

Sustainability Capstone Manual in Use: Site-Visit with Public Health Student

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Introduction

The Sustainability Capstone Manual is a document that is intended to be a contract between students and community partners. The document serves to inform both parties of the expectations that need to be met in order to fulfill the capstone requirement for EWU. The document is currently in a rough draft stage, and already has clear areas where it needs improvements. With this report, I aim to find what areas of the document will cause the most struggling by users, so my group and I can order a list of hierarchy to problems that may need to be addressed first.

Study Analysis

User Analysis

To best ensure the efficiency of my research, I decided to research a student within a major that is similar to Sustainability. Currently, Eastern Washington University offers a Public Health major, and this program is very similar to Sustainability, since both programs focus on the health and wellbeing of society. Jamie is a Public Health major at EWU, and will have to complete a similar Capstone course for her program. She was willing to take part in my research by reading and filling out the manual in its current draft form.

Environment Analysis

I asked Jamie where she would normally go through a document of this caliber. She chose a study room within the library on EWU campus. Within the study room, it was very quiet and cancelled out most excess noise coming from the main part of the library. We scheduled to meet in the library on February 8th at 12:00 to begin the research.

Methodology

I felt it would be most effective in implement aloud protocol, and have Jamie speak while she was going through the manual. This allowed me to understand what portions of the document she encountered that made the document difficult to use, or parts that were effective to use. I did not actively intervene while she went through the document, as the tasks in it are not complicated. I made sure to watch for any signs of confusion while the document was being read.

I informed Jamie to go through the document as she would any other. That she should not be expected to read “cover-to-cover” *unless* that would be something she would have done normally. I collected my data in a notebook, and was sure to document certain quotes and times as she moved through the manual.

Results

I made note of every task Jamie went through while going over the Sustainability Capstone Manual. One thing I was very interested in knowing was just how long this document would take to complete, as it is very lengthy, at 31 pages.

1. Jamie is handed the printed out manual at 12:00pm in the library.
2. She skims through the beginning information of the packet. She makes note that the manual contains a table of contents, but does not seem to scan the headings.
3. At 12:05, she wants to know why some of the text is in blue. I tell her this is because the document is in draft form, and the blue text indicates information that may need to be revisited.
4. At 12:08, she tells me that the manual is very “lengthy”, and that the material and information is very “dense”.
5. At 12:17, she notes that she is familiar with some of the agencies and nonprofits listed in the Capstone Opportunity section (pg 11-13)
6. At 12:21, she says that the information in the packet is difficult to tell what sections are intended for students and what sections are intended the supervisors of the capstone.
7. At 12:24, she moves onto the question part of the document on page 14. She begins to fill out the question portions of the manual after filling out her name, date, and advisor.
8. At 12:29, she says that many of the questions “felt very similar”, and she said it was difficult to not be repetitive in her answers.
9. At 12:31, she moves onto the Capstone Field Experience Information Form on page 16. She begins to fill out the form with her information.
10. At 12:33, she asks what she should do to fill at the parts of the forms that ask for the capstone organization information, I tell her to just to write down any nonprofit as if she planned to intern there.
11. At 12:37, she reaches the Capstone Field Experience Registration Contact on page 17. She begins to fill out the information to the best of her ability.
12. At 12:39, she reaches that Official Learning Contract on page 18. She says she is unsure who this contract is supposed to be filled out by, and she feels like there needs to be more instruction.
13. At 12:42, she reaches the Capstone Field Experience and Weekly Report, she decides that she is unable to fill out this form as she has not actually completed any capstone – I agree with her, and tell her to continue through the document.
14. At 12:43, she gets to the Capstone Field Experience Midterm Evaluation Form, she wants to know if this section is intended to be filled out by an advisor or the supervisor. She notes that the last table row on page 21 has been cut off by the printer; she also feels it is strange that the number are reversed from 6 to 1 on the rating scale.
15. At 12:45, we discussed that the forms will not be able to be filled out by her, but I instruct her to just read through to make sure she, at least, understands what the manual is asking.
16. At 12:49, she reaches the final evaluation questions on page 29, and again says that the questions seem very repetitive. She also said that she would prefer that the evaluation portion not be attached with the initial application portion.
17. At 12:51, she signs her name on the final page, and hands the document back to me.

Analysis

After ending the research portion, it was made clear that some parts of the document will need to be improved as expected. To get through the entirety of the document was time-consuming and a little daunting of a task since the document is so dense. Jamie noted a few times that the information was very dry and difficult to scan through.

It was also clear that there is some confusion of what parts of the manual are intended for students and what parts of the manual are intended for community partners. This was a problem that was mentioned multiple times during the research time. There may be a need for further instructions within the document.

Another thing to make note of is that the “Question” portions of the document seemed to ask repetitive things. Jamie mentioned this with both sets of questions, and expressed her concern that it would be difficult to fill those sections out without constantly repeating yourself. The actual forms information did not seem to cause any confusion as it asked for normal information such as name, address, student ID, etc. The way the forms were formatted never seemed to be an issue either.

Discussion

After the completion of my research, it is clear that this document is going to need some thorough vetting. The first thing I would address in regards of the design of the project is clearly establishing which sections are expected to be filled out by the student and which sections are to be filled out by the community partner.

The information in the beginning may need to have more stability and hierarchy in order to make the document easier for students to skim and scan. This would ensure that the document does not appear to be so dense in information and would make the task of completing this manual left intimidating to students and community partners.

The questions sections in the document that are to be answered pre-and-post-capstone might need some rewording as it was clearly established that many of the questions were similar to one another. As a group, it may be decided to go through each question to see which need to stay and what ones may be able to be disposed of to avoid repetition.

Recommendation

My primary recommendation for this project is coming up with an effective way of shortening the manual into something more reasonable. This may end up with a decision that this manual may be better served by multiple documents instead of the just one. For example the information, questionnaires, and forms that is intended for pre-capstone and questionnaires and forms for post-capstone could possibly be split into two separate documents.

It would be beneficial to add further instructions within the document so there is no confusion about the intentions of the individual forms and questionnaires.

I would also recommend that the rating table on pages 21-22 be reformatted to a more usable and printable design. Jamie stated that it was strange to have the scale flow from 6 to 1. I think logically it would be more useful to have a scale from 1 to 5 for the rating portion of the manual.

For the design of the document, since our clients requested no color we should stick to black and white, and expect the document to be regularly printed in gray scale. We will need to fix the parts of the font that are currently in blue font color. The headings throughout the document are not consistent, some are blue and italic while other are black and underlined. There needs to be additional cohesiveness throughout the manual.

Since the manual is also a part of a contract that is to be filled out by multiple people, it is to be expected that it will be mainly used in print form. We will have to ensure that the parts of the manual that are currently being cut off by the printer will not be an issue after being converted to a PDF file format.

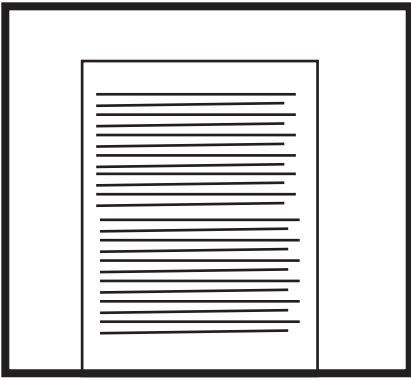
Conclusion

The Sustainability Capstone Manual definitely needs to be redesigned in order to provide a more effective user experience. After our group collects all our research information, it will be important to touch base with our clients to ensure the changes and recommendation we intended to make are acceptable by their standards.

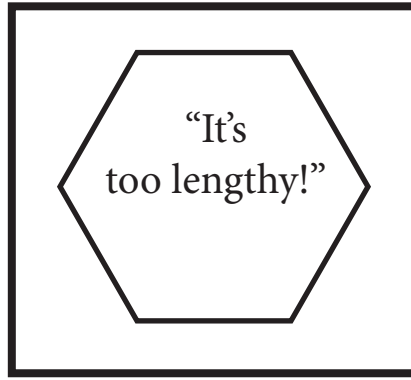
As a group, I think we will be able to redesign this document in the time we've been allotted to at least provide our client with a usable template for this upcoming major of Sustainability.

It is important for my group and I to remember that this major is not yet in place and has been in the making for two years so some details will likely change before Sustainability becomes an official major offered at Eastern Washington University. We should keep this in mind as design our document so it can be easily converted as information is either added or subtracted before the document becomes official.

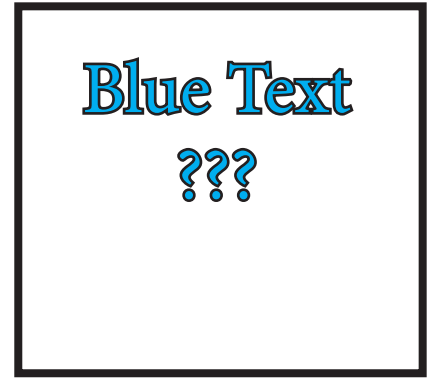
Story Board



1. Given Manual.



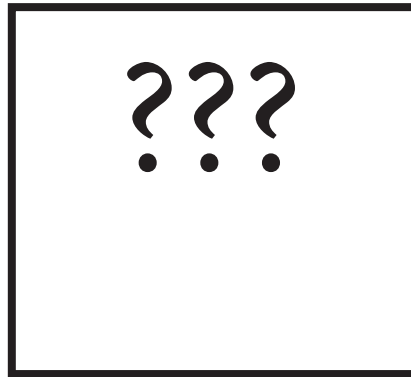
2. User feels document is too lengthy and dense.



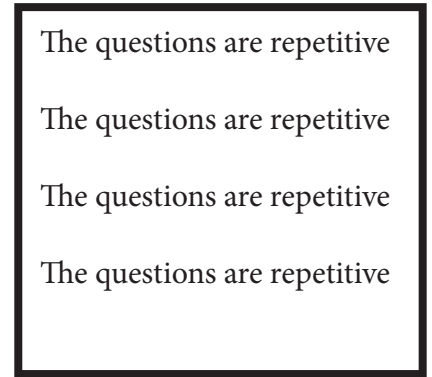
3. User wants to know why there is blue text.



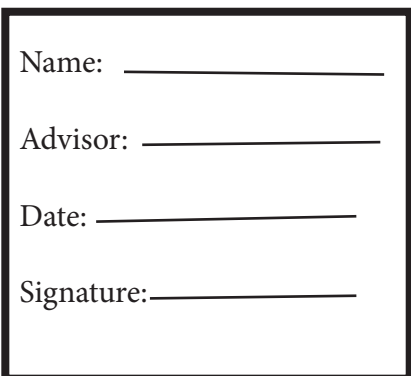
4. User is familiar with some of the community partners listed. Such as St. Luke's.



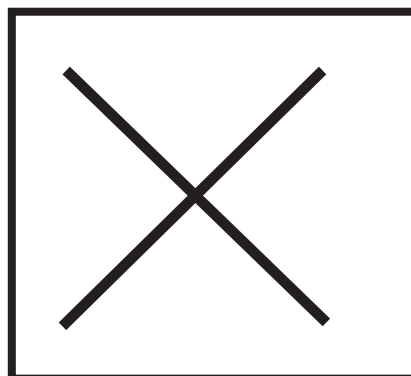
5. User is unsure who should fill out which forms.



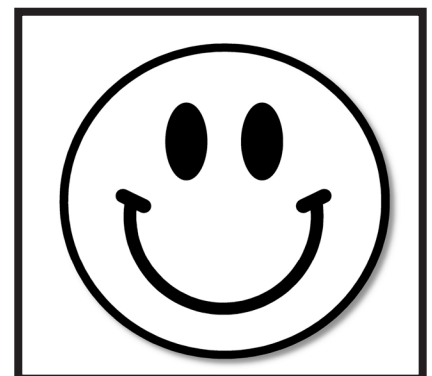
6. User feels like many of the questions are similar.



7. User is able to fill out some the form sections.



8. User is unable to fill out all sections of forms and questions about they are not applicable.



9. User finishes manual.

User Report

Start at 12:00 in study room

* 12:00 stems packet - not reading

says there is table of contents

* 12:05 "why is some of the text in blue"

* 12:08 the manual is lengthy and dense

* 12:17 she knows about St. Lukes as a community partner

* 12:21 she says information is hard to understand
does not know who should fill out

* 12:24 page 14 - questions

* 12:29 a lot of the questions are similar
hard to not be repetitive

* 12:31 page 16

* 12:33 what parts should she fill out

* 12:37 page 17

* 12:39 page 18, confused on who should fill out
the form

* 12:42 weekly report - can't fill this out

* 12:43 midterm evaluation form - should the
section be filled out by advisor or supervisor
the table arrangement is "strange" goes
from 6-1

* 12:45 tell her to just read through the question

* 12:49, page 29 - questions are repetitive, would
like each part next to be with application part

* 12:51 done with document