COSC368 2019

General Feedback on Assignment 1:

Introduction (context and purpose)

Short, succinct abstracts and introductions were done well by most.

One recommendation for nearly all groups is to use the introduction to briefly describe the key goals/objectives of your design(s). What is it that you're trying to optimise in your designs; why would users choose to use your interfaces; why would the CEO be drawn to select your team's submission as the one to pursue?

The summary/introduction gives you a chance to make a strong initial impression with your audience (the CEO of FlatMate Ltd).

Task Identification (clarity & quality)

This part of the assignment was probably the weakest for many teams.

Most teams appropriately used two main sections for task identification: a description of the users; and the tasks they wish to carry out.

In describing the *users*, there was an opportunity to clarify the *main categories* of users and the *main reasons* that they might want to use a flatting app. A few teams did this very well. However, several groups leapt into providing details about specific users. The FlatMate Ltd. CEO is unlikely to be drawn to designs that focus on a small and specific user base; instead, he/she is likely to appreciate designs that address the needs of a wide user base.

Some of the best submissions clearly communicated the meaning associated with items presented and the reason for the order of item presentation was clear. For example, the most common user categories were named and presented in order from the most to least important; and the most important tasks were named and presented from most to least important.

Other common problems with task identification include the following:

- Lack of prioritisation for the tasks;
- Seemingly random order for presentation of tasks (generally, it's a good idea to put the most important/frequent tasks first);
- Lack of a unique identifier for each task. Remember that tasks are used to evaluate/validate designs, so it's important that you are able to easily cross reference to specific tasks.
- Lack of meaningful scenarios. For example, the task "Event Requests" lacks context; why does the user want/need to do this? The context is important, because evaluation and design of the UI depends on the context; it allows the UI to be tested within TCSD's "sanity check", which asks "is it credible that a user would choose to do this?"
- Feature-centric design rather than task-centric. The "tasks" identified by

several groups seemed to be based on assumptions about features that would be supported. In other words, rather than being something the user would actually want to do, it seemed that the 'task' was derived from an assumed feature in the user interface.

- Lack of connection between user/task identification and designs. In some groups, it seemed like some members of the team had been assigned the job of identifying user categories and tasks, while others had been assigned the job of creating designs. In these cases, there was a lack of continuity between the report sections, and it was unclear how/why the designs would fulfil the task/user requirements. In TCSD, the tasks and user identification are critical inputs to design, not something orthogonal to it.

Alternative & primary designs (clarity & quality)

Many of the designs were very well done.

Some common problems that could have been easily fixed include the following:

- *Separation between designs*. For many groups, it was extremely difficult to tell where one design finished and another began.
- *Meaningful titles for designs.* Many designs had a really good central design characteristic that they were trying to convey, but it was often very hard to extract that characteristic, with meaningless titles like "Design 1". A meaningful title could easily have conveyed the key design approach.
- *Bottom-up designs.* Some groups focused their preliminary designs on bottom-up UI issues (e.g., "menu-based", "list-based", etc.), which is a poor initial design strategy. Instead, TOP-DOWN design addresses issues that users care about (their tasks). Use the homescreen as the starting state for conveying each design.
- *Wild variation of presentation.* For many teams, it looked like their *n* alternative designs were simply the different proposals from each of their team members. While this is reasonable approach for producing parallel design concepts, it would be helpful for the CEO if there was some base consistency in the way in which the different sketches are presented. It's fine for the sketches to have differing graphical style, but the callouts and annotations used to describe them could beneficially be made consistent.