English Department Website
Usability Test Plan

Table of Contents

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of conducting this usability test is to collect data on the navigability of the PSU English Department website and the accessibility of information related to the English Department programs, advising, and events. The test will be conducted by asking users to complete a number of tasks that will be assessed against successful completion criteria and established benchmarks. We will collect feedback from participants about the way they feel about their experience completing specific tasks with the website. Collecting data from usability testing will help us discover different ways the website is used and help to identify what unmet accessibility needs exist.

Study Objectives

Upon completion of this usability test plan, researchers will be able to:

1. Evaluate the ease of navigation to various landing pages available on the PSU English Department website.
2. Evaluate the ease of navigation to specific PSU English Department program information.
3. Describe the specific attitudes and feelings users have about their navigation experiences with the PSU English Department website.
4. Determine whether all types of users can meet the successful completion criteria. 5. Identify difficulties with navigability and accessibility as a result of website design.

Research Questions

1. Is the site equally easy to navigate on all types of devices?
2. How well does the site support the paths and goals of users? In other words, how closely does the organization of the site match the user's expectations?
3. What obstacles do users encounter on the way to completing certain tasks?
4. What questions, thoughts, and feelings do users share as they work through certain tasks?
5. What unmet needs exist related to accessibility?
6. What is the average interaction time for each task?

Participant Characteristics

Each class member will recruit two participants to act as proxy users for the usability activities. The participants will be grouped into four separate types of users: current PSU English undergraduate students, prospective PSU undergrad students, prospective PSU grad students, and current PSU English graduate students. We will also note four characteristics: comfort level with technology, primary mode of internet access, experience with PSU's online resources, and internet connectivity. See Table 1 for reference.

Table 1

Characteristic	Number of Participants
Participant Type: Current English undergraduate students Current English graduate students Prospective English undergraduate students Prospective English graduate students **Total Participants**	 8 8 8 8 **32**
Comfort Level with Technology Competent Limited	 16 16
Primary Mode of Internet Access Desktop Mobile/Laptop	 14 18
Experience with PSU's Online Resources Familiar Unfamiliar	 12 20
Internet Connection Reliable/Stable Unreliable/Unstable	24 8

Method

Methodology

The usability activities will be exploratory in nature, assessing the navigability and effectiveness of the [Portland State University (PSU) English Department website.](#) Participants will fall into two broad categories of users: current PSU English department students and prospective PSU English department students. We will collect quantitative data about error and success rates, interaction times, and qualitative and quantitative data about participants' experiences using the site.

Test Design: Between-Subjects Design

For our usability activity we will use a between-subjects design. Between-subjects design is a type of experimental design in which the subjects of an experiment are assigned to different conditions, with each subject experiencing only one of the experimental conditions.

In this between-subjects study, each of our 32 participants will attempt an individual task path. Class members will conduct 32 individual 30 minute usability sessions. Each participant will perform one assigned task path navigating the PSU English Department website (www.pdx.edu/english).

Participants in our usability activities will be divided into four groups of eight. Group A will be current PSU English department undergraduate students, Group B will be current English PSU English department graduate students, Group C will be prospective PSU English department undergraduate students, and group D will be prospective PSU English department graduate students. Group A will take task path 1, Group B will take task path 2, Group C will take task path 3 and Group D will take task path 4. Each task path will be tested a total of 8 times. See Table 2 for reference.

Table 2

Task Path 1	Task Path 2 Task Path 3 Task Path 4		
Group A (prospective PSU English undergraduate students)	Group B (prospective PSU English graduate students)	Group C (current PSU undergraduate students)	Group D (current PSU graduate students)

Session Outline and Timing

The test sessions will be approximately 30 minutes in duration. The first ten minutes of each session will be used to explain the session to the participant and review background information with the participant. Twenty minutes of the session will be used for the completion of usability test tasks. In the final few minutes we will conduct a post-test debriefing interview. The testing exercises will be conducted remotely via Zoom, or in person as appropriate, and observations and data will be recorded in a Google Form.

Session introduction (10 minutes):

In the session introduction we:

- Will ask participants about their experience with usability testing.
- Will stress the importance of participants' involvement in the study.
- Will ask participants about their experience with the PSU English department website.
- Will reiterate that the website was being evaluated, not the participant.
- Will explain the moderator's role.
- Will explain the protocol for the rest of the testing session.

Tasks (20 minutes):

Participants will complete one of four possible task paths based on their user profile.

Post-Test Debriefing (5 minutes):

In the post-test debriefing we:

- Will ask broad questions to collect preferences and other qualitative data.
- Will follow up on any problems that came up for the participant.

Task List

The following task paths will be used to prompt participants through a series of tasks designed to collect data on the navigability of the PSU English department website by indirectly exposing usability flaws.

Task Path 1

Prospective PSU English undergraduate students will be instructed to:

1. Task: Navigate to career information for English majors.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/careers/what-can-i-do-degree-english

2. Task: Locate a page with information about the Bachelor's + Master's English Pathway program.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/english/bachelors-masters-english-pathway

3. Task: Pretend to register for the next upcoming English department event.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/english/calendar/month, and then to the registration page of the next event.

Task Path 2

Prospective PSU English graduate students will be instructed to:

1. Task: Pretend to make an advising/informational meeting before applying to the MFA Creative Writing program. Users will be asked to find the contact information for the program director.
Location: A page that has the contact information for Leni Zumas.
https://www.pdx.edu/english/contact or
https://www.pdx.edu/creative-writing/full-time-faculty or
https://www.pdx.edu/english/full-time-faculty

2. Task: Find the deadline for applying to the MFA Creative Writing program Fall term.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/creative-writing/mfa-creative-writing-admissions#deadline

3. Task: Look for Graduate school funding options through a Graduate Assistantship.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/english/graduate-student-funding#grad%20asst or
https://www.pdx.edu/gradschool/graduate-assistantships

Task Path 3

Current English undergraduate students will be instructed to:

1. Task: Pretend to be an English undergraduate student interested in applying for scholarships. Users will be asked to find a list of scholarships and awards that are available for English undergraduate students and the deadline for submissions.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/english/awards-and-scholarships

2. Task: Pretend to be an English undergraduate student enrolled in a class taught by Professor Keri Behrens who is trying to contact her with questions. Users will be asked to find her contact information and office hours.
Location: Either https://www.pdx.edu/english/office-hours or
https://www.pdx.edu/english/full-time-faculty

3. Task: Pretend to be an English undergraduate student interested in taking a writing class this summer. Users will be asked to find out how many undergraduate writing courses are being offered in Summer 2021.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/english/summer-2021-courses

4. Task: Pretend to be an English undergraduate student minoring in Film Studies. Users will be asked to find out which courses can be taken as electives.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/english/academics/programs/undergraduate/film-studies under "Electives" or https://www.pdx.edu/english/film-studies-minor-requirements under "Sample Elective Courses"

Task Path 4

Current English graduate students will be instructed to:

1. Task: Pretend to be in the Master's of Technical and Professional Writing program and to register for the next term. Users will be asked to find a list of possible electives that count towards their degree.
Location:
https://www.pdx.edu/english/mams-technical-and-professional-writing-curriculum#techelect
2. Task: Pretend to be an English graduate student who needs information on how to pay for the program. From the English department website, users will be asked to find graduate student funding options.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/english/graduate-student-funding

3. Task: Pretend to be an English graduate student who needs more information on the courses available this Spring. From the English department website, users will be asked to find the English Department Spring 2021 course descriptions.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/english/spring-2021-courses

4. Task: Pretend to be an English graduate student in the Book Publishing program. From the English department website, users will be asked to find graduation deadlines for their program.
Location: https://www.pdx.edu/english/mams-book-publishing-graduation-deadlines

Test environment, equipment, logistics

Testing primarily will take place remotely via Zoom sessions with some in-person sessions conducted with family members or other close network participants. Participants will need access to a stable internet connection and a device with which to access.

Test Roles

Each usability test session will include participants in the roles defined below.

- **User:** perform the tasks as prompted by the moderator.
- **Test moderator*:** introduce the test, its purpose, and its process according to the usability test plan.
- **Notetaker*:** capture the participant's process while completing tasks. The notetaker will make note of the time to complete tasks, whether the task is completed, and any additional information such as body language or general demeanor during the test.

*For remote testing, the moderator/notetaker roles were combined.

Evaluation Measures

Performance measures will include:
- Number and percentage of tasks completed correctly with and without prompts or assistance.
- Number and type of prompts given.
- Number and percentage of tasks completed incorrectly.

- Count of all incorrect selections (errors).
- Average interaction time it took to complete each task.

- Satisfaction with experience completing each task overall.

- Ease of use overall.

- Usefulness of terms and labeling.

Deliverable

We will review and analyze the data collected from the usability tests and write a report of complete findings and recommendations to present to our client.