

Conducting Needs Assessment: ExamMD Task List

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Executive Summary

Working with graduate student Lisa Royse on Exam Management Depot (ExamMD), I listened to and transcribed ten hours of interviews, attending several of them in person so that I could practice taking notes and observe. Later, I went over audio files of the interviews to create an official transcript and compare this to my interview notes to see what I missed. I incorporated data from those interviews into a task list for our application.

Description

Purpose

The Task List will drive our requirements document for ExamMD, which Lisa and I will present to the programming team in Spring 2014.

Context

There are eight block directors for the medical school at the University of Missouri. Each currently stores previous exam questions for his block in a series of Word, Excel, and/or Access files that serve as a question bank for future exams. Organizing and updating these files from year to year takes an enormous amount of time, especially as the questions end up being stored in many different formats, with student performance data and other notes attached. Even with the question banks, it can be difficult and time consuming to find questions to use when the next year's exam comes around.

Exam Management Depot (ExamMD) is a web application that will allow faculty to input exam questions into an online database and update them from year to year through a text-editor interface. Question texts will be stored in the same database that houses their performance data, making it possible to view how both the question itself and student performance has evolved over the years. Faculty will be able to sort and select questions to include. They will generate the exam PDF via the web application rather than copying and pasting data, thus saving time and eliminating a major source of error.

Role

Transcribed eight block director interviews and two instructional designer interviews; identified tasks based on interview and organized into categorical/chronological list.

Reflection

From the interviews themselves, I learned an enormous amount about the role of instructional designers in exam preparation and where we fit into the exam creation process. From creating the task list, I learned how to listen for and organize relevant information: by the end, I was able to sit in on an interview and take sufficient notes to update the task list even without an audio file. One block director requested not to be recorded and for another, the audio file stopped recording after the first minute of interview, so it was essential that I got the main points written down accurately. One thing that could use improvement is specificity of language when writing the bulleted list: by the time we got to the last couple interviews, it was unclear whether some of the statements were actually new or a repetition of something already on the list but worded

differently. As I gained experience with the subject, the language I was using to record was changing.