HCI Week 2: Interviews

Nicole Meng-Schneider and Dr Tara Capel

Interviews

- A participant has a discussion on a topic directed by a researcher

- **When to use:**

  - During initial discovery (before you have a product to test) to uncover people's experiences, problems, behaviour and opinions

  - To test concepts and early ideas for possible solutions

  - As a follow-up to usability tests, when it's important to have users articulate their decisions and experiences

  - After a product has launched, to understand evolving user needs and expectations

- **Why not to use:**

  - If you need more insight into context

https://www.userinterviews.com/ux-research-field-guide-chapter/user-interviews

Unstructured Interviews

- **When to use:**
  - 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(s) 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 analyse

Structured Interviews

- **When to use:**
  - 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 interviewers
  - Resulting data is very structured and easy to analyse

- **Cons:**
  - Inflexible - no way to follow up with a participant
  - Difficult to identify if you have the correct questions/answers

Semi-Structured Interviews

- **When to use:**
  - When you know the topic area 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 interviewers
  - 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

Activity

1. **Interview other students for CW1**
   a. Get into groups of 3
   b. Assign roles (Interviewer, Participant, Notetaker)
   c. Practice 10 minutes each: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interview. We will show the questions on the screen and time it.
   d. After 10 minutes, swap roles.
2. Check-in: Share your experience. What did you find unexpected or difficult? Which method did you find easier?
3. In your groups, discuss your findings and write memos.

Roles

Interviewer

This person is in charge of running the interview during their 10 minute time slot. They should follow the script associated with their type of interview. Interviewers should focus on listening to the participant and asking questions, they do not need to make notes.
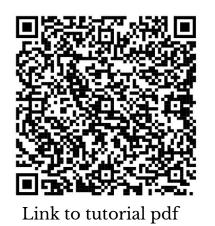
Recorder / Notetaker

This person is in charge of observing the interview and taking notes. They should not talk during the interview. Instead their focus is on recording the information they are observing. For a structured interview, this is fairly easy. For an unstructured and semi-structured interview, the recorder has a bit more work as they must record what both the interviewer and the participant are discussing.

Participant

This is the easiest role. The participant answers the questions posed as best they are able. There are no wrong answers and "I don't know" is a perfectly reasonable answer.

Script – Unstructured Interview

Hello, my name is [your name] and today I will be interviewing you about your experience with using the Learn education software at the University of Edinburgh.

[recorder's name] is also with us today and will be taking notes. We may use some of the information you give us in our HCI coursework, but we will not use your name or any other identifying information. Please remember that our goal today is to better understand how you use Learn.

There are no wrong answers.

I am going to start with an easy question to get you started thinking about how you use course web pages and Learn.

Please think about a recent time when you had to lookup information about how a course is assessed. For example, seeing if a course has an exam, or finding the details about a coursework. Please tell me about the experience. Such as what you were looking for, if you found it, and if anything worked particularly well or badly.

Script – Semi-structured Interview

Hello, my name is [your name] and today I will be interviewing you about your experience with using the Learn education software at the University of Edinburgh.

[recorder's name] is also with us today and will be taking notes. We may use some of the information you give us in our HCI coursework, but we will not use your name or any other identifying information. Please remember that our goal today is to better understand how you use Learn.

1. This year Informatics is running most of its courses on Learn. How many of your courses put the majority of their material onto Learn, as opposed to other platforms like a website or Teams?

2. When you were deciding on what courses to take this year, in what ways did you use Learn and the various course websites to help you decide between different courses?

3. Think back to a recent time when you have looked for information on Learn about a course. This could be any type of information, such as when coursework is due, what readings you need to read, or how to attend lecture. What information were you looking for and how challenging or easy was it to find?

4. Think about one of your courses that has the most easy-to-use setup on Learn, on a webpage, or on some other platform. You can also pick a past course if it is a better example.

   • What makes that class feel easy-to-use?

   • What are some of the tasks or activities you have used this course's website to do?

   • What is one thing about the way the course is setup that you wish other instructors would do?

5. Now think about a course who's materials are more challenging for you to use or navigate.

   • What makes that class feel harder-to-use?

   • Can you give an example of a task or activity you had trouble doing on that course's page.

6. If you could give course instructors guidance about how to make their Learn courses more usable for students, what guidance would you give them? Or what would you like to see them do?

7. As part of the HCI course, we will be re-designing a Learn course to make it more usable. What would you most like to see us change or improve?

Script – Structured Interview

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[recorder's name] is also with us today and will be taking notes. We may use some of the information you give us in our HCI coursework, but we will not use your name or any other identifying information. Please remember that our goal today is to better understand how you use Learn.

1. Could you please tell me how many courses you are taking this semester and how many of them have the majority of their materials on Learn.

2. Overall, on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is very easy to use, and 5 is very challenging to use, how usable do you find Learn?

3. List the top three features that you wish Learn had.

4. On a scale of 1-3 where 1 is easy to do and 3 is hard to do, how challenging do you find each of the following tasks to do using Learn? If you have never tried this task before on Learn, just say that you have not tried it.

(a) Find a course on Learn that you are not currently taking and look at its public pages.

(b) Open a course you are currently taking in Learn.

(c) Identify what courses currently have announcements that you have not yet read.

(d) Know if you are visiting a Learn page as a guest where you are not logged in, as opposed to as a registered student.

(e) Identify which courses have coursework due soon.

5. I am going to list several types of course-related activities. For each activity can you tell me if you would prefer to be able to complete this activity without leaving Learn, or if you would prefer this activity to happen on another page or service.

(a) View the course schedule. That is, information about the different activities that occur and what weeks they will happen on.

(b) View coursework information, such as instructions and any necessary files

(c) Submit coursework

(d) View lecture recording videos

(e) View lecture slides

(f) View marks from coursework

(g) View feedback from coursework

(h) Participate in class discussions

(i) Communicate with your coursework group by chatting or sharing files

(j) Contribute to a document that is being written collaboratively by the whole class

(k) Participate in a live lecture

(l) View lists of assigned readings along with when they should be read

(m) Read assigned readings

(n) Give anonymous feedback to the course Lecturers

6. Name one activity that you do on Learn that I have not listed.

7. I am going to list several types of devices. For each one, could you please tell me if you use that device to interact with Learn content on a: daily basis, weekly basis, monthly basis, very rarely, or not at all?

• Laptop computer

• Desktop computer

• Smartphone

• Tablet (e.g. iPad)

8. Briefly describe a course that in your opinion is very well organized on Learn.

9. Briefly describe a course delivered on Learn where you sometimes have difficulty finding content you need.

Link to tutorial pdf

Let's discuss your interviews

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3. In your groups, discuss your findings and write memos.
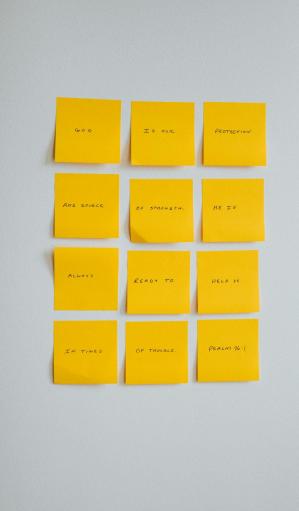
Time for Memos

Photo by Kelly Sikkema on Unsplash

Photo by Nathan Dumlao on Unsplash

Photo by Marcos Paulo Prado on Unsplash

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2. Check-in: Share your experience. What did you find unexpected or difficult? Which method did you find easier?
3. **Come back into groups and think together. Discuss your findings, write memos**

Any questions?

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Part of slidedeck inspired by Dr Kami Vaniea