**Assignment #3: Gathering User Needs and Requirements**

Group 6

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INSC 430: Foundations of User Experience

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# **Product Concept Statement**

MyUTK (myutk.utk.edu) is a website at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) that provides students access to all the information about college careers and grades. While the system facilitates many student needs in one place, it can overwhelm students with a plethora of unnecessary information and links. Ideally, myUTK should allow students to easily find, use, and accomplish their task goals.

The redesign of myUTK will include the most commonly used links by students in the forefront, while relocating less commonly used or needed resources such as the messages tab, address tab, and student success tab to clearly notated, searchable spaces. Integral features such as an improved financial hub and an academics information page will be added. These design improvements will make user interaction more efficient and provide a more satisfactory user experience.

# **Summary**

The existing myUTK homepage features a dashboard that displays several sections: a brief profile of student information, a message center, top links, the student’s current schedule, the student’s financial information, student success links, and student life featuring UTK’s student helpline. The page also features a blank space under the profile and six tabs that show a drop-down menu of additional links when clicked.

myUTK features many areas of wasted negative space along with unneeded and overwhelming information. This often creates information overload which could interfere with students’ completion of desired task goals. There are also many students on this website who feel overloaded by myUTK’s numerous pages and links.

The redesign of myUTK website will include a dashboard that allows for easier access to information about courses, class schedules, and financial aid. It will allow users to easily find the information that they are looking for without feeling lost in the excessive amount of options given by the present model of myUTK. This will make the system as a whole easier and more satisfying to use.

# **Preparation for Contextual Inquiry**

When preparing for the interviews with the potential users, we had to first assess any improvements that could be made to the website. In order to do that, we had to look over the page for myUTK, and then discuss any observations each of us had about it. Based on those observations, we listed the flaws that we found that were related to interacting with and comprehending the layout of the website. We then used that information to think of ways that we could improve the parts that were flawed, and included them as part of our product concept statement.

After we wrote out our plan in the product concept statement, we moved on to figuring out the tasks that the potential users would do based on our own observations of the website. We decided to base the tasks on what actions had different methods of completion. Then we wrote out the questions that would be used for the interviews. These questions were made based on what we wanted to understand about the users’ behavior and the way they interact with the myUTK website.

# Procedures Used to Collect Data

# Data was collected through contextual inquiry interviews on Zoom. Interviewers asked several questions of participants, including demographic information and topics of interest, as listed below. Meanwhile, participants were asked to think aloud and provided two search task scenarios to locate information on the site. Interviewers also took notes during the interviews, collecting data on clicks, methodologies, and user thoughts while the participant completed the tasks.

# **Search Tasks**

The two search tasks provided to users are as follows:

1. You are applying for an external scholarship for the upcoming year. The application requires you to submit your GPA. Use the myUTK system to find your most recent GPA.
2. Your advisor has accidentally locked themselves out of their account, and they need you to find your class schedule so that you can register for classes next semester. Find your full roster of classes from your last Fall/Spring semester.

Due to FERPA restrictions, in the first task, participants were specified to show us how they would complete the tasks but stopped before showing their GPA information to the interviewer.

# **Interview Instrument and Questions**

For our interviewing instrument, we used Zoom, due to its ability to easily communicate and record online.

The demographic/background information collected were as follows:

* + 1. Age
    2. Gender
    3. Major
    4. Year
    5. Level of experience using the Internet
    6. Level of experience using myUTK

These interview questions asked during the inquiry were as follows:

* + 1. What do you use myUTK for?
    2. What section of the website are you drawn to first?
    3. How often do you use myUTK in a week?
    4. What features do you consider to be useful for you as a student?
    5. Did you know of other ways to find the requested information?

# Team Member Experience

James McKoin

I would have to say that I fall into the novice category when it comes to data collection. I have previously conducted a contextual inquiry in another class and polled basic information utilizing surveys in an attempt to improve the University of Tennessee’s DARS system and for a research paper respectively. I learned that students’ relationship with the myUTK system varies quite dramatically. From my two participants alone, one logs into myUTK daily and the other once every two weeks, if that. The biggest challenge was thinking of task scenarios that not only showcased information redundancy found within the system, but also displayed the lack of consistency amongst users’ interactions with the system. That is, users accomplishing the same goal in different ways is an implication of poor design, because the location of information is not explicit, or is too cluttered to bring about consistent actions from users. Group work always brings about pros and cons. Generally, you might be making concessions with your own vision for the project, but have a lightened work load and benefit from multiple perspectives. In the future, it might be helpful to collect information from more users by conducting the contextual inquiry on additional participants.

Alexandra McFall:

What I learned about data collection, from this assignment, is that users have various types of methods that they can utilize when interacting with a website or application. I did have some difficulties when I was actually collecting the data, such as figuring out when to ask the interviewees questions regarding their behavior and how they interacted with the website. There were also challenges to the data collection, including having the users perform the tasks without trying to show personal information, and having them try to describe what they were going to do instead. I personally enjoyed being in a group for this assignment, since it allowed me to understand what other researchers may focus on when assessing what needs to be improved on a website. If I were to work with a group on a similar project, I would want to have more ways to assess what users think about a website, other than observing their actions and behaviors, by asking them directly what they think may need to be improved in the website.

Makayla Lerner:

Though I have completed a similar interview process for another class, I felt like I was more prepared this time. I think using Zoom and recording the interview to watch later will be useful when preparing the next steps of the cycle. I think this was an excellent project to get us involved in the design cycle. From this experience, I learned how my interviewees experience the system that I also use and was able to immediately pick-up on behaviors that students have adapted to using this system. I was also able to compare my experience with the system to my interviewees’ and my team members’ experiences. I think this is extremely useful because I had a lot of ideas of what I would want from a redesign of this system but not all of my ideas were as critical of concerns to other students. My team was amazing and we were able to work together efficiently and effectively. If I were to do this again, I would love to get more data, investigate more tasks in the system, and interview faculty and staff members as well.

Calder Novak:

While I have completed a number of interviews for other classes at UT, I have little experience with observational study and contextual inquiry. I learned a lot during this assignment about proper procedures for contacting and working with interviewees. It was a bit challenging to find time to meet during other students’ busy schedules, but the interviews themselves went well. Through the studies, I gained a better understanding of what other people think about the system. Before this project, I did not really know other students’ opinions on the myUTK website, but now I feel like I have a much better understanding of what needs to be improved in order to allow for a better user experience. Some things that I thought may have been obvious or easily missed were actually the opposite. One thing I did not expect is that the observational studies were much quicker than I thought they would be. The only thing I might do differently next time is prepare more in-depth tasks for users to complete in order to help get just a bit more data. However, even this aspect of the study can give us some kind of idea about how to improve the system. Working as a group was easier and simpler than I thought it would be. We met to discuss the format of the assignment and individually completed each of our own tasks. Overall, I felt like it was much more valuable to observe user interaction with context rather than simply asking questions, and I am excited to proceed with the next steps of the design process.

Matthew Tarnoff:

In my experience with this assignment and in this group, I learned many interesting points surrounding user experience design, contextual inquiry, and design solution formatting. The first and largest thing I learned was that we should never deal in certainty while making design suggestions, ideations, and solutions. This was mainly in the facet of certain parts of the system where people wanted multiple routes of access or utilized something we thought no one bothered to look at. As for difficulties, it was personally taxing to deal with recording or avoiding private information, as we made the realization halfway through our work. It was also quite challenging to analyze thoughts, emotions, behaviors, opinions, and needs through a virtual testing instrument such as zoom. On the facet of working as a group, I found it quite refreshing. More often than not, many groups where I had worked before never took the project seriously enough to merit a good grade. This group kept a decent pace for work, while still having time to chat and enjoy ourselves. All in all, we were able to be quite successful in our exercise. I would elect, however, that our group was a little more proactive around meeting and doing work regardless of schedule or class load. In conclusion, this assignment merited a decent amount of success and information, and proved to be very enlightening.

# Appendix

Table 1: Distribution of Time and Effort by Team Members

| **Team Member** | **Time and Effort Percentage** |
| --- | --- |
| Makayla Lerner | 20% |
| Alex McFall | 20% |
| James McKoin | 20% |
| Calder Novak | 20% |
| Matthew Tarnoff | 20% |

**Informed Consent Statement**

myUTK Contextual Inquiry Study

**INTRODUCTION**

This form has been given to you to inform you of a request to participate in a research study. The purposes of this study would be to analyze reactions, behavior, and responses to a task in order to improve myUTK from a User Experience perspective.

**INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY**

1. Introduction to research study and check on continued involvement.

2. Recording the session and having the tester consent to said recording.

3. Display information of 1st scenario search task where the user will be asked to

find their most recent GPA without revealing it to the researcher.

4. User conducts tasks to the best of their ability.

5. Short section of questions on the user's execution of tasks.

6. Display information of 2nd scenario search task where the User will be asked to

find the course schedule of their previous term.

7. User conducts tasks to the best of their ability.

8. Section of questions based on 2nd task and overall performance.

9. Conclusion/Wrap-up on overall testing session.

-Average Time of Testing Session: 20-30 Minutes

-In order to record this Contextual Inquiry session, researchers will be using zoom in order to review these sessions for their work. As such, you and your screen will be recorded during the session.

**RISKS**

-For this research session, there are no exceptional risks except for those encountered in everyday life.

**BENEFITS**

-This research session will assist in aiding myUTK in its improvement for students and faculty, as well as assisting a small body of students in improving their experience in user testing and in user experience design.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

In this study, any and all information that you display during the research session will be kept confidential, and it will only be used by the students of group six and the instructor for research purposes.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, [Team Member] at [Team Member Email] and [Team Member Phone Number].

**PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be requested for confidential use, but you can request to delete said data at any time.

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**CONSENT**

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

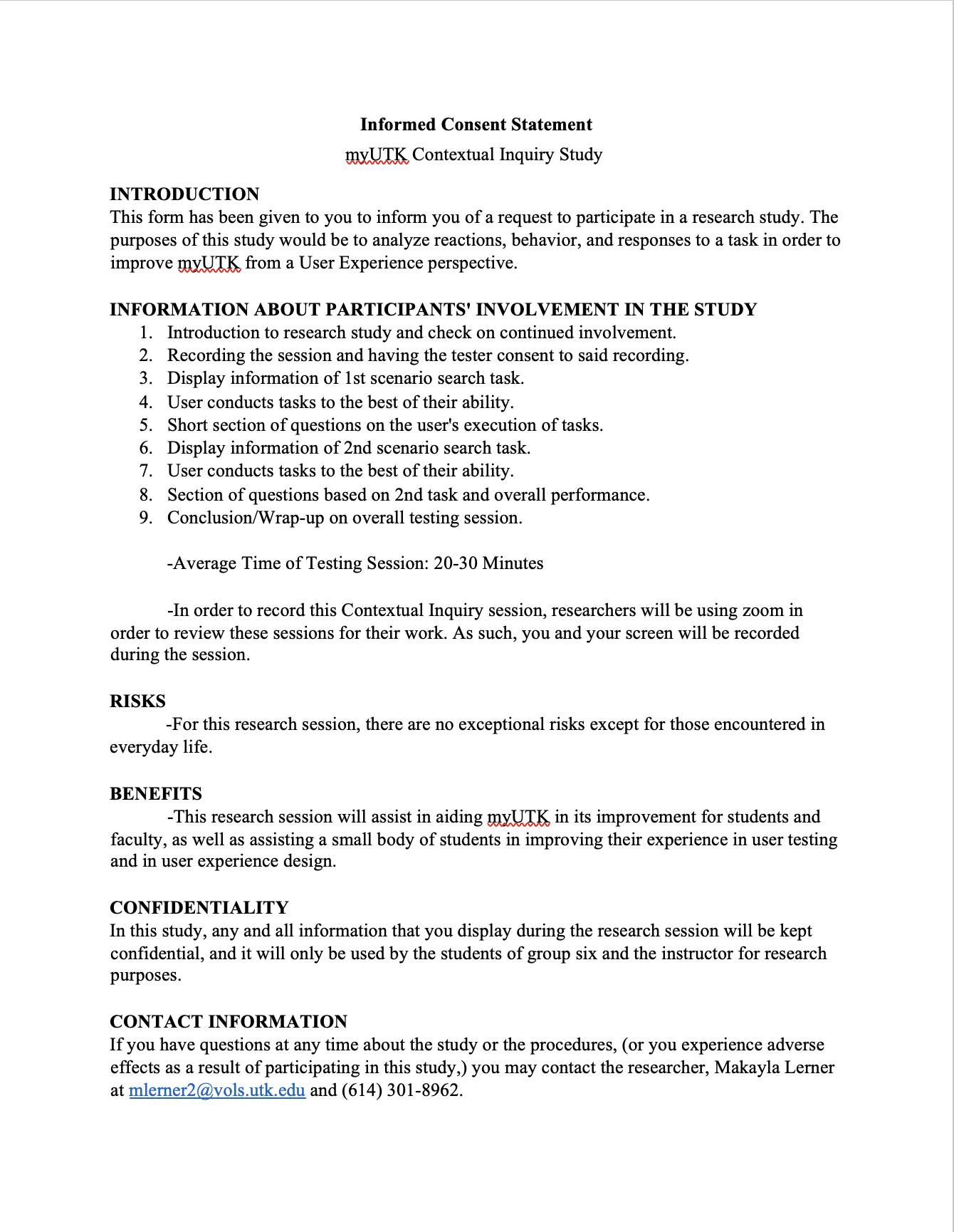
Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I have read the above information and consent to having myself and my screen recorded during the session for research purposes.

Participant's Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Signed Consent Forms:**

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