weighting: 15%

Learning outcomes

Knowledge:

- Basic principles of project management.
- Alternative project management tools and methods.
- Cost elements in content creation/acquisition.
- The role of the web content specialist in editorial policy and in co-ordination and planning generally.
- The interaction of various content forms to grab the user's attention and help the user to achieve their goals with the least effort.
- The particular strengths of still graphics, animations, audio and video for websites.
- The implications for production and delivery of using still graphics, animations, audio and video for websites.
- Accessibility implications for use of multimedia content.
- How multimedia content complements textual material.
- Sources for multimedia content.
- The production processes involved in developing multimedia content.

- Techniques for marking up content.
- Basic principles of copyright law.
- Situations in which copyright clearance is required.
- How to clear copyright.

Skills:

- Operation of project management / scheduling tools.
- Selecting multimedia content in accordance with best practice principles.
- Applying content markup principles.

Autonomy and responsibility:

- Responsible for implementation of editorial policy rather than its formation.
- Has some latitude in scheduling content creation/acquisition, in managing the work of additional content contributors and in working within agreed budgets.
- Supervises the work of other content contributors.

Learning competence:

- Demonstrates self-direction in learning.

Communication and social competence:

- Uses communication skills to gain commitment of other content contributors and multimedia specialists to the schedules and budgets.
- Uses communication skills to liaise effectively with multimedia specialists.

Professional and vocational competence:

- Formulates responses to abstract and concrete problems.

Study programme

Chat session (0.5 hours):

- Overview of the unit

Interactive self-study modules (0.5 hours):

- *WebPower*: Rule 6: Communicate with multimedia

Papers – to be produced by Clive (0.5 hours):

- Accessibility issues in web content
- Copyright issues in web content
- HTML essentials

Group research assignments (1.5 hours):

- Identifying the key principles of effective project management.
- Comparing project management tools and practices in students' organisations.

Group practical assignment (2 hours):

- In four groups. Each group designs and develops **one** of the following, posts this to the course website and describes how it was made: (1) a range of still images (illustration, photo, diagram, chart); (2) an animation; (3) an audio piece; (4) a video piece.

Individual assignments (2 hours):

- Identifying appropriate media content (still graphics, animations, audio and video) for the Internet or intranet website on which you will be working.
- Creating a simple HTML page and posting this to the course website.

Participating in forums (1 hour)

Total hours: 8

Unit 4: Creating web content

Weighting: 40%

Learning outcomes

Knowledge:

- Ethical and legal issues in content creation, including the basic principles of the laws of libel and slander.
- Principles of effective writing for websites.
- Principles of effective writing for e-newsletters.
- Principles of effective form design.
- Principles of effective writing for voiceover scripts / podcasts.

Skills:

- Planning and organising textual content.
- Using spell checkers.
- Using grammar checkers.
- Writing textual content for websites in accordance with best practice principles.
- Writing textual content for e-newsletters in accordance with best practice principles.
- Designing web forms in accordance with best practice principles.
- Preparing voiceover/podcast scripts in accordance with best practice principles.

Autonomy and responsibility:

- Responsible for completion of content creation tasks under guidance from website/project manager.

Learning competence:

- Demonstrates self-direction in learning.

Communication and social competence:

- Uses advanced skills of communication to generate content that achieves the goals of the website and meets the needs of users.

Professional and vocational competence:

- Gathers and interprets data in a field in order to formulate effective content.

Study programme

Chat session (0.5 hours):

- Overview of the unit

Interactive self-study modules (1 hour):

- *WebPower*: Rule 5: Write for the web
- *WebPower*: Rule 9: Push home your message

Papers – to be produced by Clive (0.5 hours):

- Writing voiceover scripts
- Designing web forms

Group practical assignments (2 hours):

- In four groups. Each group designs and develops **one** of the following, posts this to the course website and describes how it was made: (1) an e-newsletter for the course; (2) a form to gather feedback on students' web writing; (3) a podcast about podcasting; (4) a blog (web log) to reflect thoughts on the course.

Individual assignment (3 hours):

- Writing a 500-word web article on a topic related to this unit, to include still images.

Participating in forums (1 hour)

Total hours: 8

Unit 5: Website promotion

Weighting: 10%

Learning outcomes

Knowledge:

- The importance of website promotion.
- The ways in which websites can be promoted.
- How search engines work.
- The nature and purpose of keywords/metadata.
- How incoming links affect search engine positions.
- The mechanics and application of web advertising (AdWords, etc.).
- The mechanics and application of news feeds (RSS, etc.).
- The mechanics and application of indexes and directories (Yahoo!, etc.).

Skills:

- None

Autonomy and responsibility:

- Responsible for promotional activities under guidance from website/project manager.

Learning competence:

- Demonstrates self-direction in learning.

Communication and social competence:

- None

Professional and vocational competence:

- Contributes to problem solving by integrating information from specialists.

Study programme

Chat session (0.5 hours):

- Overview of the unit

Interactive self-study modules (0.5 hours):

- *WebPower*: Rule 7: Generate traffic

Group research assignments (1.5 hours):

- In four groups. Each group researches and documents **one** of the following and posts this to the course website: (1) how to improve search engine positioning; (2) how to boost traffic using RSS feeds; (3) how to boost traffic using web advertising; (4) how to maximise incoming links.

Individual assignment (1 hour):

- Create a plan for driving up web traffic for the Internet or intranet website on which you will be working.

Participating in forums (1 hour)

Total hours: 4.5

Unit 6: Communicating with website users

Weighting: 10%

Learning outcomes

Knowledge:

- The importance of user communication.
- Ways in which user communication can be accomplished.
- How forums work.
- Principles of effective forum moderation.
- How chat rooms work.
- Principles of effective chat room moderation.
- Establishing dialogue using blogs (web logs).
- Encouraging users to contribute content using wikis (user-modifiable websites).

Skills:

- Applying principles of effective forum moderation.
- Applying principles of effective chat room moderation.

Autonomy and responsibility:

- Responsible for communication with users under guidance from website/project manager.

Learning competence:

- Demonstrates self-direction in learning.

Communication and social competence:

- Uses communication skills to relate effectively with users.

Professional and vocational competence:

- Demonstrates the ability to interact within a complex environment.

Study programme

Chat session (0.5 hours):

- Overview of the unit

Interactive self-study modules (0.5 hours):

- *WebPower*: Rule 8: Interact with your users

Group research/practical assignments (2 hours):

- In four groups. The first two groups research and comment on **one** of the following: (1) the phenomenon of wikis; (2) the phenomenon of blogging. The third group prepares and runs a chat session for all members of the course on how to run a chat session. The fourth group moderates a forum for all members of the course on how to moderate forums.

Individual assignment (1 hour):

- Create a plan for maximising interaction with users for the Internet or intranet website on which you will be working.

Participating in forums (1 hour)

Total hours: 4.5

Unit 7: Web content maintenance and evaluation

Weighting: 10%

Learning outcomes

Knowledge:

- The importance of content maintenance.
- How to backup content.
- The importance of evaluation.
- Techniques for audience research.
- Effective practices in audience research.
- Sources for usage statistics.
- How to analyse usage statistics.

Skills:

- Using content backup software.
- Using software (such as Excel) to analyse usage statistics.

Autonomy and responsibility:

- Responsible for content maintenance under guidance from website/project manager.
- Responsible for evaluation under guidance from website/project manager.
- Makes suggestions for improvements to outcomes.

Learning competence:

- Demonstrates self-direction in learning.

Communication and social competence:

- Uses communication skills to sell suggestions for improvements to managers/peers.

Professional and vocational competence:

- Contributes to problem solving by integrating information from specialists.
- Formulates responses to abstract and concrete problems.

Study programme

Chat session (0.5 hours):

- Overview of the unit

Interactive self-study modules (0.5 hours):

- *WebPower*: Rule 10: make content count
- *WebPower*: Quiz

Group research/practical assignments (2 hours):

- In four groups. Each group implements an evaluation of one of the following aspects of the course, writes a report on this and posts it to the course website: (1) learning content; (2) usability; (3) collaboration; (4) tutoring.

Individual assignment (1 hour):

- Create a plan for evaluating the success of the Internet or intranet website on which you will be working.

Participating in forums (1 hour)

Total hours: 5

Summary

Total hours

Unit 1: Understanding web content	6 hours
Unit 2: Website design and development	5.5 hours
Unit 3: Managing web content	8 hours
Unit 4: Creating web content	8 hours
Unit 5: Website promotion	4.5 hours
Unit 6: Communicating with website users	5 hours
Unit 7: Web content maintenance and evaluation	5 hours
Total	42 hours

Timetable

One unit per week; total seven weeks.

Appendix 3: Certificate in Web Content Creation and Management

Course description V1.3 [November 5th 2010]

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to help you improve the effectiveness of the written and other content you produce for websites on the World Wide Web and/or your organisation's intranet, and for other online communications media such as e-newsletters, blogs, videos and podcasts.

The course does *not* attempt to teach you how to operate any of the tools currently available to create or manage web content, nor the technicalities of the systems and processes underlying the World Wide Web and the Internet in general. Instead, it focuses on the practical steps you can take to communicate most effectively with your website's users and, in the process, achieve the results that are critical to the success of your site.

Audience

The course is aimed at anyone who has, or expects to have, a full- or part-time responsibility for the creation or management of web content and who has not already received specialised training in this area. The course is *not* aimed at graphic designers or other media specialists, or those whose responsibilities are primarily technical.

No experience in the creation or management of web content is required.

You must be fluent in English as the course and all assignments are conducted in English. You must also be comfortable in the operation of Windows or Macintosh computers, including use of the internet, email and basic office applications. You must have access to a reliable internet connection, ideally broadband.

Schedule

The course commences on November 29, 2010 and continues until February 4, with a three week break for Christmas and New Year. It is composed of seven units, each of which is studied for one week. You will need to make available approximately the following hours of study for the seven units:

Unit 1: Understanding web content	6 hours (week of Nov 29)
Unit 2: Website design and development	5.5 hours (week of Dec 6)
Unit 3: Managing web content	8 hours (week of Dec 13)
Unit 4: Creating web content	8 hours (week of Jan 10)
Unit 5: Website promotion	4.5 hours (week of Jan 17)
Unit 6: Communicating with website users	5 hours (week of Jan 24)
Unit 7: Web content maintenance and evaluation	5 hours (week of Jan 31)

See the appendix for a detailed breakdown of the content covered in each unit.

Methods

The course is conducted entirely online, using a wide variety of methods and media:

- Practical assignments, conducted individually and in groups
- Live online sessions using Cisco WebEx (a web conferencing system)
- Research on the World Wide Web
- Papers and other study materials
- Discussion forums

Apart from the WebEx sessions, the course will be hosted on a virtual learning environment called Moodle. Do not be concerned if you have not used all of these methods before as you will be provided with full instructions. You will be supported throughout the course by your course tutors.

The style of the course

This course is designed to be challenging, interactive and enjoyable.

There is, as you would expect, some formal course content, mainly in the form of interactive, self-study modules, but also some short papers to read. However, much of your learning will arise naturally from the investigations and other activities that you undertake individually and in groups, the feedback you obtain from each other and from your tutor, and also from your reflections on how the course relates to your work responsibilities.

It would be fair to say that the more you put into the course, the more you will get out of it. Of course you could simply do the minimum required to obtain the certificate, but you will have more fun by contributing fully to all the activities and discussion forums. Sometimes you will have choices about what tasks to complete - you could choose the easiest option, or you could choose the one that takes you into new territory.

As an international course, most of you will be working in English as a foreign language. Do not let that discourage you from contributing to the full - as tutors we are not at all interested in the quality of your English, just in your ideas and opinions.

Assessment

Your work will be assessed by the course tutors in the following proportions:

- The quality of the work submitted by your groups (30%)
- The quality of your final assignment (which brings together the individual assignments that you will have worked on throughout the course) (50%)
- The feedback you provide in the forum to the work of other groups and individuals (20%)

For your work to be assessed, you must complete all of your tasks within one week of the end of the course. If your work is not judged to be satisfactory to obtain the Certificate, you will be allowed one further week to correct your work and re-submit.

Content by Unit

Unit 1: Understanding web content

- The history of the internet and World Wide Web.
- The basic principles underlying the functioning of the internet and the World Wide Web.
- The nature of web content.
- The purpose of the web content specialist.
- Parties in website development and management.
- The place of the web content specialist in the website project team.

Unit 2: Website design and development

- The role of the web content specialist as a contributor to the design process.
- Techniques for audience research.
- Elements in top-level and detailed website design.
- Principles underlying the design of content management systems.
- Required features of content management systems.

Unit 3: Managing web content

- Basic principles of project management.
- Cost elements in content creation/acquisition.
- The role of the web content specialist in editorial policy and in co-ordination and planning generally.

- The interaction of various content forms to grab the user's attention and help the user to achieve their goals with the least effort.
- The particular strengths of still graphics, animations, audio and video for websites.
- The implications for production and delivery of using still graphics, animations, audio and video for websites.
- Accessibility implications for use of multimedia content.
- How multimedia content complements textual material.
- Sources for multimedia content.
- The production processes involved in developing multimedia content.
- Techniques for marking up content.
- Copyright issues.

Unit 4: Creating web content

- Ethical and legal issues in content creation, including the basic principles of the laws of libel and slander.
- Principles of effective writing for websites.
- Principles of effective writing for e-newsletters.
- Principles of effective form design.
- Principles of effective writing for voiceover scripts / podcasts.

Unit 5: Website promotion

- The importance of website promotion.
- The ways in which websites can be promoted.
- How search engines work.
- The nature and purpose of keywords/metadata.
- How incoming links affect search engine positions.
- The mechanics and application of web advertising.
- The mechanics and application of news feeds (RSS, etc.).
- The use of social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) as a promotional tool.

Unit 6: Communicating with website users

- The importance of user communication.
- The ways in which user communication can be accomplished.
- Using forums as a means for interaction.
- Principles of effective forum moderation.
- The use of polls and surveys.
- The use of blogs to generate dialogue.
- Blogging as a unique form of content.
- The potential for website users as content contributors.

Unit 7: Web content maintenance and evaluation

- The importance of maintaining content.
- Techniques for maintaining content.
- Obtaining feedback from your users.
- Analysing website usage patterns.
- Measuring website effectiveness against the goals for your site.