Interviews

Brief: Travel booking problems

- The Acme organization is getting complaints about their internal travel booking system. Users dislike the system because according to them it is slow and makes no sense.

- The help desk at Acme has also noticed the problem. Roughly 25% of all the help desk calls are about some confusion with the booking system.

- Your goal: conduct some interviews to find out what is wrong
  - How many interviews
  - Who needs to be interviewed
  - What type of interview
  - What questions would you ask?
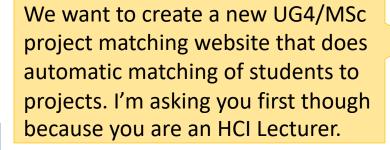
Interview structures

- **Unstructured** interviews are not planned in advance. The interviewer might ask an initial planned question and then follow-on questions
  - Rich data
  - No possible to replicate
- **Structured** interviews are tightly scripted, similar to a questionnaire.
  - Comparable data between interviews
  - Very possible to replicate
- **Semi-structured** interviews have a script of topics/questions that need to be covered, but the format is more open to exploration
  - Somewhat comparable between interviews
  - Possible to replicate, but not exactly

Unstructured interview

- When to use it
  - Unstructured interviews are best when you have little to no understanding of the topic being discussed.
  - Useful when talking with a client about the project
- Pros
  - High flexibility, you follow up on anything you feel is relevant
  - The participant gets to do the most talking
- Cons
  - No planning means that your odds of missing important things are high
  - Challenging to identify what exactly to follow up on in real time
  - Resulting data is unstructured and qualitative. More challenging to analyze

Unstructured interview with client

- Example from yesterday, involved no planning.

C: We want to create a new UG4/MSc project matching website that does automatic matching of students to projects. I'm asking you first though because you are an HCI Lecturer.

K: Why do you want to replace it?

C: Our student numbers are going up, so it is no longer sustainable to do project matching by hand. So we need to automate the matching.

K: So right now you take in emails from students and staff and do project matching using what?

C: A complex spreadsheet and text file system I setup. But it took me a long time this year and we will have more students next year.

K: What about the matching takes you the most time or is the most annoying?

C: Some projects are very popular, but only one student will get it. We tell students to select some projects which are not overly popular, but quite a few students select only popular projects, which makes it hard to give them projects that they want. Hm, should we have a "popular project" icon based on last year?
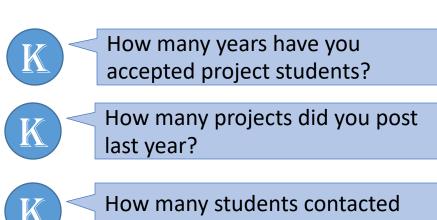
Structured interview

- When to use it
  - When you know your topic very well and can predict common opinions
  - When you want structured data
  - Many people will be interviewed, possibly by several interviewers
- Pros
  - Strong script that is well defined. Very clear what you will ask the participant
  - Easy to replicate between participants and interviewees
  - Resulting data is very structured and easy to analyze
- Cons
  - Inflexible. No way to follow up with a participant.
  - Difficult to identify if you have the correct questions/answers

Structured interview with supervisors

- Participants:
  - The supervisors
  - Interviewers could be researchers or trained undergraduates
- Planned questions:
  - How many years have you accepted project students?
  - How many projects did you post last year?
  - How many students contacted you about projects last year?
  - Did you get more or less emails from students interested in your projects this year than last year?
  - On a scale from 1-5 where 1 is very important and 5 is not important. How important is it for you to meet with each student individually?

K: How many years have you accepted project students?

S: 5 years.

K: How many projects did you post last year?

S: 2. One hard and one easy one.

K: How many students contacted you about projects last year?

S: 20-30, I think? I don't really remember.

K: Did you get more or less emails from students interested in your projects this year than last year?

S: There were a lot more students in the program this year. I think everyone got piles of email.

K: Did you get more email?

S: Yes.

K: On a scale from 1-5 where 1 is very important and 5 is not important. How important is it for you to meet with each student individually?

S: 2, important, but group meetings can work if needed.

Semi-structured interview

- When to use it
  - When you know your well enough to predict key areas, but not well enough to know what people are likely to say.
- Pros
  - Loose script that makes sure you cover key topics
  - Possible to somewhat replicate between participants and interviewees
  - Resulting data is structured by topic
- Cons
  - Interview is more topic-constrained than unstructured, may miss key ideas because they are not in the script
  - Follow-up possible, but more time limited

Semi-structured interview with supervisors

- Participants:
  - The supervisors
  - Interviewers need to be researchers
- Planned questions:
  - How many years have you accepted project students?
  - How many projects did you post last year?
  - Tell me about setting up meetings for projects last year.
  - After meeting with all the students you had to submit your rankings. How did you come up with rankings?
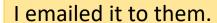 - What happened after the projects were matched?

K: How many years have you accepted project students?

S: 5 years.

K: How many projects did you post last year?

S: 2. One hard and one easy one.

K: Tell me about setting up meetings for projects last year.

S: Well, they send me an email similar to: "I'm interested in your project" but not which project. I send them an email with a Doodle poll where they can sigh up for a slot. They come, by then I've forgotten which project they are interested in, but they typically tell me. I ask them to solve problems on the white board. Then I make notes in a text file with all the student names id numbers with notes about each student.

K: After meeting with all the students you had to submit your rankings. How did you come up with rankings?

S: When entering notes I was keeping track of the students I most wanted to work with. So I took that list and just turned it in to the coordinator roughly ranked by how much I wanted to work with each student.

K: How did you turn it in?

S: I emailed it to them.

Conducting an interview

- Overview
- Notification and consent
- Simple questions to start
- Main interview
- Thank the participant

Conducting an interview

- Overview
  - Explain what the research is about
  - what the purpose of the interview is
  - That this is not an evaluation of the participant, you are here to learn from them
- Notification and consent
- Simple questions to start
- Main interview
- Thank the participant

Conducting an interview

- Overview
- Notification and consent
  - Clearly state what kinds of data you will be collecting (audio, video, notes)
  - Show them any recording equipment
  - Explain how that information will be used and if it might appear publicly
  - Obtain clear consent from the participant written or verbal
- Simple questions to start
- Main interview
- Thank the participant

Conducting an interview

- Overview
- Notification and consent
- Simple questions to start
  - Start with simple questions that are easy to answer, this puts the participant at ease and gets them used to the interview format
  - "What is your name?", "How long have you worked here", "when did you first start using the X system?"
- Main interview
- Thank the participant

Conducting an interview

- Overview
- Notification and consent
- Simple questions to start
- Main interview
  - Most of the time will be spent here
  - Focus on them, not you
  - Avoid leading questions
- Thank the participant

Conducting an interview

- Overview
- Notification and consent
- Simple questions to start
- Main interview
- Thank the participant
  - Interviews typically end with "do you have any additional questions or comments for me?"
  - When finished thank the participant for their time and clearly turn off any recording equipment.