OpenLearn Works

9 Testing your course

Contents

Introduction

The end is nearly in sight! When you have written all your content, procured your images, finalised your audio and video, and have your assessment in place (including testing your quiz and setting up your badge if relevant), you will want your course to undergo some final quality control checks before you make it live.

In the following audio recording Hannah Parish introduces the session.

Audio content is not available in this format.
9 Testing your course

9.1 Final review of content

After probably spending a considerable amount of time writing, rewriting, reading and rereading your course, it's incredibly important to have the content reviewed by someone else, with a fresh pair of eyes. You may have the resource to send this work to a professional editor. Or you may simply find it useful to ask someone who hasn't seen the content before to look at it with a fresh pair of eyes.

When briefing this person, it is important to be specific about the level of changes you want them to make or comments you would like them to offer. For example, you may only have time or opportunity to have typos corrected. Conversely, you may want someone to test your course from the viewpoint of a learner and to highlight anything that could be made clearer.

Unless briefed otherwise, generally the person doing the final proofread of your course should carry out the following:

- proofread the text for consistency and sense
- ensure that spelling and grammar are correct
- ensure that the text adheres to any house style guides/conventions
- check references and correct if necessary
- check cross-references and correct if necessary
- check headings
- check numbering and sequences
- check web links.

Depending on who is doing the final review of content, you may want them to carry out a final check of the accuracy of your content, especially if they are subject experts. Again, though, you will need to decide if this is feasible depending on time and resource.

9.2 User testing
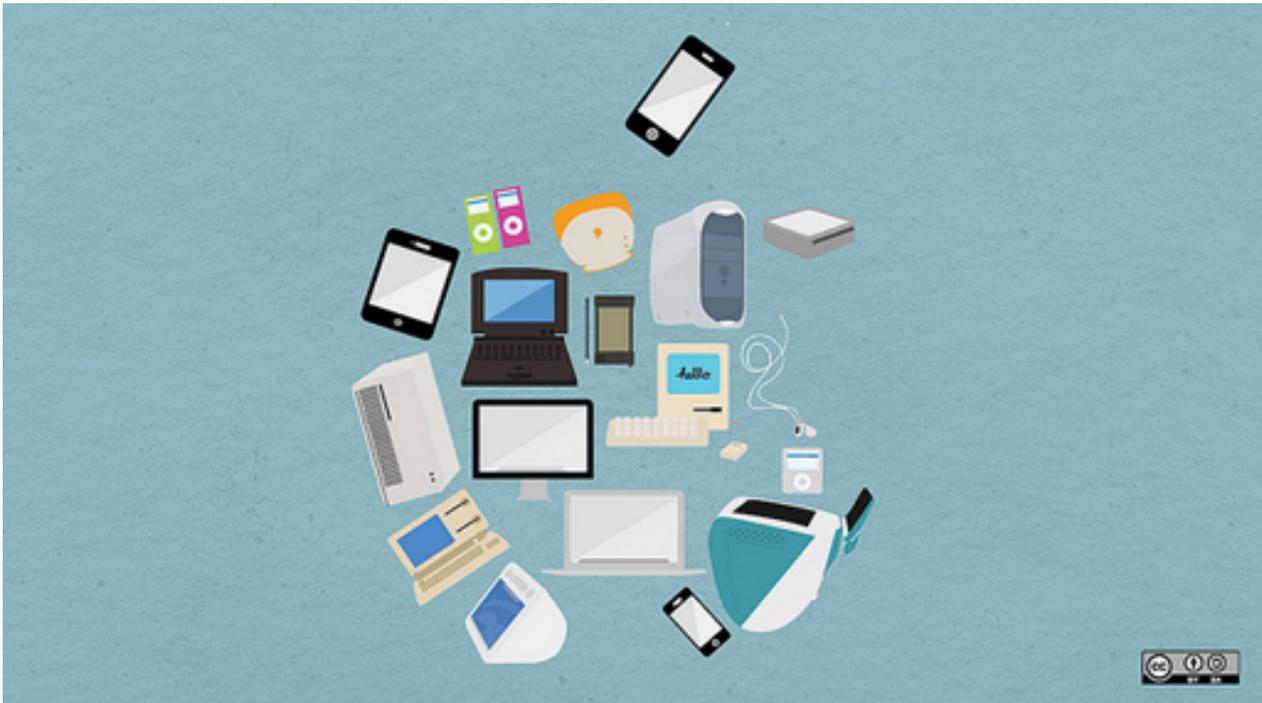
Figure 1 Testing your course on different devices.

In addition to having your course reviewed by an editor to check the content, user testing can be useful for various purposes.

You may find it useful to use the following checklist: such as a laptop, a tablet, and a smart phone.

- Navigation: does it work and can users find their way through your course successfully? Are there any dead ends? Is the structure of the course clear? If a learner lands anywhere in the course is it clear where they are?
- Accessibility: have you provided transcripts for all video and audio materials you have uploaded? Are all your in-text links labelled usefully to aid users who are using screenreaders?
- Copyright: do all your images, videos and audio files have suitable captions, acknowledging the source and licensing information if necessary?
- Keeping learners within the course: do you have instructions to view external links in a new tab or window so that learners do not navigate away from the site?
- Technical aspects: if you have any interactive features, do these work? Does the course work across different internet browsers and on mobile technologies, such as tablets and mobile phones? Do all external links work? Do all videos and audio recordings work?
- Alternative formats: if these have been produced for the course, do they all work? Are they easy to find?
- Badges or certificates: do these appear correctly when a test user has completed the course (see '8.3 Piloting your course)?

Many of these issues may have been picked up by course authors already and so may not be applicable to your course. However, it is worth noting that the purpose of user testing is to get the course reviewed by someone from the perspective of a learner. Sometimes things that appear obvious to an author are not clear to a learner who is new to the course and perhaps also to online learning.

You may want this testing to be completed by one person, or a group of testers. Ideally, these would be members of your intended audience, who are likely to take the course but who have not have involvement in the development of the course. Like an editor, they will look at the course with a fresh pair of eyes and notice problems that you hadn't thought about during the production of the course.

It is crucial to schedule any user testing into the production cycle, so that you have time to make any changes which have come out of the testing.

If you have the time and resource, you might want to pilot the course in its entirety to test the whole learner experience. This is looked at in the following section.

9.3 Summary

In this session, you have looked at the different types of testing you can do on your course, in order to ensure that the content is correct, the course works technically and is accessible and the badge is set up correctly.

In the next, and final, session of the course you will learn about different ways you can publicise your course, including increasing its search engine optimisation.

You can now go to Session 10.

Acknowledgements