
INITIAL FORMATIVE EVALUATION

USER NEEDS ANALYSIS - METHODOLOGY

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User Needs Analysis – Methodology

It was decided that the user needs analysis would take the form of semi-structured interviews. The benefits of such an approach were a known target quantity, the opportunity for interviewees to raise points not included in the original question set, and the potential for in-depth analysis of topics that clearly sparked interest. Although qualitative information such as this is more difficult to analyse than quantitative data, the results are more topic specific, and the format is less restrictive for the interviewee.

Target interviewees were approached at four of the partner institutions: South Bank University, De Montfort University, University of Edinburgh, and Sheffield Hallam University. A mixture of one-to-one interviews and group interviews were used according to the wishes of the interviewees and the organisational logistics. A total of 47 staff members were interviewed and both academic staff from varying subject areas and support staff were represented.

The interviews were all conducted by Nicole Harris to ensure consistency of approach. The interviewees were all provided with the same background information about the project, and presented with the same introduction to the interview.

The Interview Questions

In keeping with the concept of the semi-structured interview, the questions used were all open, with the exception of the questions used in section 1. Furthermore, the interviewees were encouraged to diverge from the structure of the interview, to ignore questions if they wished, and to ask their own questions at any point. This approach means that a question-by-question analysis of the results is not possible. The benefit of this approach is that each and every comment made in the interviews can be fed directly into the design work package.

Key concepts were repeated at several points within the questioning to ensure that all the necessary information had been covered by the end of the allotted time. In this way, the questionnaire allowed for some guidance for both the interviewer and interviewee.

It was originally hoped that the majority of information required would be obtained through question 1A and the discussion that would inevitably surround it. This question was designed as an ordinal question in order to encourage discussion and response. It was hoped that this would make discussion easier for the rest of the interview. In practice, question 1A did not produce the response required. Although the question specifically asked the interviewee to respond for him or herself only, the interviewees consistently answered the question from another point of view. As the ANGEL research was concerned with direct individual opinion, this made the results invalid.

It was established early on in the interviews that interviewees were happy to ignore the first question, and entered into discussion freely and easily without the need for prompting. The interviewees felt more comfortable giving their own opinion when it could be couched directly in their own words as a response to an open question. The decision was made to leave question 1A out of the process.



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