

# Interactive Systems 3: Open Assessment Part 1 (Web Evaluation and Design)

Prof. Chris Johnson,  
Dept of Computing Science, Univ of Glasgow,  
Glasgow, Scotland. G12 8QJ.  
<http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/~johnson>

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## 1 Introduction

This question forms the first part of the open assessment associated with the Interactive Systems 3 course. It will be worth 50% of the open assessed marks for this course. The remaining 50% will be reserved for a further question that will cover Rob Sutherland's implementation work. Together these two questions will account for the 25% of the total course marks that are associated with IS3.

## 2 Formal and Informal Evaluation of an Existing Web Site

The initial evaluation work should be done collectively in the same teams that are working on level 3 projects. If this causes any problems for anyone then please see me immediately.

Your task is to conduct an evaluation of some part of ONE of the following two web sites:

<http://www.railwaysafety.org.uk>  
<http://www.vogue.co.uk>

One of the problems of conducting any exercise using 'live' web sites is that the content is subject to change. I cannot control the format or presentation of the site. You should consider this when scheduling the evaluation work. If major changes are made to the site that you are working on and you are left in any doubt about how to proceed then email me AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

The first stage is to identify the potential users of the web site that you have chosen. You should then use an informal evaluation technique to identify any potential usability problems with the existing site. This might include a heuristic evaluation, a cognitive walkthrough or a 'think aloud' form of cooperative evaluation. You must focus your evaluation to help determine those usability problems that will have the greatest effects on the potential user population.

The second stage is to use a formal evaluation technique to provide empirical data that confirms or contradicts your initial ideas about a usability problem. The quality of your work will be assessed both in terms of the findings that you obtain and the evidence that you use to back up your arguments. As part of the write-up, please justify your decision to use a particular technique and explain why you decided not to use other formal evaluation methods. You must use appropriate statistical techniques to analyse the data obtained during your evaluation.

### 3 Site Redesign

You should use the results of your formal and informal evaluations to guide the redevelopment of a section of the web site. The redesign work should be described, for example, using appropriate sketches of the new interface. You should assess the success of your redesign by conducting an informal evaluation using a pencil and paper prototype. You DO NOT need to do any programming at this stage. Remember, however, that the next section of the course will introduce user interface development using Java's AWT library. You may, however, suggest particular implementation techniques that help to realise your design.

During the design you MUST remember the needs and attributes of the target audiences for the web site that you have chosen to evaluate. Of course, the potential users of the Vogue web site will be very different from those of the Railway Safety and Standard's Board service. Also, it is important to remember that there will be big differences even within these user groups. Finally, you should remember that any redesign should be accessible to the largest possible proportion of the target user population.

During the redesign you must also justify your decision about which areas of the site to work on. In particular, I would recommend that you target those areas that have the greatest relevance to the potential users of the site and, ideally, to the organisational objectives of the site developers. Hint: try to search for statements about the organisational objectives for the site you are looking at before you begin.

### 4 Write-Up Guidelines and Marking Scheme

Although the evaluation is to be done in teams, the design work and all of the write up must be done on your own. Your attention is drawn to the University regulations against plagiarism. The following marking scheme will be applied:

- Justification of evaluation techniques (10 marks)
- Method, conduct and results of formal and informal evaluation (15 marks)
- Site redesign proposals (15 marks)
- Presentation (10 marks)

I would strongly recommend that your solutions contain sections headings that reflect this allocation of marks. This will help to ensure that you address each aspect of the problem that has been set in the exercise. The final submission should not exceed 15 A4 pages. The main part of the report should use a serif font at 10 point or above.

### 5 Submission Guidelines

Your solutions should be handed in not later than 16.30 on the Friday of week 6 via the secured box in Lilybank Gardens. The General Office should be able to direct you to it. Your attention is drawn to the regulations governing late submission and medical problems in the course handbook. The second part of the open assessment will be organised by Rob Sutherland and further details will be provided later this term.