Observation Technique

A set number of tasks were asked to be performed by the user and observed. The goal being to determine the usability of the website for new users.

The tasks that are to be performed are:

1. Navigate to the course selector to find a pre-chosen course.
2. Find the course descriptor
3. Find the course co-ordinator
4. Find how to apply for the course
5. Find the fees for the course

The course pre-chosen was a Part-time course, a Post Graduate Diploma in Arts in Human Resource Management.

1. To find the course the user simply navigated to Courses, from there the user used the side navigator to navigate to Part-time courses. The user noted that it would have been preferable to have courses structured in their different discipline rather than in one page as it was relatively easy to bypass the course.
2. The course descriptor/content on the pre-chosen course leads you to another page. The user noted that it would be more helpful if each module was at the least listed and then the descriptor for the module followed through a link. To access the module descriptor, you must go through two-page loads and click two links.
3. The user was unable to find the course co-ordinator, but noted that she would more than likely contact admissions on any questions she may have about the course. The user noted that there is no direct route on the course page. It should be also noted that the user by-passed the brochure at the top of the page also. When asked the user said it was not well highlighted.
4. The user still on the course content page found it unusual that she did not have direct access to apply for the course on the page itself. The user had to navigate using the side navigator to How to Apply, scroll down to part-time courses and then download an application form. The second unusual aspect was that this could not be done on-line. The user also noted that when she eventually stumbled upon the brochure and clicked the link on How to Apply, this link brought her straight back to the NCI homepage, where she needed to navigate further to the How to Apply page. This should be a direct link.
5. Although the fees are stated on the course page the Direct Debit plan could easily have been printed alongside this. The user bypassed the course a few times before the direct debit plan related to the pre-chosen course was found. The user had expected the plans to be in alphabetical order i.e. All Postgraduate courses together, all Certificates together.

In conclusion the user felt that overall the site was good but that there were too many clicks to get to the needed information. Where possible the information should be on one page and links should be direct. Several links to get one piece of information was confusing and frustrating.