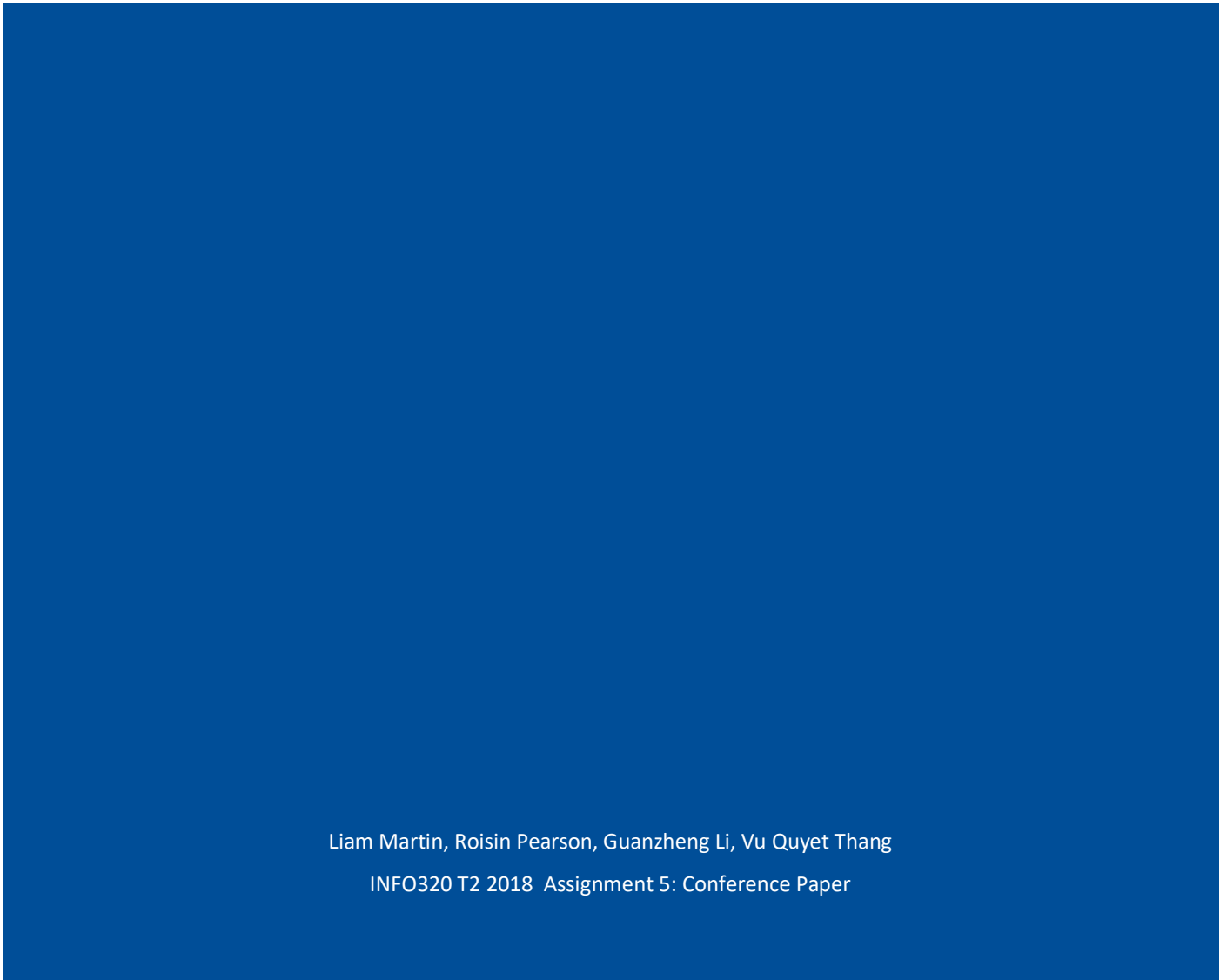# PHIS-NZ PROJECT CONFERENCE PAPER

Liam Martin, Roisin Pearson, Guanzheng Li, Vu Quyet Thang

INFO320 T2 2018 Assignment 5: Conference Paper

PHIS-NZ PROJECT CONFERENCE PAPER

TEAM LUNA: LIAM MARTIN, ROISIN PEARSON, GUANZHENG LI, VU QUYET THANG

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 - THE PROJECT

We were tasked with redesigning the PHIS-NZ website and the supporting WordPress blogs for the PHIS-NZ organisation. Over the past 12 weeks we have worked on a WordPress solution for our Project Sponsor Associate Professor Pedro Antunes from the School of Information Management. This section will give a brief overview of what we have created.

PHIS-NZ WEBSITE

The previous PHIS-NZ website was very limited in its functionality and was showing its age. It was often not updated and held links to external sites that no longer existed. As well as this it lacked modern design aesthetics such as a responsive UI and mobile interface. Our new website has looked to overcome these problems in 3 main areas: A feature rich, but easy to use CMS, a better UI/UX experience and more valid information. We believe we have achieved this.

The solution has been designed with both front-end users (visitors to the website) and back end users (PHIS-NZ members) in mind. It has a nice UI as well as being easy to use. Using WordPress has allowed us to futureproof the website with users being able to create new pages from templates as well as providing many more features such as a member only blog and analytics dashboard.
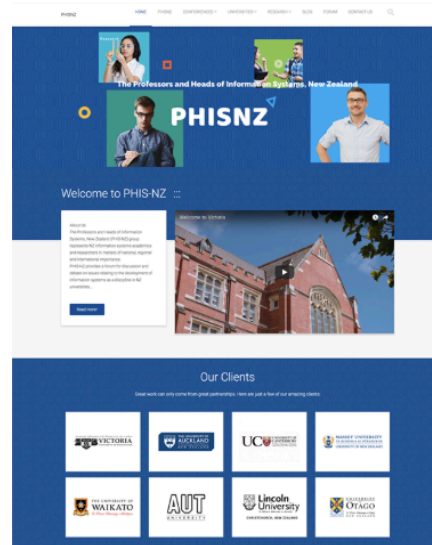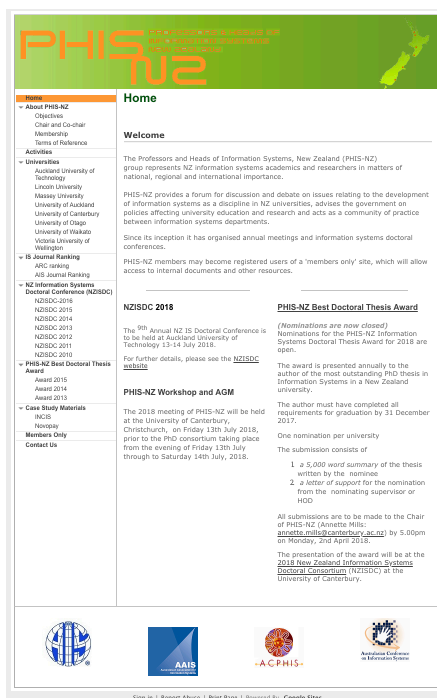

Figure 1 (above): Comparison of homepages. Old PHIS-NZ website on left. New PHIS-NZ web solution on right.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The decision to use WordPress in creating the new website was recommended by our sponsor and also helped us to future proof the website in the future, allowing new users to create new pages and edit older pages. The Initial plan for the project was broken down into three core areas. These areas would cover all of our sponsors expectations and we knew if we achieved these points, then we should have achieved our objectives.

An easy to use CMS

- Ability to manage different users in the private and public forum
- Strong, modern website security

A better UI/UX experience

- The website is designed for use until 2025 with modern structures and user responsiveness
- Public users should be able to see upcoming workshops, meetings and announcements

Better Information

- Previous content that is still relevant will be kept on the new website
- The website should collect information such as the email, name and position of members
- New Information should be collated to fill gaps previously void.

The project scope and project plan changed as the project went along with many roadblocks and changes to our project schedule. Despite this, our objective stayed true through the entire process.

 The main objective is to reorganise the content and layout of the website and collate conference information and award information. The content should be displayed in ways which improve user experience and allow for easy navigation of the site. The design should be appealing as to improve user satisfaction with a more professional interface. In order to make the website easy to use and keep the theme succinct, templates should be created so that users can easily post content on future awards or conferences. This will aid the future growth of the website without it having to be continuously maintained.

2 - THE PROCESS

This section will outline the some of the problems and obstacles we have encountered over the projects lifespan as well as explain how we overcame these issues and adapted our plan to suit. It is split into three sections, outlining three core timeframes in our project.

PAST - WEEKS 1-6

Weeks 1-6 were all about planning and gathering information for our team. We initially planned to develop the project in a fully agile manner however various roadblocks rendered this not possible and we stuck with some traditional development practices. By the end of week 6 we considered our project to be well on track, however this wasn't without some changes.

One of our first hurdles was the lack of collaborative coding solutions for our WordPress project. We had originally planned to use Cloud9 however it was no longer useable under the Amazon Web Services banner and so we had to look elsewhere. Despite many hours of looking and many different attempts, we could not find a suitable online collaborative coding solution. This meant we could not easily develop an agile website with many iterations, and we also had to update our project plan to stay on track. This meant this time was spent brainstorming many UI design ideas and wireframes as well as gathering PHIS-NZ information and completing various reports and project plans. We also completed requirements analysis and research into other development methods.

Another key problem we encountered was the lack of communication from our project stakeholder Annett Mines. We needed to contact her to sort out hosting for the new website as well as access the older website to help transfer information over. Despite multiple enquires we never heard back and that seriously hindered our progress during this time. We had to adapt our project plan to suit this and changed multiple deadlines for milestones and deliverables in order to continue to advance the project forward. This included manually copying data across which previously wasn't required, completing research into logo design and colour schemes earlier than anticipated and some limited building of the website. Some of our final design work can be seen below.

Completed Milestones:

- Initial Meeting with Project Sponsor
- Project Scope Report
- Project Plan
- Development Methods Research
- UX Design Research
- Design Template Completed
- Collate Information Together

Figure 2 (above): Some example logo designs completed after UI research

PRESENT - WEEKS 7-9

We took a two week break from the project over the mid-trimester break to refresh and re-evaluate. In the first week back in this period we found a temporary website solution at aladay.com which allowed us to finally take our WordPress site live and collaboratively code rather than all be in one place. This has not been a totally smooth process however with multiple site failures making coding difficult.

Schedule clashes are something we have had to manage throughout the entire process and this has been no different over these weeks. Weekly team meetings on Wednesdays and fortnightly meetings on Fridays have allowed us to stay in contact, as well as the use of messenger and Trello to keep up to date on our progress remotely. We have decided to split duties for the project and this has been a huge help. Liam Martin (Project Manager) and Roisin Pearson (Head of Design) are tasked with completing relevant paperwork and planning for the presentation whilst Vu Thang (Head of Development) and Li (Head of Requirements) are tasked with completing the website. We have thus far found this to be very effective.

Completed Milestones:

- Hosting & Backend
- Interim Report to Sponsors
- Homepage Completed
- Finalised UI
- Front End Completed

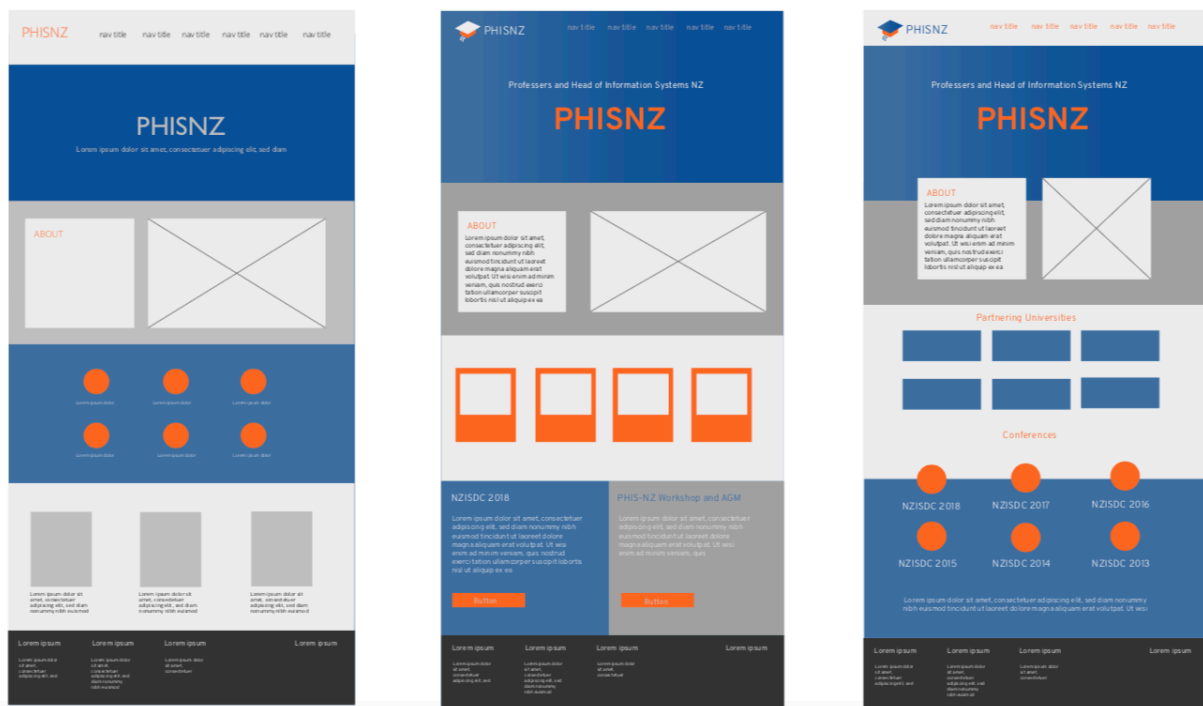*Figure 3 (above): Testing UI Colours (week 6)*

Figure 4 (above): Some example wireframes as part of our wireframe design process

FUTURE - WEEKS 10-12

Changes to the project plan over the project's timeline can be seen below by the changing dates of our milestones. Over the next two weeks we have a little bit to do however, despite this we are still on track for a successful release. The website looks great thanks to our heavy design work early on.

Milestone	Originally Planned Week	Revised Planned Week	Week Completed
Initial Meeting with Project Sponsor	Week 2	Week 2	Week 2
Project Scope Report	Week 2	Week 2	Week 2
Project Plan	Week 3	Week 3	Week 3
Development Methods Research	Week 5	Week 3	Week 3
UX Research	Week 5	Week 3	Week 3
Design Template Completed	Week 6	Week 5	Week 5
Collate Information Together	Week 7	Week 5	Week 5
Hosting & Backend	Week 3	Week 6	Week 6
Interim Report to Sponsors	Week 7	Week 7	Week 7
Homepage Completed	Week 8	Week 7	Week 9
Finalised UI	Week 8	Week 8	Week 8
Frontend Completed	Week 7	Week 8	Week 8
Backend Completed	Week 7	Week 10	Week 10
Recheck / Testing	Week 8	Week 10	Week 10 (TBC)
Website Completed	Week 9	Week 11	Week 11 (TBC)
Conference Paper Submission	Week 10	Week 10	Week 10
Presentation / Documentation	Week 11	Week 11	Week 11 (TBC)

Figure 5 (above): Milestone Table Changes over 12 weeks

3 - THE DELIVERY

Our website is now live and available to view on www.aladay.com. There is still work to be done, however given our setbacks, we are proud of what we have accomplished, and we are still on track to finish on time.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

We had quite a unique experience working with our sponsor. Pedro outlined early on that he was happy for us to take control of the project and only approach him when needed. Although he had many great ideas / suggestions, there was a bit of leeway on what the project scope was as long as it met his core expectations. He outlined these in our first interview and this was very helpful to refer back to during the entire process. Due to our project plan changes we had little contact with the project sponsor beyond the initial interviews. We kept Pedro up to date with regular email correspondence but as we were less agile than intended we felt we didn't require any contact. With more communication with Pedro earlier on we could have kept the project closely aligned to its original scope and plan, however that's not to say the way we did it was not successful at all.

Our biggest learning throughout the project was the importance of agile methodology. This is something we didn't do as well as we should have, and it possibly hurt our final outcome. Pedro outlined in our initial interview that Agile would work well for the project however due to the constraints around getting the website hosting working we struggled to implement this to its full extent. Instead we adopted a waterfall mentality in certain areas. The process could defiantly have been improved with more agile practices. Particularly in having a group with members with various time constraints it would have allowed us to work outside of easier.

One of the things we benefited from was having a team made up of different backgrounds and expertise. This allowed us to take change in certain areas when needed and also gave us a wide variety of perspectives when debating different areas of the website. This showed how critical having a good functioning team was. The ability for people to ask questions different to your perspective gave us a higher quality outcome for sure. Another key with the team was setting out expectations early. Having laid out expectations made the team function better and everyone felt they were on the same level.

*United Nations Sustainable Development Goal: **Quality Education***

Our project vision was aligned with the UNSDG of Quality Education, that focuses on education facilities and learning environments, scholarships and teaching (UNDP, 2018). The new PHIS-NZ website should hopefully facilitate discussion between Professors, Associate Professors and Heads of School in New Zealand and assist in the recognition of highly commended students. Our project provides a far greater access to the PHIS-NZ organisation and should hopefully continue to help universities around New Zealand deliver quality Education

PROJECT EVALUATION

Overall our project has been a success. The way we got to the final outcome is not as originally planned however that is the nature of our still partly agile methodology and of digital projects in general. We believe the project satisfies the objectives given to us from the sponsor (see pg.3) whilst also meeting our own success criteria (below).

When starting this process, we expected the best way to control the project was to set clear deadlines and stick to them. However, in reality this simply wasn't possible, with many deadlines moving and others requiring previous deadlines to be finished we struggled to keep to earlier timeframes. This shows the importance of Scrum Meetings in Agile and also general flexibility when designing a project. Being flexible was a key reason we managed to make the project a success, despite constantly changing deadlines.

As well as the Project Objectives on page 3 of this report, one of the best evaluations for our project is by referring back to our 9-step success criteria. This was released as part of our Project Scope Report and still stays true. This is outlined below and our evaluation of it.

1. The final website design is clean, professional and easy to navigate
2. The website is able to easily be configured for future changes using WordPress
3. The website displays all historical conference and award information alongside current website details (previous event winners, current nominations etc.)
4. The website has access to a private portal which can be accessed by current PHISNZ members using a secure login
5. The website allows current PHISNZ members to create new pages based off a template to update with award information for future years.
6. The website back end is easy to use and simple for any PHISNZ member
7. The website should allow PHISNZ users to send out announcements to inform members and the general public of upcoming events and award winners
8. Private access and public access
9. The project sponsor (Pedro Antunes) is happy with the final outcome

Check out for yourself what we have accomplished. Visit www.aladay.com.

REFERENCES

UNDP. (2018). *Goal 4: Quality Education*. Retrieved from United Nations Development Programme: http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-4-quality-education.html