Focus Group:
Study-abroad.uark.edu

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Contents

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 3

Navigation ................................................................................................................................. 3

  Recommendations: ................................................................................................................ 3

Content .................................................................................................................................... 3

  Recommendations: ................................................................................................................ 3

Detailed Findings ..................................................................................................................... 4

Action Item: Find scholarships on the study abroad website..................................................... 4

Question: How did you all choose to navigate to scholarships? Would you say that this was easy or difficult to navigate to? How familiar are all of you with this website? ............... 4

Action Item: Find where to search for Programs.................................................................... 5

Question: Was finding this information easy or difficult? How important is this information? How could this information be more helpful to perspective students? ............... 5

Action Item: Locate where you can register for independent student travel............................ 5

Question: Was this an easy task to complete? ......................................................................... 5

Action Item: Find office hours.............................................................................................. 6

Question: Was finding this information difficult? If so, how could this task be made easier? ........................................................................................................................................... 6

Question: Of all of these tasks, how would you rank them – one being most important and four being least important – in order of importance? ........................................................................... 6

Question: What is your impression of this website? ................................................................ 6

After viewing the content, what, to you, is the purpose of this website. ................................. 7

How often do you visit this site? ............................................................................................ 7

Do you most often visit this site from a desktop, smartphone or tablet?................................. 7

Is this an effective home page? .............................................................................................. 7

What are some positive experiences of this website and what made these experiences positive?........................................................................................................................................... 8

What content would bring you back to this website?............................................................... 8

What suggestions do you have to improve this website?.......................................................... 9

Would you be interested in social media integration on the homepage? ............................... 9

Are there any actions you feel should be on the home page that aren’t there now? ............... 9

Would a video be helpful for this website? .......................................................................... 9

What is the best way to do a video? .................................................................................... 10
Handout One ........................................................................................................................................ 11

Demographics ...................................................................................................................................... 11

Research Methods .................................................................................................................................. 13

Research Goal: ...................................................................................................................................... 13

Research Design: ................................................................................................................................... 13

How the Information Will Be Used: ......................................................................................................... 13

How This Project Fits Into Our Department: ......................................................................................... 13

Why This Method Was Chosen: .............................................................................................................. 13

Focus Group Agenda: ............................................................................................................................... 14

Guidelines .............................................................................................................................................. 14

Action Item Questions: 45 Minutes .......................................................................................................... 14

General Questions: 45 Minutes ............................................................................................................... 15

Strategy for Analysis ............................................................................................................................... 15

Specifications for Time and Location ....................................................................................................... 16

Who Fulfilled the Leadership Roles of the Focus Group? ................................................................... 16

Appendix A ............................................................................................................................................. 17

Google Analytics ..................................................................................................................................... 17
Executive Summary

Navigation

Two participants were familiar with studyabroad.uark.edu. One participant Googled ‘uark study abroad scholarships.’ All participants thought scholarships were easy to find, but three out of four participants were not able to directly locate scholarships. Those participants eventually found the item but did not navigate to it through the intended navigation path.

Three out of four participants confused graduate school programs with study abroad programs and all participants agreed the information was important.

All participants thought the top navigation was confusing. They expected the top navigation to contain study abroad related items.

Three out of four participants thought office hours should be easier to find.

Participants #1 and #2 ranked scholarships as the most important item and participants #3 and #4 ranked programs as the most important item.

All participants agreed that the TerraDotta form is “clunky,” “overwhelming.”

Recommendations:

- Conduct usability tests to improve categorization and navigation of items.
- Considering the high volume of traffic to the scholarships page, create a call-to-action to apply for scholarships. See Appendix A.
- Considering the high volume of traffic to the programs page, create a call-to-action to search for programs that stands out more than the current portal on the left navigation.
- Simplify the Terradotta form so that drop-down items are arranged in an accordion format.
- Change ‘Programs’ to ‘Study Abroad Programs’ to prevent confusion.
- On the home page, consider moving the left navigation to the top and removing the graduate school navigation from studyabroad.uark.edu, retaining the left navigation on interior pages.
- Move office hours to the left navigation underneath the phone numbers.

Content
All participants like the homepage and all participants also agreed that an interactive map displaying study abroad opportunities would be helpful. The participants made the claim that they would like the map to have dots where students had studied abroad. They wanted to be able to hover over those dots and be presented with a paragraph about the student and their experience that you could click on to lead to an in-depth feature story.

Three out of four participants said they wanted professional tips regarding how they can use their study abroad experience on their resumes.

All participants agreed they would like to see key points of the pros of studying abroad with short excerpts and an option to read a feature story.

All participants agreed that an “exciting,” “conversational,” “wanderlust” video that incorporated quick clips from student’s study abroad experience should be used on the home page.

Recommendations:
- Create an interactive study abroad map for an interior page.
- Provide professional tips to apply study abroad experience to a resume.
- Provide key points of the pros of studying abroad with an option to read a full feature story.
- Create a video as the participants described to feature on the home page.

Detailed Findings

Action Item: Find scholarships on the study abroad website.

00:00:59

Question: How did you all choose to navigate to scholarships? Would you say that this was easy or difficult to navigate to? How familiar are all of you with this website?

00:02:18

- Two out of four participants found it easily.
- Participant #1 used Google to search for UARK study abroad scholarships.
- Participant #2 Went to studyabroad.uark.edu homepage and the first thing I clicked on was Getting Started but that Started with clicking on Getting started but that didn’t
work so didn’t work so I scrolled down to students and found scholarships. Stated that it was easy because they were familiar with the website already.

- Participant #3 went to students and then scholarships and found it that way. They said it was easy and that they were familiar with the site.
- Participant #4 went to studyabroad.uark.edu found it from there with Getting Started and then Scholarships. They stated that they were not very familiar with the site but thought finding the scholarships was easy.
- Two participants were familiar with the website and the other two were not.

**Action Item: Find where to search for Programs.**

00:03:36

**Question: Was finding this information easy or difficult? How important is this information? How could this information be more helpful to perspective students?**

00:05:32

- Two out of four of the participants found this easy.
- Participant #1 saw it on the homepage.
- Participant #2 knew where to look because they were familiar with the site. Thought the process was easy. Suggested having multiple avenues to it might make it easier for people who aren’t familiar with the site.
- Participant #3 found it by scrolling down on the homepage. Stated that the information was important and that it might be helpful to have a tab for Study Abroad Programs.
- Participant #4 found it difficult to find and was confused by Programs tab at the top of the page.
- All participants agreed that the information is important.
- Participant #2 felt that Programs information could be clearer between Graduate Programs and Study Abroad programs. Participant #1 and #3 agreed.

**Action Item: Locate where you can register for independent student travel.**

00:08:05

**Question: Was this an easy task to complete?**

00:09:22

- Participants #1 and #2 found this information easy to find. Both used the student tab.
• All participants agreed that the student tab was in the right spot.
• Participant #3 stated that she didn’t think Independent Student Travel was that common so seems to be in the right place.
• Participant #4 used the search bar.

Action Item: Find office hours.
00:10:43

Question: Was finding this information difficult? If so, how could this task be made easier?
00:12:12
• Three out of four participants found this information easily.
• All participants agreed that this information is important.
• Participant #2 felt like finding this was not as easy as expected and could have been easier to find perhaps by putting the information in the left side under the general information. Participants #1 and #3 agreed.
• Participant #3 went to the Home first but didn’t find it and then went to About Us.
• Participant #4 went straight to About Us.

Question: Of all of these tasks, how would you rank them – one being most important and four being least important – in order of importance?
00:13:44
• Participants #1 and #2 felt that the order of importance was: Scholarships, Programs, Office hours, Travel
• Participants #3 and #4 felt that the order of importance was: Programs, Scholarships, Office hours, Travel

Question: What is your impression of this website?
00:14:52
• Participant #1 stated the website was nice and aesthetic.
• Participant #3 likes the website but feels that TerraDotta is where people have trouble with the site. It is confusing, the tabs are confusing, it is clunky and can be overwhelming. Updating the layout or format of TerraDotta would be helpful. Having so many tabs is overwhelming and improving the format with dropdowns would make a difference in an accordion format. All participants agreed.
• Participant #2 felt that the site was very similar to UA Connect and pretty easy to navigate. Doesn’t like how the blue Search For Programs tab brings you right into the advanced search page as opposed to the simple search. Some of the terms overlap too much in TerraDotta.
• Three out of four participants stated that they like the website and that it looks nice.

After viewing the content, what, to you, is the purpose of this website.
00:20:53
• Three out of four participants agreed that studyabroad.uark.edu is good and the purpose is to provide everything needed to get the process started.
• Participant #3 stated that a programs search is much needed and that the study abroad page should be more basic. Also stated that the purpose of the site is a research tool to find what program fits you best.
• Participant #2 stated that they like how the search is integrated and that the site should be low level and broad which it is. The website should present the basic way to start. Site should be broad but low level and this site does that.

How often do you visit this site?
00:24:52
• Two out of four participants had not visited the site before today.
• Participant #2 stated that they work in the Study Abroad office and visit the site at least 5 times a week. Outside of work they only visit the site when they need to. The site has no recreational value.
• Participant #3 stated that they also work in the office but use the website outside of work on a regular basis.

Do you most often visit this site from a desktop, smartphone or tablet?
00:27:00
• All participants stated that they either visit the site from a laptop or desktop.

Is this an effective home page?
00:27:12
• Participant #3 said that the tabs across the top cause people to regularly get confused because they pertain to the Graduate and International website. Once you realize that, using the side navigation is pretty easy to navigate.
• All participants agree that the top navigation is confusing.
• Participant #4 suggested moving the top navigation items into a tab on the side navigation.
• Participant #3 stated that a link to Hogs Abroad would be good. The terminology is confusing and a link to your study abroad account and application.
• All participants generally like the look of the home page.
• Participant #1 said the site looks nice and organized.
• All participants like the slideshow. All agreed that no one will look through all of the slides but they look nice. Agree that three are good on the home page but a single image on interior pages.

What are some positive experiences of this website and what made these experiences positive?
00:30:15
• Participant #1 said that the site looks nice and easy to use and likes the pictures.
• Participant #2 likes the images but not much text over the images. Likes images of headings.
• Participant #3 suggested a gallery tab for a photo contest that study abroad does every year. More impactful than reading about it.
• Participant #4 thinks seeing all of the opportunities are is more impactful than reading.
• All participants agree that an interactive map to images of different study abroad locations that are clickable to more information would be nice. Perhaps they would change color with mouse over. Make interior page not home page. Link in left navigation maybe. All agree that the images would attract a wider range of students. The gallery would attract them to what they could do.
• Participant #3 suggested continent based and drill down from there.
• Participant #2 suggested thumbnails of images that expand on hover over.

What content would bring you back to this website?
00:35:39
• Participant #3 said photos would bring them back to the website. Resources of what to do when you get back.
• Participant #2 suggested professional tips on how to talk about your experience for job purposes and how to list it on your resume. Also info on how to readjust. Participant #1 and #3 agrees.
• Participant #3 agreed and suggested a single sentence or fun fact about it or a participant highlight of the week that is clickable to more info. All agree
Participant #3 felt that professional development opportunities, ways to get involved and information on how to readjust after studying abroad would be helpful. Participant #2 agreed.

Participant #4 suggested key points of the pros of studying abroad with excerpts (not full stories) from former participants with options to click to full story. All participants agreed.

What suggestions do you have to improve this website?
00:39:42
- Participant #1 likes the website because it looks like the University of Arkansas website.
- Participant #2 stated that it is hard to distinguish the site from the graduate/international site.
- Participants #3 and #4 both stated that they like the site but that the navigation could be more specific and that TerraDotta was an issue.

Would you be interested in social media integration on the homepage?
00:41:49
- Participant #1 suggested tagging photos on social media to the website.
- Participant #3 stated that there is an integration of blogs under Getting Started with twitter and Facebook but people may not know. Also stated that it is not important for the main part of the site. Doesn’t need to be the first thing you see on the site. People see that on their own.

Are there any actions you feel should be on the home page that aren’t there now?
00:43:47
- Participant #3 suggested linking to Hogs Abroad with different name. Some students don’t know what Hogs Abroad is.
- Participant #2 is content with the homepage. Once you know to look to the left it is intuitive with one click.

Would a video be helpful for this website?
00:45:36
- Participant #2 thinks photos are fine.
- Participant #3 suggested a video of travel tips. Videos are good if you find the right place to put them. Participant #1 agrees.
• Participant #2 stated that a video is good as long as it is not cheesy and a good production quality.
• Participant #4 suggested fast music video to hype people up like Red Bull. All participants agree.
• Participant #1 thinks a video of what you can do would be helpful.
• Participant #3 suggested action, students jumping off a cliff in Greece.

What is the best way to do a video?

00:47:37

• Participant #4 stated that GoPro snapshots of trips that students go on would be good. Participant #2 agreed.
• Participant #2 suggested having a contest for clips. Also suggested that the video not be on auto play and don’t lead the website with the video but have it be on the homepage in some form. All participants agree.
• All participants agreed that it should have good, catchy hipster music.
• Participant #3 suggested having the video be an item in the image gallery that you click to.
• Some other suggestions included just experience, exciting glimpse, and wanderlust.
• All participants agree that the video should be more conversational with logo and web address at the end for more information.
Handout One

Demographics

Study-abroad.uark.edu/ Focus Group

Participant Demographics

Participant number: ___
Age: _________________
Gender: _____________

Participant type
a) Student
b) Staff
c) Faculty
d) Other ___________

Familiarity/Involvement with study abroad:
a) Not familiar/involved
b) Slightly familiar/involved
c) Familiar/involved
d) Very familiar/involved

How comfortable are you at using the internet:
a) Very comfortable
b) Moderately comfortable
c) Not comfortable
Participant One
Age: 21
Gender: Male
Participant type: Student
Familiarity/Involvement with Study Abroad: Not familiar/involved
How comfortable are you at using the internet: Very comfortable

Participant Two
Age: 21
Gender: Male
Participant type: Student
Familiarity/Involvement with Sustainability: Very familiar/involved
How comfortable are you at using the internet: Very comfortable

Participant Three
Age: 22
Gender: Female
Participant type: Student
Familiarity/Involvement with Sustainability: Very familiar/involved
How comfortable are you at using the internet: Very comfortable

Participant Four
Age: 19
Gender: Male
Participant type: Student
Familiarity/Involvement with Sustainability: Not familiar/involved
How comfortable are you at using the internet: Moderately comfortable
Research Methods

Research Goal:

To improve website usability for students.

Research Design:

Laura Moix recruited the participants for this focus group. The focus group was about one and a half hours in length. This focus group had four participants.

How the Information Will Be Used:

The research will be used for the targeted audience to improve usability on University of Arkansas websites. This includes students, faculty, staff, the Fayetteville community and legislative members. Reports from the findings will be sent to departments, webmasters and be made available on the digital publication WebFirst.

How This Project Fits Into Our Department:

As a content strategist, one main focus of this job is to use qualitative and quantitative data to improve the usability of the University of Arkansas’ websites. Currently, this is accomplished primarily through Google Analytics and the Google Search Console. Focus groups are another piece to the usability puzzle that will create a better user experience. Focus groups allow digital design and development to interact directly and observe students to see how they use University of Arkansas websites and what they would like to see improved. From this information, changes can be implemented after cross-referencing the data from the focus groups with our existing sources of data.

Why This Method Was Chosen:

The Digital Design and Development team uses Google Analytics, the Google Search Console and the Google Search Application that provide quantitative analysis. So, the Digital Design and Development understands the “what?” question through the data already obtained, but the focus groups will explain the “why?” question. For instance, if a specific page has a high bounce rate, a focus group will essentially act as a real-time heatmap that will provide answers as to why users choose to leave a page or continue on to other internal pages.
Focus Group Agenda:

Thank you all for agreeing to participate in this focus group for the graduate school.

My name is Chad Woodard and I am the Content Strategist for University Relations.

Kelly Bostick will assist me today.

This is a focus group designed to improve the usability of the graduate school. Please feel free to give your honest opinion throughout the course of this focus group as it pertains to the graduate school website.

Guidelines

- There are no right or wrong answers. We value everyone’s opinion as it pertains to handbook.uark.edu.
- We hope to have many opinions throughout this focus group, so speak up if you agree or disagree.
- We would like everyone to participate. You could be called on if you have not spoken often.
- We will be video recording this focus group. We will not call you by your name and you will remain anonymous in our report.

Action Item Questions: 45 Minutes

Navigate to the graduate school website. How did you choose to navigate to the website? Was the website easy or difficult to locate? When you applied to the graduate school how did you find the website?

Find the fall 2016 thesis/dissertation submission deadline. How did you navigate to the deadline? Was this easy or difficult to locate? What made it easy or difficult to locate?

Find the graduate school application deadline for the spring semester. Was finding this information difficult? If so, how could this task be made easier?

Find the master’s student thesis title form. Were you able to find this information? Was the terminology confusing? If so, what would you call this?
Ranking all three action items, with one being the most important and three being the least important, how would you rank the importance of these items?

General Questions: 45 Minutes

1. What is your impression of this website?
2. After viewing the content, what, to you, is the purpose of this website?
3. Does this purpose satisfy your needs or expectations?
4. How often do you visit this website?
5. Do you most often visit this site from a desktop, smartphone or tablet?
6. What are some reasons you visit this website?
7. Does the content match your reasons for visiting this website? If not, what content do you expect to find?
8. Are you able to easily find information you are looking for? If not, is there too much, too little or missing information?
9. What are some positive experiences of this website and what made these experiences positive?
10. Was there anything about this website you found confusing?
11. Is this website easy or difficult to navigate and what makes it easy or difficult to navigate?
12. What suggestions do you have to improve this website?
13. What content would bring you back to this website?
14. Would you be interested in a social media feed of graduate school content on the homepage?
15. Is there anything we have not discussed pertaining to this website that you think should be addressed?

Strategy for Analysis

After the focus group, the responses will be gathered and transcribed from an audio and video capture. From here, comments from the participants, as well as nonverbal communication, will be tracked to reveal common themes about the experience of the particular website in the focus group. The data, once transcribed and grouped by theme and trend, will be cross-referenced with Google Analytics to find common themes. A written report will then be created after the common themes from all of the resources are compiled. The written reports will provide recommendations for change based on the findings from the focus groups and the other data tools. The recommendations will be sent to the departments and webmasters to implement the changes. The results of this analysis will also be made available on the digital publication WebFirst.
Specifications for Time and Location

The focus group took place at 9:30 a.m., October 14, in room A354 in the Arkansas Union. The room consisted of computers for the participants and the ability to project the website onto a larger screen.

Who Fulfilled the Leadership Roles of the Focus Group?

Laura Moix gathered the participants for this focus group. Chad Woodard led the focus group and interviewed the participants. Kelly Bostick took notes of nonverbal communication of the participants during the focus groups. Kelly Bostick transcribed the responses from the participants. Chad Woodard and Kelly Bostick grouped the information into common themes and trends for the written report as well as published a report of the findings on WebFirst.
Appendix A

Google Analytics

The analytics clearly indicate that the scholarships page is extremely important to the audience for this website. Creating an easier portal to this page will improve the usability for this website.