



TO: Dr. Gregory Wickliff  
FROM: Anne Cooper Moore  
SUBJECT: ENGL4181/5181 Spring 2022 Project 2 Assessment Memo  
DATE: April 13, 2022 (Revised 04/22/22 to summarize Dr. Wickliff's comments and my corrections)

For Project 2, I performed a usability study of the Career Center's "Competency Compass" interface as well as how it is presented on and accessed from the Career Center website.

### **1. Process & Technical Goals for the Project: What did I learn?**

- a. I accomplished all of my goals for the project:
  - Practice creating a script for a usability test and editing it to be succinct and effective.
  - Practice recruiting usability participants who are members of the target audience of the CCC.
  - Design an effective usability test of the functionality of the CCC web-based application, including all of the data collection instruments.
  - Practice conducting usability tests as they are conducted in technical and professional writing positions, including how to interact with participants.
  - Practice organizing and analyzing the results of usability tests and summarizing them in the final report.
  - Provide input to the designers of the CCC, so they can improve the functionality of the application.
  - Practice my report writing and editing skills.
- b. I learned how difficult it is for web developers to create a user friendly, understandable, and effective interface. I suspect that the web developer was tasked by the Career Center director to create this interface and then met with the staff of the Career Center to flesh out the ideas. It appears that he did not perform usability testing with actual students before or during development because the biggest weakness in the interface is the lack of clear explanation of what it is for and why students should use it. It is neither integrated into the Career Center website nor designed to explain clearly what the student is looking at on each screen.

- c. I learned how challenging it is to create an effective usability test task list. The researcher must think of the typical tasks users of the interface will need to perform, but that will also demonstrate issues they detected during their own investigation of the site or interface. In the task list, the researcher must set up tasks that will be easy to understand and repeat for the participant who is unfamiliar with the interface, but that will also present them with the most important tasks for any user of the interface, so it gets a thorough and realistic test. The researcher has to design the right pre-test questions to gather the demographic, technology platform, and technology expertise data needed to frame the results for the requestor. Then the researcher has to design post-test questions that will encourage the participant to reflect on the experience and explain what works about the interface and what was confusing – to draw out useful feedback for the requestors/designer.
- d. I was amazed at the discoveries that surfaced during the usability tests and the variety of interpretations the participants had about the purpose of the interface. The requestors/designer thought they were clear and complete in their presentation, but the participants had many points of confusion, including about the basic purpose of the interface.
- e. I learned a lot more about some of the more advanced features of InDesign, particularly working with a long document. I found it easier to write in Google Docs and Microsoft Word and then copy and paste into InDesign textboxes. I spent a lot of time editing the wording and format before copying and pasting into InDesign. Of course, none of the formatting for numbering, bullets, or headings transferred, but I needed the structure laid out in advance to visualize the report. I was glad I edited everything in advance because I knew how long my sections were. I made a few additional editorial changes when the text was in InDesign, which probably improved the writing. Then I focused on the formatting. I think this was a sound approach because all one can focus on when working in InDesign is the formatting, appearance, and consistency!
- f. I was not able to dedicate the time required to capture video clips from the usability test recordings to demonstrate the issues with the interface. I would have liked to master this skill and it would have added credibility to the findings, but I would have needed more instruction in how to do this since I don't even know how to begin.

## **2. Audience Members' Goals for the Project**

- a. I think I achieved the goals of the developer (Curtis), the Career Center director (Patrick Madsen), and his staff. I developed a prioritized list of tangible concerns and provided suggested solutions. I know they will not implement all of the

suggestions, but some changes can easily be completed in the timeline they have allotted (the first part of the summer).

- b. I hope the Career Center staff will recognize they need to emphasize the accuracy and completeness of the content in the records for the activities and classes rather than just to encourage faculty to add more entries. Currently there are plenty of descriptions, but they are not organized and cannot be searched. The creation and application of a consistent taxonomy for both the stars and the tags is essential to the viability of the interface for students. The separation of the “activities” into categories such as internships, jobs, course assignments, student organizations, and volunteer activities is also important for students to be willing to use the tool. The Career Center’s original plan of creating a browsing, serendipitous interface will not work when it contains a lot of entries. They need to invest the time and effort to create a comprehensive search with the course prefixes, majors, year in school, and other ways the students want to search for relevant classes and activities. I would also note that linking to and from authoritative systems of information that already exist (course catalog, Hire-a-Niner, NinerEngage, etc.) would help the students get all the information they need without having to go to multiple interfaces, which they will not do.
- c. The Career Center should instruct faculty in creating an accurate and complete entry as it appears they are beginning to do this semester.
- d. If the Career Center implements most of the recommendations over time and market the interface more effectively, UNC Charlotte students will benefit from learning about opportunities to develop their career competencies while in college, about bullets they can include in their resume that document their competencies, and about how to incorporate their competencies in interview question responses.

### **3. Key Results of Peer Review and/or User Tests**

- a. User Tests: I recruited a balanced set of participants who were extremely engaged and brought up important points about the interface. Only the librarian who is the liaison to the Career Center had ever seen the “Competency Compass” before and that was when it was originally designed in 2017. The three undergraduate students who work in the library are really bright and yet they did not understand what was going on with the interface. The recent alumni had greater insight, but still would not have used it in its current version. The retired developer who had done extensive usability testing in his nearly 40-year career at Boeing set right in to detecting issues. The librarian was perhaps the most helpful because she understands where students are. Through working with these participants, I realized how important it is to test the interface with members of the user population to gather relevant insights and create an interface that will be used and will be effective. I will remember this lesson for my next project.

- b. Peer Review: Dorothy Knosby reviewed my Project 2 documents as I did hers. She gave me a wide variety of useful content, editorial, visual, and stylistic suggestions. It had been two days since I had last touched the InDesign file before I read her comments. Her suggestions coupled with a fresh perspective helped me make a number of improvements. I remade all of the tables to be bolder and clearer. I changed the font for the table and figure labels from 14 pt Arial to 12 pt as they had originally been. I also re-read all of the findings to ensure I used the second person throughout. I made the “Recommendations” section headings in the Findings section both bold and italics, so they would stand out better. Obtaining objective and outside input on usability reports is important as we cannot detect many of our own mistakes. While Dorothy had tested the experiences database, we both found similar types of issues with the two interfaces.

#### **4. Your Overall Assessment of the Final Document and the Design Process**

- a. I am extremely proud of the final product and I hope it will help the Career Center improve the “Competency Compass” for students. The “Competency Compass” is an innovative idea and the first of its kind. I hope my report helps them take the concept to the next level. Maybe other career centers will create a similar service for students at other universities.
- b. I learned a great deal from this project; however, it was personally exhausting and stressful. I haven’t been this overwhelmed since I was finishing my dissertation and that was over 20 years ago. But that said, I feel like I am ready to conduct an effective usability test and write a compelling report. The teaching method is effective, but we would get more out of it if we had fewer projects and more time to master the new skills.
- c. I feel much better about my InDesign skills, but one needs to practice every single day to maintain proficiency. And Adobe keeps changing the interface! At least once a week, there is a new version. I was shocked to discover during the writing of Project One that Adobe changed “master” to “parent” literally while I was working on my tutorial. I am planning to take some type of course that focuses specifically on InDesign and another on Photoshop once I retire.
- d. I did not end up including an appendix because all I could think of would be to type up my notes (and additional comments from the recordings) for all seven of the participants. But I ran out of time and did not think the Career Center would read it.

#### **5. Feedback from Professor Wickliff and Changes Made**

Below is a summary of Professor Wickliff’s comments for improvement on my draft, which I received on April 21, 2022, and immediately worked to incorporate.

- a. Include a table of task times – I had thought this wouldn’t be worthwhile, but indeed it was! It surfaced challenges participants encountered finding the

- “Competency Compass” from the [Career Competencies webpage](#), locating an introduction to the “Competency Compass,” and a lack of contrast between the menu bar (white text) on pages with white background images. I added a matrix of the task times (Table 4) and explanations in the text of the report.
- b. Move the script/task list sections from the Methodology to Appendices at the end of the report – Done. Add Appendices to Table of Contents and label individual appendices – Done.
  - c. Move the illustrations of how to solve each issue (Figures 1-7) from after the recommendations to just after they are each initially mentioned in the Findings section – Done.
  - d. Write out numbers less than 10 – Done. In APA style when you have several numbers greater than 10 in a sentence, all numbers should be Arabic numerals.
  - e. Highlight the lack of contrast between the white menu text when the image has a white background (Figure 6). Placed a box around the area to highlight it – Done.
  - f. Shift the caption for tables to above the tables – Done.
  - g. Letter of transmittal. I had uploaded this document in Canvas several times, but then had uploaded another version of the report and forgot that I had to upload all the documents again. Sent by email – Done.
  - h. On the title page, reduce the font for the UNC Charlotte personnel, so that the titles do not wrap to another line. I changed the font size for this section from 24 pt to 18 pt.
  - i. Use consistent capitalization in the list of tables and figures – Done.
  - j. Add a reference for the interview with Curtis Kularski to the References – Done. APA 7 Style does not cite interviews that are not published because they cannot be traced.

These corrections greatly improved the final report. I appreciate Professor Wickliff’s attention to details to help me create the best possible product.