

Transfer Credit Search Tool

UX Lab, Student Communications Services

May - June 2019

Abstract

From May to June 2019, the UBC UX Lab, as part of Student Communications Services, ran usability testing on the [Transfer Credit Search tool](#). There were a total of 7 participants: 3 incoming transfer students and 4 advisors. All tests were completed on a laptop.

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Introduction

Project Background

The [Transfer Credit Search Tool](#) was launched on May 2, 2019, on the Student Services site. Prior to the launch, there were three phases of usability testing performed on the prototypes and wireframes, allowing for reiteration in its development.

To evaluate the performance of the newly launched search tool, the UBC UX Lab ran usability testing with incoming UBC transfer students and both UBC and non-UBC academic other stakeholders such as advisors.

UX Lab Student Team

This study is conducted by the UX Lab student team, managed by Ariel Lee, UX Coordinator in Student Communications Services. The UX Lab is comprised of UBC students from diverse programs that support user experience (UX) research through a volunteer research assistant position.

The four students on this summer's UX Lab student team are: Carley Low, Jessica de Rosario, Wynonna Moo, and Tiffany Wu. They come from various backgrounds such as Psychology, Behavioural Neuroscience, Cognitive Systems and Computer Science.

Research Goal

The purpose of the study is to understand how students and stakeholders are navigating the [Transfer Credit Search Tool](#)

Methodology and Analysis

For the usability testing, we ran a remote moderated scenario test with laptops, prompting users to think aloud while performing a given task.

Both incoming transfer students and academic advisors were recruited via emails from Debbie Lin, manager of UBC Enrolment Services Undergraduate Admissions. Participants were invited to a remote session via Skype or BlueJeans.

Test flow

1. Participant fills out a consent form
2. Participant answers a few questions about their demographics on a pre-screen survey (students only)

3. Participants are asked to search up two of their most recent or commonly used courses and tell the facilitator which UBC credits they would receive from the courses
4. The facilitator asks the participant a few questions regarding their experience
5. The facilitator ends the session with a quick debrief of the study and provides the participant with gift card



Location and Timing

All tests were held over two days (Mon May 27 and Tues May 28) in Brock Hall.

Think-aloud procedure

During the test, participants were asked to follow the “think-aloud procedure”, in which they verbalize their thoughts as they navigated their task.

Remote testing

Since a few advisors were located on the UBC Vancouver campus, and transfer students have not yet arrived on campus, all tests were held remotely. Users either used Blue Jeans or Skype to complete the test.

Piloting

Prior to running the test, we ran two pilot sessions with the co-op student from Student Communications Services, and Debbie Lin.

Participant Demographics

- Students (3)
- Advisors (4)

As multiple reiterated pre-launch testings have been conducted previously, only a smaller sample ($n = 7$) was recruited for our study.

The demographic breakdown of our participants is as follows:

Students	Advisors
Year 2, Langara College, B.C.	Academic advisor, UBC Vancouver - Arts

Year 1, Thompson Rivers University, B.C.	Academic advisor, UBC Vancouver - Sauder
Year 2, Santa Monica College, L.A.	Academic advisor, UBC Okanagan
	Transfer and Articulation Officer, Langara College

All 3 student participants are transferring into the Faculty of Science.

All students were offered a \$5 UBC Food Services gift card for their time.

Results

Purpose of Tool

The purpose of using this tool was different depending on if the user was a student or an advisor. Incoming transfer student participants noted that they would use the tool for course planning. On the other hand, advisors stated that this tool would be used for advising prospective students in terms of their courses and how they would transfer.

Search Fields

Upon first arriving at the search tool landing page, there are three main search fields that users interact with: “Your Institution Name”, “Course Code”, and “Completion Date”.

Your Institution Name

This is typically the first search field that users type in. From the testing, there was some slight confusion around what users think the text “Your Institution Name” meant.

One of three student participants was unsure whether to enter the school they were transferring from or into, whereas one of four advisors was unsure whether to input the institution they work at or the institution of the student they were helping.

Course Code

One of the common user themes found with inputting course codes was that two of four advisors and one of three students entered their course codes without inserting spaces between the subject and the number, subsequently receiving an error message displaying a correct example. After reviewing the error message, all were able to revise their search and proceed correctly.

One student indicated that he liked the helper text shown in the course code field as he found it easy and clear to follow.

Both students and advisors mentioned preference in an autocomplete or drop-down function listing potential course codes, as it is hard for them to remember specific course codes. It could also help them know that the course they searched is indeed in the system.



A screenshot of a web form element. It features a blue label "Course code" above a light gray rounded rectangular input box. Inside the box, the text "e.g. PHYS 1115" is displayed in a light gray font.

On the other hand, one advisor stated that it was “irritating” to have to search up specific courses one at a time. Two of four advisors reported preferring a full list of transferable courses at hand where they can see all of the courses at once rather than having to manually search up only one course at a time.

When asked why this was the case, one advisor reported using the BCCAT tool to help a student plan which courses to take to receive specific UBC transfer credit. To do so, it would be helpful for the advisor to see a list of courses within a subject and choose from there.

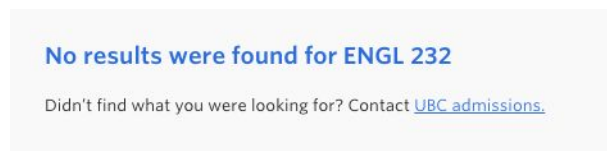
Completion Date

All users were able to input this information correctly, with no problems.

Search Results

Error Message

In the search results, we found that both students and advisors had confusion with the ‘No Results Found’ error message. Two of four advisors and one of three students were unsure whether this meant that the course does not transfer or if it still has to be assessed in the future. One advisor noted that stating a reason why the results are given, via a specified error message, could save students time and confusion, and prevent them from having to contact Admissions.



A screenshot of an error message box. The main text is "No results were found for ENGL 232" in blue. Below it, in a smaller font, is the text "Didn't find what you were looking for? Contact [UBC admissions](#)."

Search Results: Critical Incident

We had one student from a school outside Canada (Santa Monica College) experience confusion with the search results, where upon receiving the search result ‘UBCV CPSC 1st’, the student copied and pasted entire phrase (“UBCV CPSC 1st”) into the Google search engine to find out what it meant. Upon being prompted to find the ‘[How to read results](#)’ link, the student was still

not able to find it, and even once he was told where to click, he did not read through the instructions thoroughly as he was still confused.



The same student remarked that it would be helpful to have the UBC course codes hyperlinked to a course description page, where they can understand more about the course details.

Combination Course Codes

One of four advisors noted that results for combination course codes can be confusing for students because all of the different possibilities are listed on one page. In particular, the advisor was expecting the single course code result to show up at the top of the list, but the results were displayed in no specific way.

UBC Campus			(#) = credit value
Both	Vancouver (UBCV)	Okanagan (UBCO)	
LANG STAT 1181			UBCO STAT 230 (3)
			The above credits are valid for courses completed between 01 2006 - present
LANG STAT 1181 LANG STAT 1181 (3) & LANG STAT 1224 (3)			UBCO STAT 230 (3)
			The above credits are valid for courses completed between 05 2005 - present
LANG STAT 1181 LANG STAT 1181 (3) & LANG STAT 3223 (3)			UBCV STAT 200 (3) & UBCV STAT 2nd (3)
			The above credits are valid for courses completed between 01 2006 - present
LANG STAT 1181			UBCV STAT 2nd (3)
			The above credits are valid for courses completed between 01 2006 - present
LANG STAT 1181 LANG MATH 2310 (3) & LANG STAT 1181 (3)			UBCV MATH 1st (3) & UBCV STAT 2nd (3)
			The above credits are valid for courses completed between 01 2006 - present

Trust Issues: Data Inconsistency

Two of three students suggested that the search results may be inaccurate. For example, one student found that the course code in their school database was PSYCH 1, while it was PSY 1 in

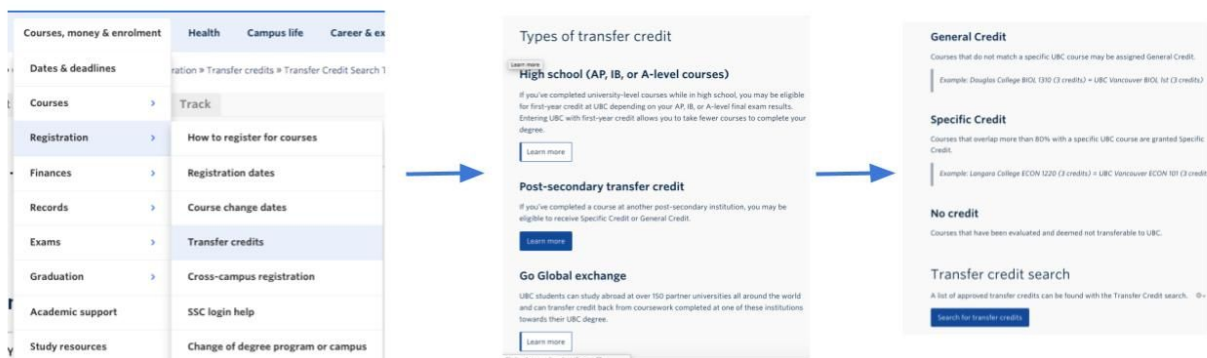
the UBC database. Another student from Langara mentioned that he believes his course is transferable to UBCV, however our search tool result showed that no credit could be received from UBCV for his course. Two of four advisors also found similar data inconsistencies, where one had expected the course to transfer to UBCV and it only showed credits for UBCO, while another advisor found searches for international schools to be ‘spottier’, suggesting some important information may be missing causing the data to appear less reliable.

Change Search

One common issue among both students and advisors was the location of the “change search” button. Both groups of participants noted that it was difficult or confusing to find the button after they located it. One of four advisors voiced her difficulty in returning to the landing page, and was about to refresh the page before seeing it. One of the students stated that the change search button should be at the top-left side of the page, where the back button of a web-browser would be.

Getting to the tool

A possibility for the lack of use is the users’ ability to search for it on Google. The tool itself is hard to find. Currently, users need to find the “Transfer credits” page from the menu, click into the “Post-secondary transfer credit” page, and scroll down to find another link to the tool, under “Transfer credit search.



The tool also does not perform well on Google search

Advisors

All the advisor participants stated that they prefer using other resources, such as the SISC internal tables or the BC Transfer Guide, due partially to the fact that they provide a list of courses

that transfer between schools. Two advisors mentioned that they prefer using the other resources because it is more easily accessible to them, since it's bookmarked and they've developed the habit of using it.

Pitfalls and Considerations

Since the transfer credit search tool had already undergone usability testing prior to the launch, the sample size was small, limited to 7 participants (4 advisors and 3 incoming transfer students). In addition, all 3 student participants were transferring into the Faculty of Science. It may be helpful to run the usability test with students from other faculties, to have more representative data.

According to Jakob Nielsen from the Nielsen Norman group, running many small tests with five users is more efficient and potentially more effective than running many elaborate usability tests with several users (the more users you add, the more you're likely to encounter the same results).

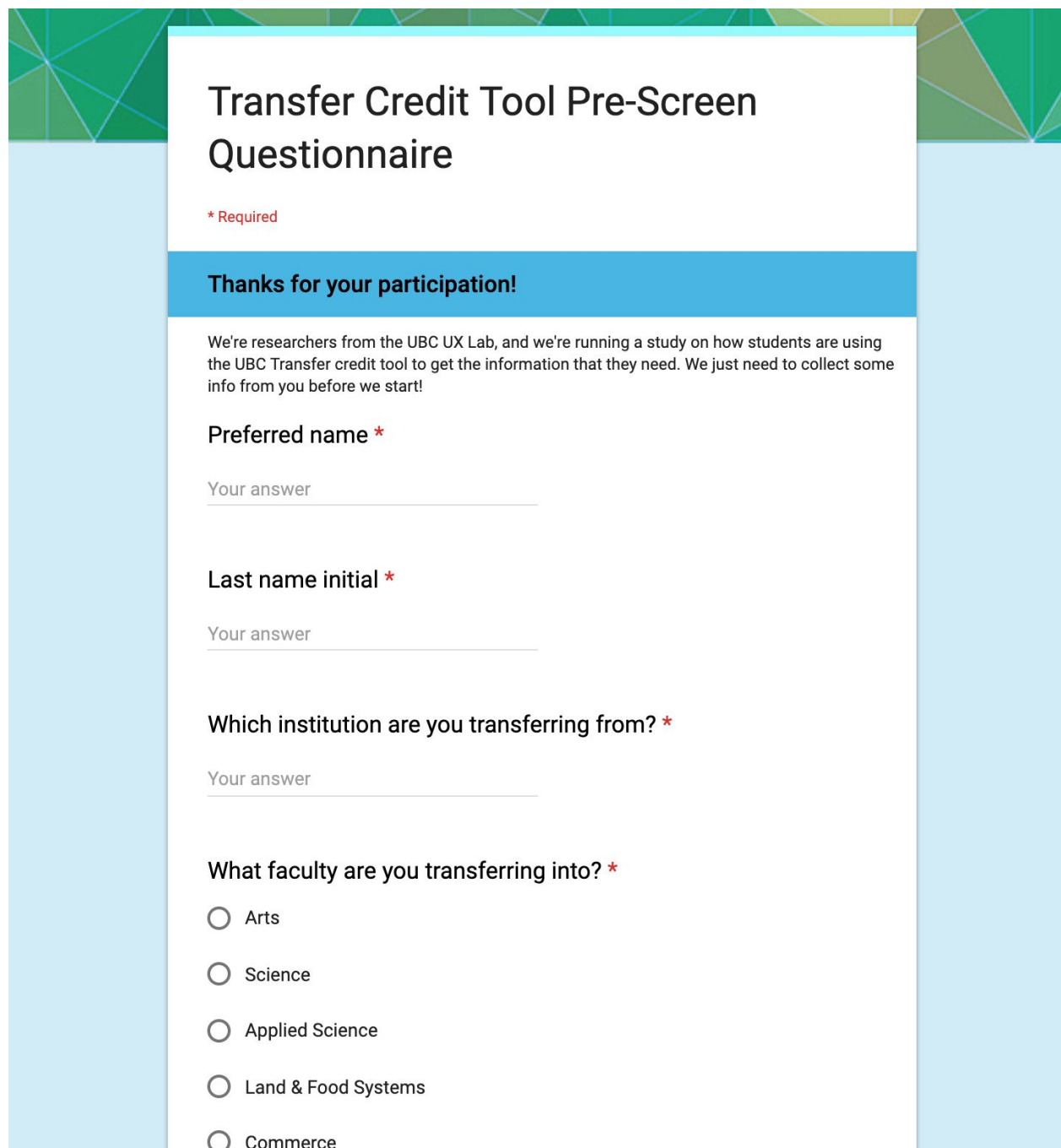
Future Direction

Findings from the transfer credit search tool data indicate future improvements that can be made to improve the usability of the tool. One recommendation would include making the 'change search' button more obvious or in a more identifiable location. In addition, any error messages displayed could also be specified to the error that is being made. Site exposure and reliability for this tool could also be further increased by improving SEO and ensuring that all of the data is accurate.

Future tests with incoming students transferring into different faculties, or with advisors from schools outside of Canada can be helpful in identifying other areas of improvement for the tool.

Appendix A.

Pre-screen Questionnaire:

The form is titled "Transfer Credit Tool Pre-Screen Questionnaire" and includes a red asterisk indicating required fields. It features a blue header bar with the text "Thanks for your participation!". The main content area contains a welcome message from the UBC UX Lab, followed by four questions: "Preferred name", "Last name initial", "Which institution are you transferring from?", and "What faculty are you transferring into?". The first three questions have text input fields, while the last one has a radio button selection list with five options: Arts, Science, Applied Science, Land & Food Systems, and Commerce.

Transfer Credit Tool Pre-Screen Questionnaire

* Required

Thanks for your participation!

We're researchers from the UBC UX Lab, and we're running a study on how students are using the UBC Transfer credit tool to get the information that they need. We just need to collect some info from you before we start!

Preferred name *

Your answer

Last name initial *

Your answer

Which institution are you transferring from? *

Your answer

What faculty are you transferring into? *

☐ Arts

☐ Science

☐ Applied Science

☐ Land & Food Systems

☐ Commerce

☐ Kinesiology

☐ Forestry

☐ Other: _____

Which academic year level are you transferring into? *

☐ Year 1

☐ Year 2

☐ Year 3

☐ Year 4

☐ Year 5+

Sex *

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Prefer not to answer

☐ Other: _____

BACK

NEXT


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Google Forms

Appendix B.

Transfer Credit Search Tool:



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Vancouver Campus



Student Services

[New to UBC](#) [Courses, money & enrolment](#) [Health](#) [Campus life](#) [Career & experience](#) [Support](#) [UBC Life blog](#) [Logins](#)

Student Services » Courses, money & enrolment » Registration » Transfer credits » Transfer Credit Search Tool

UBC Transfer Credit Search

Search courses from your institution and how they transfer to UBC.
The results shown are for reference only and are subject to change.

[Learn more about transfer credit at UBC.](#)

Your institution name

Course code

Completion date

Appendix C.

Testing Script

Transfer Credit Tool script - students

Greeting	<p><i><introduce self></i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did you complete the consent form?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ If not complete, tinyurl.com/uxlab-consent
What are we doing?	<p>We're from UBC UX Lab (Student Communications Services) and we're trying to understand how students use the transfer credit tool we recently launched to check for transfer credits.</p> <p>You will receive a \$5 gift card to Food Services after completing a task.</p>
We're just going to ask a few questions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Name & Last Name Initial?• Which year level are you transferring into at UBC?• Where are you transferring from?• What faculty are you transferring into?
THINK ALOUD TEST	

<p>Task Instructions</p>	<p><i><start screen share></i></p> <p>Can you share your screen with us?</p> <p>We'll be recording this for research purposes, is that okay?</p> <p><i><start screen recording></i></p> <p><i><for students only></i></p> <p>First, can you fill out a questionnaire just to tell us a bit about yourself?</p> <p><i><provide participant with prescreen survey on skype chat></i></p> <p>We just launched a tool online for students and advisors to check their transfer credits and how they transfer to UBC. We want to understand the process you go through when you are using the transfer credit tool.</p> <p>We'll be showing you the transfer credit search tool in a moment. As you go through the process, tell us everything on your mind, even the smallest details!</p> <p>We're not trying to test you with the tool; we're testing the tool itself. You can be as honest as you want about the tool!</p> <p>Any questions?</p>
<p>TEST STARTS</p>	
<p>Test starts</p>	<p>Here's the link to the transfer credit search tool through the chat.</p> <p><Send link:></p> <p>https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/registration/transfer-credits/search-tool</p>
<p>Scenario</p>	<p><Say the task and send link in chat:></p>

	*Please now look up 2 of the most recent courses you've taken and tell me what credits you'll receive from UBC.
Follow-up questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever used this transfer credit tool before? • Why are you using the tool or how have you used it before? • What were some of the problems you had? • Remember when you did XYZ? Can you explain a little bit more about why? • Any other thoughts about the tool?
Gift card for student	Thanks so much for your time today. For the gift card, we'll send you an email to arrange a pickup when you come to campus.

Questions people sometimes ask:	
What's UX Lab?	We're part of Student Communications Services. Basically, we run user experience (UX) research studies to improve digital communications for students.
Opportunities with UX Lab?	We recruit student volunteers to help with the UX research each term (just not this term). If you're interested, you can contact Ariel (ariel.lee@ubc.ca).

Transfer Credit Tool script - Advisors

Greeting	<i>Hi there, <introduce self - names></i>
What are we doing?	We're from UBC UX Lab (Student Communications Services) and we're trying to understand how advisors use the transfer credit search tool we recently launched.
THINK ALOUD TEST	
Task Instructions	<p>Firstly, have you completed the consent form? <if no, http://www.tinyurl.com/uxlab-consent ></p> <p>We'll need you to share your screen and we'll also be recording your screen and voice throughout, only for research purposes. Is that ok?</p> <p><i><start screen share></i></p> <p><i><start screen recording></i></p> <p>First, we'd like to know a little more about you and your role at your institution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What's your first name and last initial?- What's your job title?- What's your faculty, unit, or program?- How do you usually work with transfer credits? <p>Do you have any questions before we start?</p> <p>A bit of background about our study: We just launched an online tool for students and advisors to look up their transfer credits and how they would transfer to UBC. We want to understand the process you go through when you are using the transfer credit tool.</p>

	<p>We'll be showing you the transfer credit search tool, and asking you to search up a few courses. As you go through the process, please tell us everything on your mind (e.g. i don't like this button, I like this button), even the smallest details!</p> <p>We're not testing you; we're testing the tool itself. You can be as honest as you want about the tool!</p> <p>Any questions?</p> <p>I'm sending you the task in the chat so you can follow along. <i><send following task scenario in Skype chat></i></p> <p>The task we want you to do is: Please look up 2 of the most commonly searched courses in your role and tell me what UBC credits the course transfers to.</p> <p>Are you ready?</p> <p>I'm sending you the link to the transfer credit tool in the chat. <i><provide participant with link to transfer credit tool></i></p>
<p>TEST STARTS</p>	
<p>Follow-up questions</p>	<p>That concludes our testing, we just have a few follow up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have you ever used this tool before? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What was the reason? ■ When did you use it? ■ How did you use it? ● What were some of the problems you had? ● Did you have any problems while you were using the tool? (If yes, follow up) ● Remember when you did XYZ? Can you explain a little bit more about why? (optional) ● Do you have any other thoughts about the tool?

Thank Advisor	Thanks so much for your time today.
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Questions people sometimes ask:	
What's UX Lab?	We're part of Student Communications Services. Basically, we run user experience (UX) research studies to improve digital communications for students.
Opportunities with UX Lab?	We recruit student volunteers to help with the UX research each term (just not this term). If you're interested, you can contact Ariel (ariel.lee@ubc.ca).

Appendix D.

Coding sheet - students

Transfer credit search tool testing - STUDENTS

Facilitator	
Observer	
Date	

First Name & Last Name Initial	
Which year level are you transferring to UBC from?	
Where are you transferring from?	
What faculty are you transferring into?	

Introduce study

- We're from UX Lab, Student Communications
- We've recently launched a tool for transfer students to check how their credits apply to UBC
- \$5 gift card to Food Services afterwards
- Ensure consent form is completed - did you complete your consent form?
 - If they haven't, link them - tinyurl.com/uxlab-consent
- Any questions?
- **FOR STUDENTS ONLY** - Please complete [prescreen](#)
 - First, can you fill out a questionnaire just to tell us a bit about yourself?
 - *<provide participant with [prescreen survey](#) on skype chat>*

Task

Provide instructions	<p>We just launched a tool online for students and advisors to check their transfer credits and how they transfer to UBC. We want to understand the process you go through when you are using the transfer credit tool.</p> <p>So first of all, we'll need you to share your screen and we'll be starting the voice recording. Is that ok? [share screen]</p> <p>We'll be showing you the transfer credit search tool. As you go through the process, tell us everything on your mind, even the smallest details!</p> <p>We're not trying to test you with the tool; we're testing the tool itself. You can be as honest as you want about the tool!</p> <p>Any questions?</p>	
Test starts Scenario	<p>Here's the link to the transfer credit search tool through the chat. <Send link:> https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/registration/transfer-credits/search-tool</p> <p><Say the task and send it in the chat:> *Please now look up 2 of the most recent courses that you've taken at your institution and tell me what credits you will receive at UBC.</p>	
During test	Comments on page	User's action next
FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS		
Have you ever used this transfer credit tool before?		

What were some of the problems you had?		
Remember when you did XYZ? Can you explain a little bit more about why?		
Any other thoughts about the tool?		
<p style="text-align: center;">Thanks!</p> <p>Thanks so much for your time today. For the gift card, we'll send you an email to arrange a pickup when you come to campus.</p>		

Transfer credit search tool testing - ADVISORS

Facilitator	
Observer	

First Name & Last Name Initial	
Job title	
How do you usually work with transfer credits?	
Faculty, unit, or program	

Introduce study

- We're from UBC UX Lab, Student Communications
- We've recently launched a tool for advisors to check transfer credits
- Cookie after session
- Ensure consent form is completed
- Questions?
- Screen Share with us

Task

Provide instructions	<p>Have you completed the consent form? <if no, http://www.tinyurl.com/uxlab-consent ></p> <p>So first of all, we'll need you to share your screen and we'll be starting the voice recording. Is that ok? <start screen share> <start screen recording></p> <p>First, I will for some basic information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What is your first name and last initial?- What is your job title?- How do you usually work with transfer credits?- What is your faculty, unit, or program? <p>We are now ready to begin. I'll be providing you with the link to the transfer credit tool. <provide participant with link to transfer credit tool></p> <p><send following task scenario in Skype chat></p> <p>We just launched a tool online for students and advisors to check their transfer credits and how they transfer to UBC. We want to understand the process you go through when you are using the transfer credit tool.</p> <p>We'll be showing you the transfer credit search tool. As you go through the process, tell us everything on your mind (e.g. i don't like this button, I like this button), even the smallest details!</p> <p>We're not trying to test you with the tool; we're testing the tool itself. You can be as honest as you want about the tool!</p> <p>Any questions?</p>
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	<p>Here's the link to the transfer credit search tool through the chat. [Send link: https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/registration/transfer-credits/search-tool]</p> <p>*Please now look up 2 of the most commonly used courses at UBC.</p>	
	Comments on page	User's action next
FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS		
<p>Have you ever used this tool before this session?</p> <p>If yes, what was the reason, when did you use it, and how did you use it before?</p>		
What were some of the problems you had?		
Remember when you did XYZ? Can you explain a little bit more about why?		
Any other thoughts about the tool?		
Thanks!		

Works Cited

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