REPORT + SUPPORT

USER EXPERIENCE EVALUATION

2021

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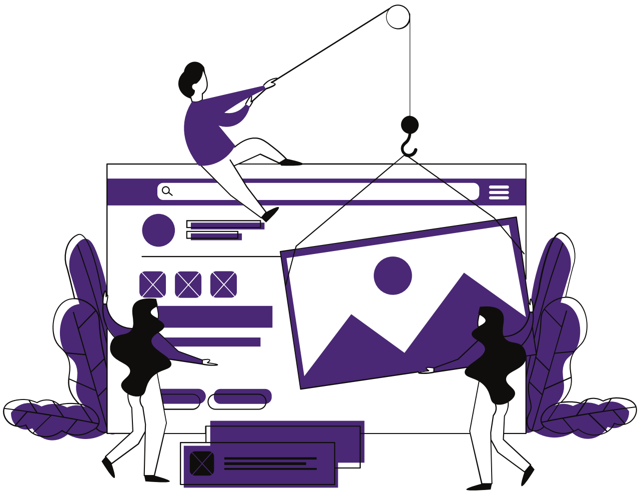
01. PROJECT OVERVIEW



GOALS

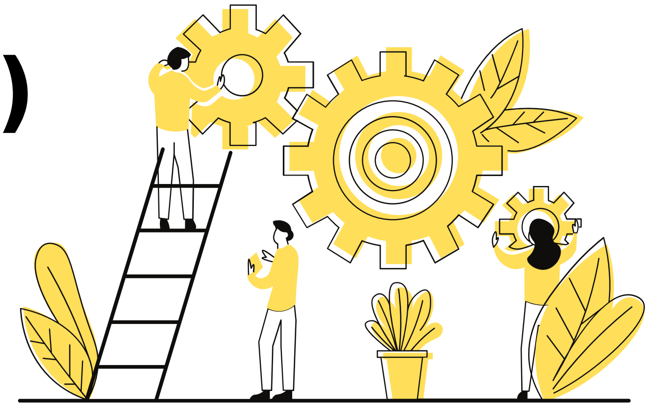
The aim of this project is to evaluate the user experience of UCL's Report & Support (R&S) platform, including the **website** used by students/staff for reporting incidents (front-end) and the **dashboard** used by administrators and responders (back-end). The evaluation will help inform any future changes for improving the user experience and solving any current issues.

SUMMARY

We recruited 12 users to participate in a think-aloud study, a card-sorting exercise and interviews. The goal was to evaluate the experience of submitting a report and looking for support on the Report + Support website (Front-end). To assess the Dashboard (Back-end), we conducted interviews with 5 users and had 18 additional users fill in a short survey.

The evaluation revealed useful insights into current issues and pain points, for which we have provided recommendations for possible solutions.

02.WEBSITE (FRONT-END)



METHODOLOGY

USER FLOW DIAGRAMS

A user flow diagram is a diagram that shows at a glance, the path the user will take through an app or website to achieve a certain goal. We created diagrams for both reporting an incident and looking for support on the R+S website. The user flows allowed us to (a) better understand potential pain points, (b) identify hypotheses for problems and (c) to inform the interview questions.

THINK ALOUD STUDY

PARTICIPANTS:
12 users: Students (4X undergraduate, 4Xpostgraduate taught, 4X postgraduate research); purposively selected for a mix of gender, ethnicity and home/international status

In a think-aloud study, participants are asked to verbalize their thoughts while completing a task. We asked users to complete two separate tasks:

Task 1: report an issue based on a given scenario (bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct, and domestic abuse).

Task 2: find relevant information and/or support for their imagined situation - without reporting the issue.

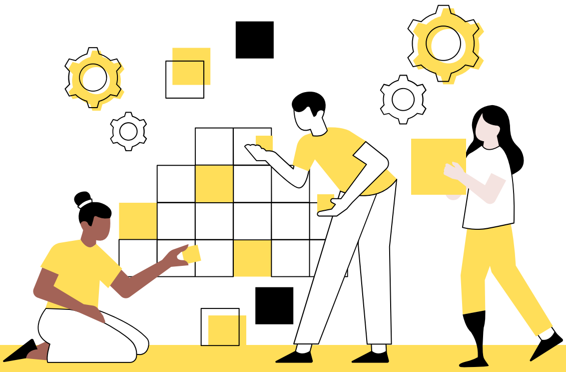
CARD SORTING

PARTICIPANTS:
12 USERS

To test the information architecture (IA)*, we used a card sorting activity. Card sorting is a well-established research technique for discovering how people understand and categorize information.

We asked users to sort all 14 articles from the support page into groups that made the most sense to them and to give those groups a name. This activity allows us to:

- identify issues with the organisation and structure of the Support page
- understand the reasons for those issues



SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Participants:
12 users: students (4X undergraduate, 4Xpostgraduate taught, 4X postgraduate research); purposively selected for a mix of gender, ethnicity and home/international status

After both the think-aloud exercise & the cart sorting activity we conducted short semi-structured interviews to:

- gain a better understanding of people's experiences and impressions of R+S
- clarify moments in the think-aloud study which might have been unclear or required further explanation
- better understand the card sorting results

*IA is the science of organising and structuring content in a logical, user-friendly manner.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT SECTION

FINDING 1

UNINFORMED DECISION MAKING

INSIGHT:

Not enough information in the report section to choose between Report Anonymously and Contact an Advisor. Participants struggled to understand the difference between the two options and noted that they chose Report Anonymously because it had "Report" in it. Additionally, people felt there was a lack of transparency regarding the follow-up process.

> *Not obvious what happens when I contact an advisor vs report anonymously.*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Explain the difference between Report Anonymously and Contact an Advisor before people have to make a choice.
- Provide a step-by-step breakdown of the process for each option. In addition, it is recommended to rename the options such that both contain the word "report" in them.
- Provide more information on the follow-up procedure to help users choose whether to report or not. Some useful information would be a timeline of the report processing procedure, possible outcomes, etc.

FINDING 2

OVERWHELMING DEMOGRAPHICS

INSIGHT:

It is not communicated to users that sharing their demographics data is for statistical reasons only. Therefore, there was some scepticism of participants as they felt uncomfortable sharing so much data about themselves. Meanwhile, they felt there is too little opportunity to share information on who the person they are reporting is.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Reassure users that data will be kept confidential and state clearly that this data is needed for statistical purposes

FINDING 3

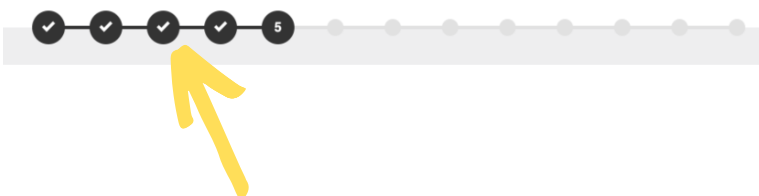
DIFFICULT NAVIGATION

INSIGHT:

Navigation between each step in the reporting process is difficult, as there is no option to jump to a specific point and modify it. As a result, users are forced to skip to a point by pressing "back" numerous times. However, this is a highly inefficient and time-consuming task that is understandably unappealing to the users.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Allow jumping between steps by making the progress ribbon interactive.



FINDING 4

CONFUSING QUESTIONS/ TERMINOLOGY

INSIGHT:

Some questions in the report form were confusing or unclear.

A.

Is the harassment you have experienced related to any of the following protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010?:

- Provide information on what is the Equality Act.
- Many participants needed definitions of "sex" vs "sexual orientation".

B.

Please provide information on the report you would like to make:

- Instead of noting what not to write in the report, it would be helpful to give information on what to write in the report

C.

Who would you prefer to be contacted by?

- Participants did not know how to choose whom to be contacted by. They would have preferred to mark more than one option or say they do not know.

D.

Is the reported party in the same area in UCL?

- There was a need for clarification on what "area" stands for.

SUPPORT SECTION

FINDING 1

OVERWHELMING TEXT STRUCTURE

INSIGHT:

Participants found the structure of the support pages to be overwhelming and difficult to navigate, making it challenging to look for relevant information.

> *Took a long time to get what I needed.*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Adding more flexibility to the Sites tool on the back-end would help achieve better text structure with actions like:

A.

Improve visual hierarchy by using font sizes for in-text headings. This will help site visitors distinguish between the most important and less important information.

B.

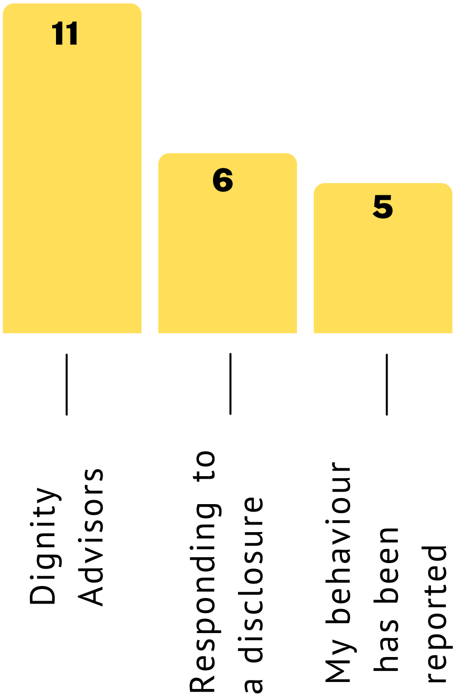
Break text with pictures or quotes. Elements such as pull quotes or images make reading texts easier.

C.

Consider narrowing the text. If a line of text is too long, the reader's eyes will have difficulty focusing on the text. This is because the line length makes it difficult to gauge where the line starts and ends. Nevertheless, keep in mind that if a line is too short, the eye will have to travel back too often, breaking the reader's rhythm. The optimal line length is 50-75 characters per line, including spaces.

FINDING 2

CONFUSING PAGE TITLES



INSIGHT:

Participants reported the following articles in the support section to have confusing titles that did not reveal clearly what the content of the page would be:

- Dignity Advisors
- Responding to a disclosure
- My behaviour has been reported

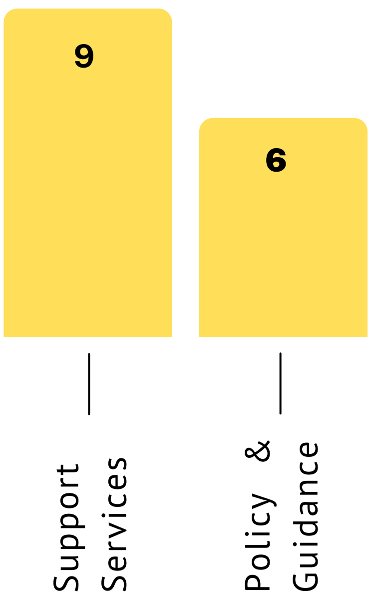
*The chart on the left shows how many of the 12 participants found each of the three pages confusing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended to rename those pages and/or the sections they are part of for more clarity.

FINDING 3

MOST ESSENTIAL PAGES



INSIGHT:

The users identified the articles related to Support Services and Policy and Guidance as the most essential and valuable.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Emphasise these pages when coming up with the new categories for the site.

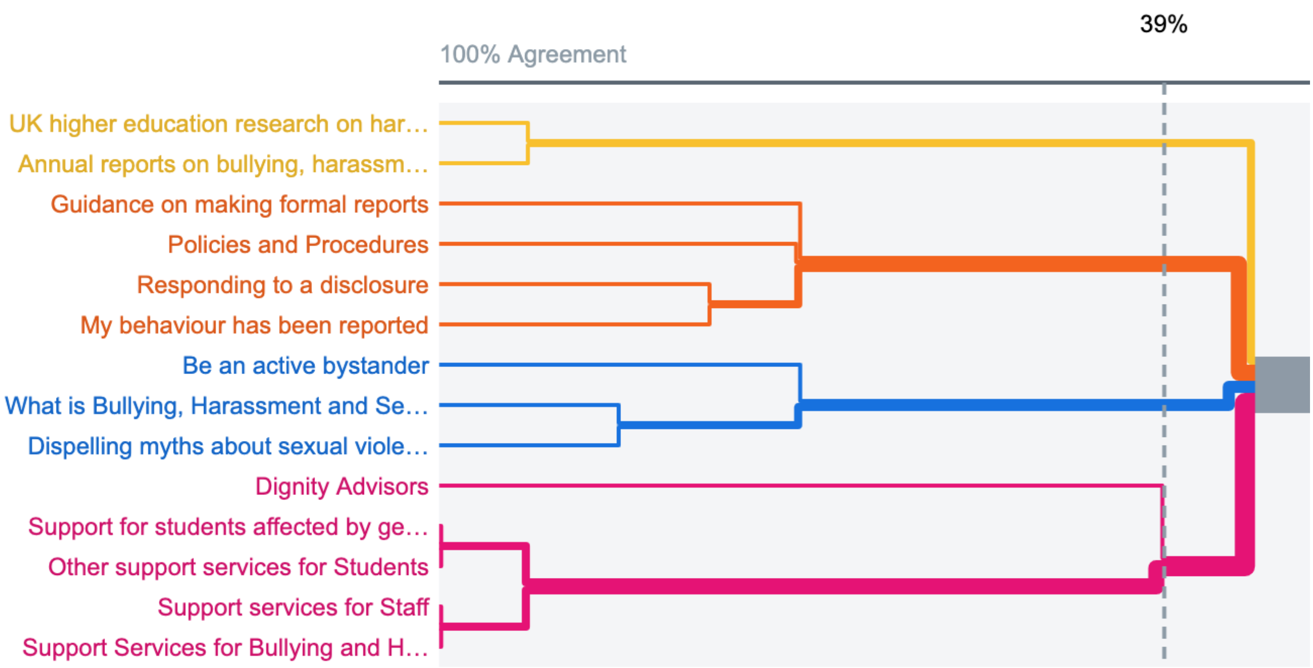
FINDING 4

CARD SORTING ACTIVITY RESULTS

Link to the results:
https://tinyurl.com/77yphf2f

HOW TO READ THE DENDROGRAM (PICTURE BELOW):

Dendrograms show what proportion of the participants agreed with particular card groupings.
Support Section articles are listed down the left-hand side of the dendrogram, while the axis along the top measures the level of agreement across participants. Clusters closer to the left indicate that more participants agreed with this grouping.



INSIGHT:

The following four groups emerged:

GROUP 1.

Articles: UK higher education research on harmful behaviours students experience + Annual reports on bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct

Percentage agreement: 92%

Common group names given by participants: Data / Data & Research / Definition and Evidence

GROUP 2.

Articles: Guidance on making formal reports + Policies and Procedures + Responding to a disclosure + My behaviour has been reported

Percentage agreement: 69%

Common group names given by participants: Actions /After Reporting / Complaint Procedure

GROUP 3.

Articles: Be an active bystander + What is Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct + Dispelling myths about sexual violence

Percentage agreement: 69%

Common group names given by participants: General Information / Information / Background

GROUP 4.

Articles: Support for students affected by gendered violence + Other support services for Students + Support services for Staff + Support Services for Bullying and Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, Domestic Violence, and Mental Well-Being & Mental health

Percentage agreement: 92%

Common group names given by participants: Support Services / Support / Help

*Note: Dignity Advisors was also grouped here; however, the agreement then drops to 39%. A likely explanation of why users were not consistent with grouping this article is that 11 out of all 12 participants reported this article to have a confusing title that was not informative and meaningful.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Consider these groupings when rearranging the Support page.

OTHER FINDINGS

FINDING 1

HOME PAGE

INSIGHT:

Users found the home page repetitive as it only contained the information from the other pages and did not add anything new. Some users noted that information on the process like the different ways to report, how long it will take to hear from advisors, etc. would have been a good use of this page.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Since the home page is a merge of the Report, Support, and Campaigns pages. Since the home page is currently redundant it would be a suitable space to provide information that has been proven to be missing based on our findings (eg. information on reporting processes

FINDING 2

LEAVE SITE

INSIGHT:

Users found the "Leave Site" button was not something they would instinctively use if they needed to quickly close the website. Most participants claimed they would simply close the tab because the "x" button is more intuitive and easier to spot.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The "Leave Site" button needs to be re-designed in such a way that it's easier to differentiate from another point in the menu. The use of bright and eye-catching colours such as red is recommended. The novel design should be tested, and if unsuccessful we recommend its removal.

FINDING 3

TALK TO US

INSIGHT:

Clicking on the 'Talk to us' menu point, users were immediately redirected to their email, which discouraged them from sending an inquiry. Moreover, a few participants were not redirected to their mailbox at all due to their browser settings and the lack of desktop emailing application. It was also unclear to users whom they are contacting exactly, and what query they can send.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Consider making "Talk to us" a page with an in-page contact box where users can write their email and inquiries. It is generally best to avoid user flows that lead users to leave the website as they become less likely to task switch and abandon the activity. Additionally, such a page should provide useful contact information.

03.DASHBOARD (BACK-END)

METHODOLOGY

THINK-ALOUD + INTERVIEW

PARTICIPANTS:
5 users: Staff (2X Report & Support administrators; 2X data analytics users; 1X general manager)

All 5 participants had different roles and used the dashboard for different tasks.

Users were first asked to open the dashboard and demonstrate the tasks they usually perform on it while verbalizing their thoughts as they move through the user interface.

We followed up with a semi-structured interview to understand the user experience further and elaborate on any insights made during the think-aloud exercise.

SURVEY

PARTICIPANTS:
18 user responses from backend responders (listed as advisors on Report & Support)

To gain a better understanding of the user experience we conducted a short survey with all back-end responders from human resources (HR), dignity advisors, student support and well-being, and students casework and mediator. Users were asked to rate their experience with the platform on a scale from 1-10, to share what they like and dislike about the back end and to think about ways the platform can be improved.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

USER EXPERIENCE

6.6 / 10

STRENGTHS

"Simple, clear & easy to use"

REPORTS SECTION

FINDING 1

LACK OF AUTOMATIC NOTIFICATIONS

I have not known that cases were assigned to me and they were there for some time until I was chased.

INSIGHT:
There are no automatic reminders for responders to accept or close their reports. There are also no notifications when an update is added to a report.

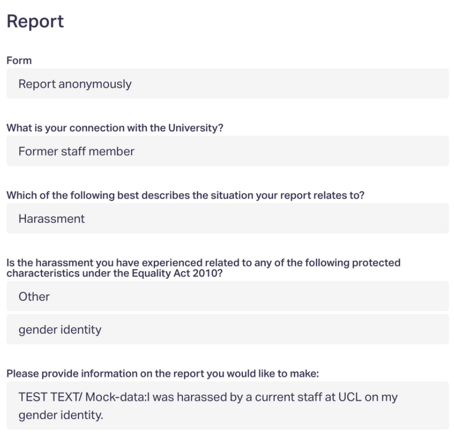
As such, there is the need for an administrator to manually send emails to remind responders to accept or close their reports. This is time-consuming for the administrator and the system breaks down if the administrator is on leave or not in the office.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add automatic notifications to remind a responder to *accept* a report (e.g. after ___ days of being assigned a report).
- Add automatic notifications to remind a responder to *close* a report (e.g. after ___ days since a report has been updated).

FINDING 2

CHALLENGING TO READ REPORTS



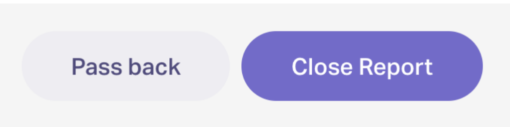
INSIGHT:
There is a lot of information in a single report which are not of equal importance to administrators and responders. It is difficult to extract the relevant important information from a report without the need for lots of scrolling.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Prioritise important information at the top of the report:
  - Summary
  - Connection with University
  - Connection of Reported Party to University
  - Faculty
  - [Contact Advisor reports]: Who would you prefer to be contacted by
  - [Contact Advisor reports]: Contact details (name, telephone number, email address, student/staff number)
- Less important information can be put at the bottom or behind a "more details" button.

FINDING 3

DIFFICULTY IN CLOSING REPORTS



INSIGHT:
There can be long periods of time between a responder reaching out to a person and them receiving an update on the situation. However, there are only two options for a report - "open" or "closed". Once a report is closed, the responder is unable to view the report or provide further updates. Some responders are also not sure what "passing back" a report means (see left figure).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add a "waiting for updates" status, and allow responders to add comments and updates.
- Provide a reference number for anonymous reports so responders can follow-up on them after they are closed.
- Add a tooltip (which appears with mouse-hover) to explain what it means to "Pass back" a report.

FINDING 4

DIFFERENT TEAMS USE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS

INSIGHT:

Responders from different teams (e.g. Dignity Advisors, HR, Student & Wellbeing) use separate case management systems and spreadsheets. As such, administrators need to keep separate spreadsheets to help them to track the assignments of reports, updates to reports and the status of the responders (e.g. time since last assignment, if they are out of office). Administrators also need to use other resources (e.g. UCL website, separate spreadsheets) to check who they should be assigning certain reports to.

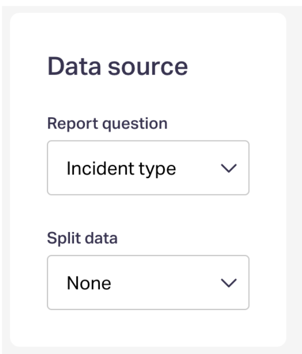
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Encourage different teams to use R&S as a centralised platform for managing cases, and provide case updates on the R&S platform.
- Add a feature that provides the administrator with more details about each responder, such as their role, the time period since their last assignment and when they are out of office.

ANALYTICS SECTION

FINDING 1

LIMITED FUNCTIONALITY



INSIGHT:

Users can only compare two categories at once (1 report question, 1 split-by). There is also no flexibility in the visualisations, and some of the default visualisations are not useful in facilitating comparisons (e.g. stacked bar chart). As such, most of the analysis work is done in Excel rather than using the Analytics tool in the dashboard.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Allow users to compare more than two categories.
- Allow users to adjust the marks and channels (e.g. position, colour) used for encoding the attributes.

FINDING 2

NO RESTRICTED ACCESS FOR DIFFERENT USERS

INSIGHT:
Some users from certain roles will find it useful to access specific parts of the analytics. (e.g. faculties having access to the analytics of their department). However, these people cannot be given permission to use the analytics tool because they are not permitted to access the whole database.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide different levels of permissions for users, so users from different roles can have a limited view of the data on the analytics tool.

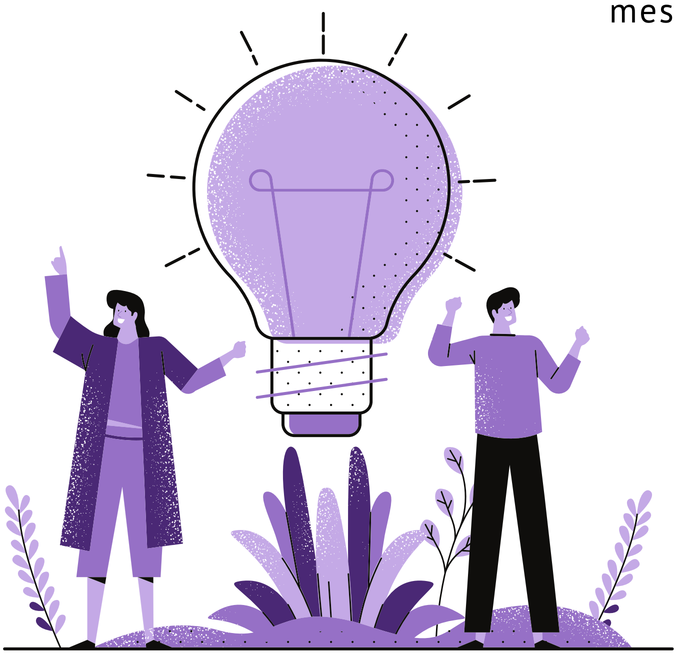
FINDING 3

MESSY DATA

INSIGHT:
Many separate reports may be linked to the same incident, so the data may not accurately reflect the number of incidents that are being reported. In addition, when a new question is added to replace an old question, the old name stays in the system so there is a need to manually match the old data to the new data.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

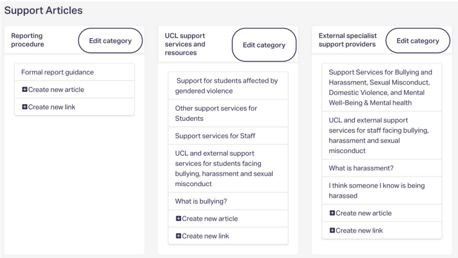
- Allow users to link multiple reports to the same incident, and to indicate which reports are made by responders on behalf of someone else.
- Allow users to easily edit/update questions without messing up the data.

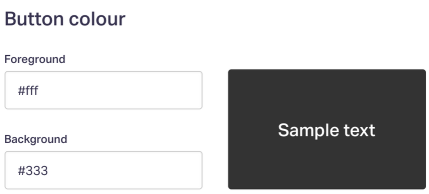


SITES SECTION

FINDING 1

LIMITATIONS OF MAIN PAGE





INSIGHT:

It is difficult to see at a glance which pages are published and which are drafts. Also, each page that is created must be put into one of two categories ("Campaign" and "Support", even though they do not always necessarily fit in them (e.g. policies & procedures). When editing colours under settings, administrators have to select their colours using the hex code (e.g. #ffffff) which may not be understandable or familiar to some users.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Unpublished drafts should be in a grey colour on the main page to differentiate them from published pages.
- Users should be able to create and name their own categories.
- A colour picker should be added to assist users in choosing colours for their web pages.

FINDING 2

LIMITATIONS IN WRITING ARTICLES

INSIGHT:

Articles tend to be messy and disorganised, and users need to scroll and search through large chunks of information to find relevant information. This is because there is no flexibility to the page layout, which results in all pages following a linear format. There is also no way to add a glossary with in-page links to allow users to go to the sections that they are interested in.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add a feature that allows pages to be structured in a non-linear layout (e.g. grid).
- Add a feature that allows in-page links to be added so users can jump to relevant sections.

04.DISCUSSION

SUMMARY

The aim of this project was to evaluate the user experience of UCL's Report & Support (R&S) platform, including the **website** used by students/staff for reporting incidents (*front-end*) and the **dashboard** used by administrators and responders (*back-end*).

WEBSITE (FRONT-END)

To evaluate the front-end, we conducted **usability tests**, **open card sorts** and **semi-structured interviews** with 12 participants.

For the **reporting procedure**, we found that users made uninformed decisions on whether to report anonymously or contact an advisor, that users were overwhelmed by demographic questions, and the reporting procedure was difficult to navigate and contained confusing terminology.

For the **support pages**, we found that users were confused by how the different articles were categorised, that many of the pages had confusing titles, and that users were ovewhelemd by the amount of text on each page.

DASHBOARD (BACK-END)

To evaluate the back-end, we conducted **usability tests** and **interviews** with 5 participants, and a **survey** with 18 participants.

For the **Reports section**, we found that there was a lack of automatic notifications, that it was challenging to read and close reports, and that responders from different teams use different case management systems apart from R&S. For the **Analytics section**, we found that the analytics had limited functionality, did not allow restricted access to different users, and often led to messy data. For the **Sites section**, we found limitations in both the management of the main page and the writing of individual articles.

LIMITATIONS

1) RESOURCE LIMITATIONS

Due to the **tight timeline** for this project (2 months), we were not able to implement our recommendations or conduct further rounds of user testing to evaluate how successful our recommendations were.

Additionally, we were only able to conduct user testing with a **limited number of participants**. Although we conducted user research for the dashboard (back-end) with some administrators, responders and analysts, we did not manage to speak to users from some roles (e.g. HR, Dignity Advisors) who are also frequent users of the dashboard. Non-user stakeholders, like departments and faculties that receive data reports could also not be included in this evaluation. We recommend that another evaluation cover them separately or together with others users in a further testing with longer timeline.

2) TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS

Since the design of both the website (front-end) and dashboard (back-end) were **constrained by the functionality of the hosting platform** (CultureShift), many of our front-end recommendations were adapted to make them technically feasible for the current platform.

Nevertheless, for problems that could not be solved using the current version of the platform, we propose recommendations for features or fixes that could be **passed on to CultureShift** to implement.

NEXT STEPS

1) FRONT-END CHANGES

A suggestion for future work is to improve the **website** based on the findings and recommendations proposed in this report. These include improving the **clarity of the reporting procedure** and improving the **information architecture of the support pages**.

2) BACK-END CHANGES

A second suggestion for future work is to improve the **dashboard** based on the findings and recommendations proposed in this report. These include adding automatic notifications and adapting workflows to **facilitate the assignment and closing of reports**, and adding some features to improve the "**Sites**" and "**Analytics**" section.

3) EVALUATE & ITERATE

Once the changes are made, **further user research** should be carried out with more participants to evaluate if the changes were successful at improving the usability of the R&S system.

In addition, the new insights should be used to make **further improvements** to the website (front-end) and the dashboard (back-end).

END.