DCB412 — Designing for the UX
Reflection

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My main motivation in signing up for this elective was because I wanted to get a better understanding on how to properly conduct user tests, but also on how to analyze the results to get the most out of them. Before this course I was very inexperienced with user testing, it was something I would do at the end of a design process, mainly because I was expected to have user test data for the final report. In retrospect, I think my passive stance towards user testing was because I did not fully recognize what user testing has to offer in various stages of design processes. During the lectures I learnt all about users in design processes. We were given reasons why we should include users in design processes in varying stages, as this can help the designer to understand the user and the user in a specific context, the goals a user has and the needs a user has. We were also given information about how to involve the users in a process.

To me, three methods stood out: contextual inquiries, diary studies and cultural probes. Every one of these has their own advantages and disadvantages, though my personal favourite was the cultural probe. Cultural probes allow you to swiftly gain overall insights in the needs from a user's perspective, which makes them a powerful tool to have at the start of a design process. Later on in the course I learnt about the different types of research, qualitative and quantitative research, and for what reason they should be used, for generation or for evaluation. In the workgroup meetings I was able discuss these concepts with my peers, and later on I was able to sufficiently implement this knowledge by setting up various research iterations. The second half of this elective was focused on analysing the gathered data on multiple dimensions: qualitative/quantitative-wise and subjective/objective-wise. We were taught ways to look back at the research and examine if it was done properly by looking at the protocol, the sample size and on significance.

I was introduced to statistical tests such as Wilcoxon's tests, t-tests, u-tests and numerous others. Therefore, I am now able to use these to verify the validity of the research I have conducted. In retrospect, I think the build-up of this elective was well planned, and the contents were up to my expectations. I enjoyed the balance this course had with lectures and subsequent workgroup sessions, as they motivated me to apply the newly learnt theory in practice. This course allowed me to gain understanding of the importance and the process of user testing and analysing the data. I now have the tools to incorporate in-depth user testing in my overall process, which will help me increase the quality of my work. I consider this course to be a useful asset to my overall development as a designer, which is why I would recommend it to fellow designers who want to get an introduction in conducting research through user tests.