Reflective Piece

The Secure Software Development module covered a wide range of topics including: waterfall and agile approaches to software development, cryptography, UML modelling, standards that are beneficial to secure a software, testing for vulnerabilities, future trends, concepts of programming languages like python, etc.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the module was learning about secure coding practices, how to implement them in projects and testing. It was gratifying to see how following best practices can enforce security of a system. Evidence of the tasks performed are after References.

Other than covering the module, we were grouped into different teams so as to apply the skillsets acquired throughout the module. In Group2 we chose to do a project on Dutch Police Internet Forensics (Government of the Netherlands, N.D.), where we were to design a secure software proposal report and a coding output for them.

We started off by threat modeling using STRIDE AND OWASP (CWE Content Team, 2021), then used the findings to build a more secure system that has features and development strategies that promotes Confidentiality, Integrity, Availability (CIA), Non-Reputability and mitigates cyberattacks. Such features included:

- Web architecture and cloud hosting so as for easier accessibility on the internet
- GDPR implementation
- The Model-View-Controller (MVC) architectural pattern and UML designing
- User controls and Permissions
- Authentication and authorization

- Data encryption and use of SQLite database
- Firewalls, SSL certificates, session management, HTTPS, etc.

As my teammates performed other tasks, I took part in the designing of UML diagrams and also offered some cybersecurity solutions that could be applied in the proposal report (my submission is included after References).

Even though coding was the most challenging aspect of the project due to lack of experiences in Python web development, my groupmates and I still opted to using Django framework instead of Web2Py framework or Flask.

After researching on Django, Python, CSS, HTML and Bootstrap from sources such as: Codio exercises on Essex's student page, (Django, 2015), (T, 2013), (Django, N.D.), (W3Schools, N.D.), (Dauzon, et al., 2016), (Saabith, et al., 2019) YouTube videos, etc.-I came to realization on how Django framework:

- supports MVC pattern and has robust built-in security features against common web vulnerabilities.
- allows integration of other Django modules and all python libraries,
- fully customizable, more automated, efficient and scalable

thus, guaranteeing productivity, security and code quality: which is a plus in secure software development.

As a result, I became motivated and confident enough to develop a Django web application that focused on our 1st Sprint's scopes. In doing so, I got to have a first-hand experience and gained skills on:

- Django and Python installation and their different libraries that needs to be imported first for a function to work.
- How to connect and integrate the Model (SQLite database), View (HTML, user Interface) and Controller.
- How to extend a Django's default user model/database using one-to-one relationship.
- How to secure a web application by setting permissions (decorators), groups
 and user roles so as to control access, implementing custom password
 validators, authentication, adding csrf_token on login page to protect data,
 debugging, etc.
- HTML page inheritance (extend and include) which helps in minimizing code redundancy through out the View part of the system.
- How it is not a good idea, security-wise, to implement a user account
 deactivation after 3 or more failed login attempts. This is because an attacker
 can purposefully initiate a DDOS attack by blocking users. Therefore, a better
 solution is to block an IP address after 3 or more failed login attempts.

(Screenshot evidence of the above are after References)

Afterwards, my teammates performed tests and did the documentation since that is also essential in secure software development.

Being part of a team has been a rewarding and educational experience. Some of the factors that contributed to the success of this project and individual growth were:

Daily reviewal discussions with my team throughout the development process so

as to present and explain work progress and ensure we all on the same page.

Team-playing, respect and self-discipline,

A lot of patience and endurance during coding and debugging.

Motivating, supporting, helping and learning from each other to have clear

understanding on the project

I have come to understand the importance of secure software development in protecting

sensitive information (GDPR) and preventing damage to individuals and organizations,

and also got an opportunity to apply the skills on an actual project and see its fruition.

I plan to apply my learning in the future by being more mindful of and prioritizing security

when building software, and also by staying up-to-date on the latest best practices,

trends and technologies.

Additionally, it is crucial to prioritize securing a software from the earliest development

stage all through to the end. That been the case, I will continue to practice and build

upon this knowledge so as to ensure security is prioritised and fully-covered in future

software development and projects.

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Below are screenshots of my contributions throughout this module as from my E-portfolio

https://mutegibeatrice.github.io/module4.html



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« Collaborative Discussion 1: UML flowchart



Initial Post

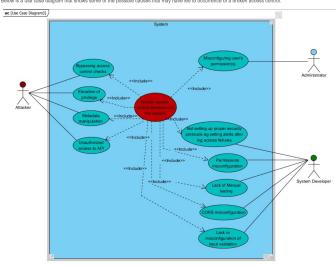
The Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) is an online community that enables organizations to develop, purchase, and maintain secure applications and APIs by providing free and open methodologies, tools, documentation, cheat sheets, technologies, etc. (Anon, 2017).

As from (Anon, 2017), Broken Access Control is one of the OWASP top 10 most critical Web Application Security Risks (2017) (placed in category A5).

Before a user get access to a feature, some web applications check the user's access so as to control access, however, if requests are not checked, attackers will be able to gain access to features and even servers without the proper permission(s) (Fredj. et al., 2021)

(Anon, 2017) further describes that one of the common causes of this weakness been due to the lack of automated detection and effective functional testing by application developers. Therefore, manual testing is necessary and the most effective way to detect missing or ineffective access control.

Below is a use case diagram that shows some of the possible causes that may have led to occurrence of a broken access control.



Other than the use case diagram shown above, (which has been created with the use of one of the Open-source tools, <u>Visual Paradigm</u>), UML diagrams such as: sequence diagrams and activity diagrams, can give a more in-depth graphical description of this attack due to their ability to show interaction of operations or processes and show dynamic aspects of a system respectively.

References

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