



Case Study

University of Westminster – Strategic Workshop February 2008

The brief

The University of Westminster offers a variety of undergraduate, postgraduate, research and professional programmes and short courses to a wide variety of users. The University was aware that the site did not enable users to achieve their goals easily, and wished to redevelop the site in a user-centred fashion to make it more effective.

As with most other universities, there are a number of faculty ‘silos’ within the organisation making the process of redeveloping the site difficult because of the difficulty of making decisions. In order to try and address these issues, the University wished to develop a shared understanding amongst key internal stakeholders about the issues that affected the usability of the site and the best process for redeveloping the site.

How we responded to the brief

We recommended a strategic workshop, informed by usability. The objectives were:

- To gain a shared understanding of the usability and information architecture issues on the website
- To identify target users and user goals
- To clarify the University of Westminster’s aims for the site
- To discuss and agree a process for the review and future development of the website (one that ensures it will be user focused, but which can be achieved quickly and economically)

What we did

Prior to the workshop we conducted usability testing with 5 different users representing a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate students in different subject areas. We then produced an



edited highlight video of the usability testing, which was shown at the workshop to inform the discussion. Whilst watching the user evidence video at the start of the workshop, the participants were ‘active’ observers, noting issues on post-its as they occurred during the video, which were then mapped, to form the basis of the subsequent discussion.

This discussion was facilitated by a WUP consultant to agree key issues with the site. The participants then considered the University’s site aims, the target users and the user goals the site was to support, as well as a process for the redevelopment of the site – helped by break-out group exercises and the use of reference websites.

The outcomes

A wide variety of usability issues were identified, along with possible solutions. The participants concluded that the different ‘silos’ needed to work together in order to produce a useful and usable website. A site re-development process was agreed along with recognising that a new approach to the site content and site management was required.

“WUP’s assistance has been invaluable. Their services were delivered flexibly and to a consistently high standard. WUP helped to focus the thinking of a large and complex organisation to unite around a common framework. We wouldn’t hesitate to recommend their services to others.” – Rob Fenwick, Director of Communications and Public Affairs

Timing & costs

The user testing and analysis/reporting following the workshop took about 4 weeks to complete. The online survey was live for about 8 weeks.