



Standards that
create the outstanding

BCS Foundation Certificate in User Experience Glossary

**Version V1.0
October 2015**

Change History

Any changes made to the Glossary shall be clearly documented with a change history log. This shall include the latest version number, date of the amendment and changes made. The purpose is to identify quickly what changes have been made.

| Version Number | Changes Made |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Version 1.0 October 2015 | Glossary Created |

A

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| A/B testing | A technique used to compare two alternative designs of a live system with a large number of users. |
| Accessibility | The extent to which products, systems, services, environments or facilities can be used by people from a population with the widest range of characteristics and capabilities to achieve a specified goal in a specified context of use (ISO 26800). |
| Affinity diagram | A method used by design teams to organise large amounts of qualitative data and information into groups so that the data can be analysed. |
| Affinity diagramming | Organising large amounts of qualitative data and information into groups. |
| Affordance | The properties of an object that suggest to people how the object can be interacted with (cf <i>signifier</i>). |
| Alignment | The practice of creating strong lines that keep the viewer focussed and cause user interface screens to look elegant. |
| Assumption Persona | Personas developed without user research. |

B

Boomerang technique Answering a question with another question.

C

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| Card Sort | A research method where participants organise features, functions and pages of a user interface into groups that make sense to the participants. |
| Closed Card Sort | A card sort where the categories into which information can be sorted has been pre-defined. See also 'Card Sort'. |
| Closed question | A question where the participant has to choose his answer from among a proposed list of responses. No other answer than the ones proposed are allowed. |
| Conceptual model | A high-level description of the way the designer of a system has planned the system to work. |
| Context of use | Users, tasks, equipment (hardware, software and materials), and the physical and social environments in which a product is used. (ISO 9241-11). |
| Contextual Inquiry | A research method where a researcher carries out a site visit to observe users carrying out their normal activities in their natural environment. |
| Contrast | A visual design technique where the object of attention is made very different from the other elements that surround it. |

D

Design pattern

A reusable solution to a commonly occurring design problem

Diary Study

A longitudinal research method where users keep track of the activities in which they engage.

Discount usability

An approach to usability that seeks to optimise usability methods for cost effectiveness.

E

Empathy Map

A visual summary of what the user hears, sees, thinks and feels within the context of use.

Ethnography

The scientific description of people and cultures with their customs, habits and mutual differences.

Eye tracking

A technique used to measure either the point of gaze (where the user is looking) or the motion of the user's eye relative to the head.

F

Fidelity

When used to refer to a prototype, this refers to the degree of exactness with which the prototype reproduces the final design. Note that a prototype can have high visual fidelity but low interactive fidelity (e.g. static screens created in a graphics program), and low visual fidelity but high interactive fidelity (e.g. a paper prototype).

Fitts' Law

The time taken to move to a target is a function of the target size and the distance to the target.

Fixation

The pause of an eye movement on a specific area of the visual field.

Formative usability test

A form of iterative usability testing that aims to find problems with a system so they can be fixed.

G

Gaze plot

A moment-by-moment representation of a user's eye movement across the screen.

H

Heat map

A representation of the different areas of the screen where the user has spent the most time looking.

Heuristic

A guideline for evaluating the usability of a user interface.

Hick's Law

The time taken to make a decision increases as the number of choices is expanded.

High Fidelity prototype

A prototype that appears very similar to the final system.

I

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| Implementation model | The view of the system from the developers' point of view, often with system models, etc. |
| Information architecture | The discipline that ensures users can find the functions, features or content they need to achieve their tasks. |
| Interaction Design | The process of identifying design solutions and creating prototype user interfaces. |
| Interface control | An element of interaction in a graphical user interface, such as a button or scroll bar. |
| Interface pattern | See design pattern. |
| Iterative design | A design methodology based on a cyclical process of prototyping, testing, analysing, and refining a system. Based on the results of testing the most recent iteration of a design, changes and refinements are made. |

J

K

L

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| Low Fidelity prototype | A prototype that has some characteristics of the target system but is otherwise simple, usually in order to quickly produce the prototype and test broad concepts. |
| Leading question | An interview question phrased in such a way that it tends to suggest the desired answer. |

M

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| Mental model | The internal, mental, representation that a user has about how a system works. |
| Moderator | The person who runs a usability test. The moderator is responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the session and for ensuring that the test objectives are addressed. |
| Microcopy | Text labels that appear on buttons, dialog names, form fields and tooltips. |
| Moderated usability Test | A usability test where a test administrator is with a test participant in real time, for example to remind the participant to think aloud. |
| Monothetic agglomerative cluster analysis | A statistical method of analysing results of a card sorting session. |

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| Multivariate testing | Generalised version of A/B testing, where there are more than 2 alternatives. |
| N | |
| Negative Persona | Users whom the service is specifically not designed to serve. |
| O | |
| Observation | In the context of a usability test, this is something the participant says or does (as distinguished from an 'interpretation' which is the observer's belief about the cause). |
| Open Card Sort | A card sort where where users can create their own grouping scheme. See also 'Card Sort'. |
| Open question | A question that cannot be answered "Yes" or "No" but requires the participant to answer with a sentence or two. |
| P | |
| Paper prototype | A prototyping technique that involves creating drawings (often roughly drawn) of an interface that can be used to test out design ideas with end users. There is often the ability to 'interact' with the prototype. |
| Persona | A fictional person created to model and describe the goals, needs, and characteristics of a specific type or group of users. |
| Primary Persona | The main target for the design of the service. |
| Progressive disclosure | An interaction design technique that helps maintain the focus of a user's attention by reducing clutter, confusion, and cognitive workload. This improves usability by presenting only the minimum information required for the task at hand. |
| Proximity | A visual design technique used to organise and group the various parts of a user interface. |
| Q | |
| R | |
| Recall question | A question that requires the participant to remember an event that has happened in the past. |
| Repetition | A visual design technique used to create consistency and to add visual interest. |

S

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| Saccade | The movement of the eye from one part of the visual field to another. |
| Sample Size | The number of participants interviewed / observed etc. in a given research study. |
| Secondary Persona | A persona whose needs and goals can be accommodated without upsetting the design's ability to serve the primary persona. |
| SCRUM | A system design methodology, falling within the 'Agile' set of methodologies. Attributed to Ken Schriber. |
| Signifier | An indicator of how something is designed to be interacted with to get an intended result (<i>cf affordance</i>). |
| Sketch | A design concept or solution not intended for testing with users. |
| Summative usability test | A form of usability testing that aims to measure usability metrics, such as effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction. |
| System Model | A system model is the conceptual model that describes and represents a system. |

T

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| Thinking aloud | A technique from cognitive interviewing where a participant describes his or her thought processes when engaged in an activity. |
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U

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| Unmoderated usability test | A usability test where the test participant works alone on the test tasks, for example from their home computer. |
| Usability | The extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use (ISO 9241-11) |
| Usability inspection | A usability evaluation process where an expert evaluates a design against a set of usability principles or standards. |
| User | Person who interacts with a system, product or service. |
| User acceptance test | A test conducted to determine if the functional requirements of a specification have been met. |
| User centred design | A design process in which the needs, wants, and limitations of the end users of a product, service or process are considered at each stage of design. |
| User experience | A person's perceptions and responses resulting from the use and/or anticipated use of a product, system or service (ISO 9241-210) |
| User journey map | A diagram showing the steps in a scenario in which a user interacts with a system or service. |
| User research | The process of uncovering user needs, goals and motivations. |

User Story

User stories are part of an agile approach that helps shift the focus from writing about requirements to talking about them. All agile user stories include a written sentence or two and, more importantly, a series of conversations about the desired functionality. The generalised format is "As a [role], I need to [carry out this task] so that I can [achieve this goal]".

V**Validated learning**

A form of iterative design where the design team test design hypotheses with users.

Visual Design

The process of devising grids, laying out pages, choosing colour palettes and developing icons.

W**Wireframe**

An image or set of images which displays the functional elements of a website or page, typically used for planning a site's structure and functionality

X**Y****Z**