

For user researchers in Government who want to meet the Digital by Default Service Standard, "User Research Fundamentals" is a 5-day immersion seminar that shows you how Government Digital Services (GDS) plan and carry out user research within Government. You'll practice interviewing and contextual research, carry out usability testing, explore the bigger picture of assisted digital and discover how to plan user research on agile projects. You'll also practice techniques for communicating your research to teams, ensuring your research is acted upon.

Duration

This is a 5-day workshop.

Overview

Field studies and usability tests are invaluable when you need to understand first-hand how users work or behave, the kinds of tasks users carry out and the variety of environments in which users operate. Real-world observation provides insights that user self reports or surveys can't provide — often because users can't explain what they are doing or because their behaviour is so practised that users can't articulate how they use a service.

But carrying out field studies and usability tests present a number of difficulties. How do you select the right users? When should you observe and when should you ask questions? How do you collect observational data and how do you analyse it to build and improve your service?

In this course, you'll discover how GDS do user research within government to meet the Digital by Default Service Standard. During each classroom session, delegates prepare the materials they will need to carry out user research on the very service their team is designing. On returning to the workshop, delegates get the opportunity to share their results.

Who is the course for?

This course is for you if you are new to the role of user research in Government.

How will I benefit?

After attending this course, you will be able to:

Discover why contextual research is critical to developing government services.

Describe the user groups for your service.

Create a lightweight persona to identify the key assumptions you need to test.

Practice field study interviewing.

Build a research plan to take back to your workplace and execute.

Recognise good and poor questions to ask in user interviews.

Practice field study interviewing.

Use affinity diagramming to interpret the data from a field visit and create a user journey map.

Recognise different methods of usability testing, such as lab-based, pop-up, remote moderated and remote unmoderated.

Learn how to write a test plan to engage the development team in user research.

Develop test tasks that are relevant to your service.

Turn key tasks into usability testing scenarios.

Use your test data to create insights and design ideas that can move your project forward.

Experience what's involved in moderating usability tests, making observations and analysing the data.

Practice using a Kanban to plan user research within an agile framework.

What will I learn?

Days 1 & 2: Field research

Understanding user needs and designing services to support them

Syndicate activity: Defining usability.

The three elements of the context of use.

Researching all the people who need to use your service

Why carry out contextual research?

Why you need to discover (not just validate) user needs.

Syndicate Activity: Understanding the big picture.

The first (and second) rule of finding out what people want.

The 6 phases of field research.

Set the project focus

How to evaluate existing research.

Defining your research problem.

Decide who to visit

Introduction to theoretical sampling.

Creating a sketch persona to highlight assumptions.

Getting access to assisted digital users.

The four questions to test a user need.

Schedule the visits

How many users should you involve?

Briefing the recruitment agency.

How to ensure each team member gets their “exposure hours”.

Carry out the field visits

How to obtain consent and manage personal data according to GDPR.

The four phases of a field visit.

When to use open and closed questions.

How a topic map will help you elicit stories.

The role of investigator and note taker.

Syndicate activity: Run a practice interview.

Artefact analysis and workflow analysis.

Analyse the data

What is an “observation”?

The 5 steps in analysing qualitative data.

Introduction to affinity diagramming.

Lean approaches to user research

Pop-up user research.

Jobs to be done (JTBD).

Diary studies.

Remote phone interviewing.

User workshops.

Analyse the data

What is an “observation”?

The 4 steps in analysing qualitative data.

Data extraction: what makes a great affinity note?

Introduction to affinity diagramming.

The art of the insight statement.

Share the results

Empathy maps, scenarios and storyboards.
The user journey map, from simple to complex.
Syndicate Activity: Create a user journey map.
The experience mapping technique and when to use it.
Syndicate Activity: Create a user experience map.

The GDS way of working

GDS resources for user researchers.

Days 3 & 4: Usability testing

Introduction to usability testing

Formative versus summative testing.
The landscape of usability testing methods.

Forming a test strategy

The Usability Test Plan Dashboard.
Syndicate activity: Turn these half-formed questions from the team into designs for a usability test.
Syndicate activity: Create a test plan dashboard.
The Landauer-Nielsen formula: Why 5 participants are (usually) enough.

Writing Test Tasks

Turning tasks into usability test scenarios.
A taxonomy of test tasks.
The 5 questions to ask of a usability test scenario.
Syndicate activity: What's wrong with these usability test scenarios?
Syndicate activity: Create test scenarios for a usability test.

How to moderate a "thinking aloud" usability test

The 3 hats you wear as a usability test moderator.
Syndicate activity: Observe videos of moderators welcoming a test participant.
Syndicate activity: Generate solutions to challenging test situations
The 4 mistakes that test moderators make when using the thinking aloud protocol.

The Usability Test Moderator's Flowchart.

The 3 components of usability and how to measure each one.

Practical activity: Run a usability test.

Finding and fixing usability problems

Affinity diagramming as an analysis tool.
Sharing your results with screenshot forensics.
Identifying the smallest, simplest change to keep people from having the problem you observed.

Day 5: Planning and executing a program of user research

Syndicate activity: Planning user research activities (Phase 1)
Syndicate activity: Using the Kanban to prioritise.
Syndicate activity: Report back on research activity.
Syndicate activity: Planning user research activities (Phase 2)
Syndicate activity: Report back on research activity.
Syndicate activity: Tricky user research scenarios.

Wrap up

Your homework options.
Opportunity for final questions.

What is the workshop format?

A fast-moving, interactive, but structured training session covering the topics outlined in the programme. Activities and case studies will enable you to apply the concepts to check your understanding. You will be encouraged to ask questions and to contribute to the seminar.

Who is the workshop leader?

David Travis is the Managing Director of Userfocus, an independent consultancy specialising in usability training and consultancy. David holds a BSc (Hons) degree and a PhD in Psychology. David specialises in the design and evaluation of hardware and software systems aimed at non-technical users and he has logged over four hundred hours in usability labs. He recently spent 12 months coaching business analysts in HMRC to transition to a user research role and has worked closely with user researchers in GDS to create this course.

What do delegates say about this seminar?

“Honestly it was the most useful course I've ever done, although I now spend my spare time spotting really bad/really good user design!” – Tess Dekkers, Head of Market and User Research, UK Hydrographic Office.

“The course was very comprehensive and exceptionally well run.” — Jacqueline Buckley, Environment Agency.

“I was concerned I already had a good grasp of user research and it would duplicate previous training or tell me what I already knew. Whilst we did touch on things I already knew, I have learnt far more than I thought I would: in particular, techniques I didn't know and how to do things 'right'.” — Phoebe Crossland, Department for Transport.

“Super helpful and digestible. Loved that days were clearly split into branches of user research.” — Corey Drewry, Department for Transport.

“The specific parts of the course I found most useful were the case study on the final day where we worked on a specific scenario and the usability testing where we highlighted and prioritised user insights.” — Rosie Clayton, GDS.

“The Usability Test Plan Dashboard is an excellent way to plan a usability test and to involve the team in planning usability tests.” — Associate User Researcher, Ministry of Justice.

“I was concerned that this course would be too high level/theoretical and not useful given I've already learnt a lot on the job. But it wasn't at all! Very useful detail, good practical exercises and examples and lots I can implement.” — Naomi Grayburn, HMRC.