# Executive Summary

We are technical communication students, currently participating in the UX Independent Study at Mercer University, who have been tasked to conduct a usability test for the Mercer MSTCM program website. Our team has conducted a usability study of both the mobile and desktop versions of the site in order to test how easily and effectively users could navigate and find information on the website, regardless of the environment/medium of access. The results of the tests include the pass/fail values, time elapsed values, and SUS scores. Our findings can be separated into categories based on the 5E’s of Usability: Effective, Efficient, Engaging, Error Tolerant, and Easy to Learn.

To perform these tests, we enlisted the help of nine participants (four on mobile, five on desktop) to complete a series of eight tasks each. Each of these tasks required performing actions or finding information or files on the MSTCM section of Mercer.edu. During each task, we measured a variety of criteria to determine how well each task could be performed.

# Findings

A detailed explanation of all methods, findings and recommendations as well as images and examples can be found in our full report.

## ***Quantitative Findings***

The SUS evaluation revealed a score of 65 for the mobile site and a score of 79.4 for the desktop site. A score of 68 indicates that the website has an average level of usability, meaning that the mobile site has a less than average level of usability, and the desktop site has a higher than average level of usability.

Table 1 below details the pass/fail rates of each task. The task which generated the most failures for the mobile site was task 7, searching for course descriptions (four out of four failures), while the task which generated the most failures for the desktop test was task 4, searching for admission criteria (four out of five failures). Overall, the task which generated the most failures was task four with a combined seven failures out of nine participants. The task which generated the least amount of failures for mobile, desktop and combined was task 2, finding the MSTCM website from the Mercer.edu home page. All nine participants were able to successfully complete this task.

Just under half of the total administered tasks were either left uncompleted or were completed incorrectly by participants. Out of 72 total administered tasks, 35 were failures. In particular, 17 out of the 32 total administered tasks on mobile were failures, as opposed to only 18 out of the total 40 administered tasks on desktop. This is a strong indicator that neither version of the site (but particularly the mobile site) is a helpful marketing tool for the university or the MSTCM program. If potential applicants are unable to find the proper information on the website, they are less likely to apply to the program or the University at large.

Table 1 Number of Pass/Fails Per Task

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Task | Mobile | | Desktop | | Combined | |
| Pass | Fail | Pass | Fail | Pass | Fail |
| 1 Find Remote Masters Programs | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| 2 Find MSTCM Website | 4 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| 3 Find Professor’s Specialization | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| 4 Find Admission Criteria | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| 5 Find Class Meeting Frequency | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| 6 Find Classes Taught Each Term | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| 7 Find Course Description | 0 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| 8 Find Program Cost | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| Total | 15 | 17 | 22 | 18 | 37 | 35 |
| Total Administered Tasks | 32 | | 40 | | 72 | |

## ***Qualitative Findings***

Table 2 below details a summary of the qualitative findings from this study. The full details of these findings (including images and examples) can be found in the full report.

Table 2 Qualitative Findings Summary

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Problem Identified | Description | # Mobile Participants Affected | # Desktop Participants Affected |
| Effective | Editing | Spelling errors. | 0 out of 4 | 0 out of 5 |
| Broken Links | Various links were dead links (did not lead anywhere). | 0 out of 4 | 1 out of 5 |
| Mobile Course Catalog | Mobile course catalog is unusable. | 4 out of 4 | N/A |
| International Terminology | Terminology used on the site is not universal. | 0 out of 4 | 1 out of 5 |
| Credentials and Accolades | No auxiliary information indicating credibility of the program. | 1 out of 4 | 2 out of 5 |
| Headings | Headings not optimal indication of section content. | 1 out of 4 | 2 out of 5 |
| Menus | Redundant/extraneous menus and extensive levels of collapsible options. | 1 out of 4 | 4 out of 5 |
| Efficient | Content Quantity | Too many words/too much “fluff” content (especially on main page) | 2 out of 4 | 3 out of 5 |
| Content Organization | Pertinent information is too low on the page and the information is not organized in a conducive way. | 2 out of 4 | 3 out of 5 |
| Meet the Faculty | No link directly to Dr. Brewer's profile page. | 2 out of 4 | 3 out of 5 |
| Improve SEO | General SEO improvement is always beneficial for program and University marketing purposes. | 0 out of 4 | 0 out of 5 |
| Engaging | Design and Aesthetics | General design of the website is well done. | 2 out of 4 | 3 out of 5 |
| Desktop Course Catalog | Not well integrated, inconsistent design compared to the rest of the website. | N/A | 3 out of 5 |
| Error Tolerant | “Programs” Search Bar | Does not properly filter extraneous words searched by users. | 0 out of 4 | 2 out of 5 |
| Search Correction | Unnecessary/incorrect search correction prompts. | 0 out of 4 | 1 out of 5 |
| Easy to Learn | Collapsible Menu | Insufficient indicators of collapse menu features. | 0 out of 4 | 4 out of 5 |
| Application | Insufficient indication of use of general engineering application rather than an MSTCM specific application. | 0 out of 4 | 3 out of 5 |

# Recommendations

Based on the findings, we believe that the following actions would increase the overall usability of the MSTCM Program website. They have been separated into recommendations which affect the usability of the entire Mercer.edu website and those which only affect the MSTCM webpage specifically. Additionally, they have been numbered by priority.

## ***University Wide***

These are recommendations which can be applied to the broader Mercer.edu website.

1. Edit the site for spelling and grammatical mistakes.
2. Remove or update all dead links.
3. Develop an integrated course catalog, such as directly adding the information to the webpages.
4. Begin with all relevant levels of the sidebar menu promptly when the user enters the site.
5. Improve the “Programs” search bar ability to filter irrelevant words while still providing relevant results.
6. Improve accuracy of recommended and “did you mean” search prompts.
7. Change collapsible menu indicators from plus signs to arrows.
8. Move the collapsible menu indicators to the left side of the words, rather than the right.
9. Use colored background to accentuate subpages on the menu.
10. Remove the blue menu shown in Figure 5 in the main report.

## ***MSTCM Specific***

These are recommendations which either primarily or exclusively apply to the MSTCM webpage.

1. Make headings more accurate and better descriptors of the relevant content. We specifically recommend changing “Program Requirements” to “Graduation Requirements” or “Program Curriculum” and changing “Apply Now” to “Admission Requirements.”
2. Make sure information is grouped appropriately under headings, such as separating the information which indicates to use the general Engineering Graduate Application to a separate section with the heading “How to Apply.”
3. Reorganize the website so that the most important information has priority location at the top of the page. The more relevant and important information is, the closer it should be to the top. For example the benefits of distance learning are currently above admission requirements which is at the bottom of the page. Admission requirements should be significantly closer to the top of the site.
4. Improve SEO for more possible variations on searches related to the program title and description such as “master’s in communication” or “master’s in communication management.”
5. Add admission requirement information to the FAQ page.
6. Add clear indicators to the Graduate Admissions application page that it is the general application for graduate engineering programs.
7. Add a direct link to Dr. Brewer’s profile page next to the “contact” section on the left side of the page.
8. Add credentials and accolades to the site including research, projects and accolades of current and former students and faculty.
9. Create a glossary of terms.
10. Decrease the amount of extraneous words and paragraph chunks, particularly on the main page.

These changes will make the MSTCM website more usable for potential applicants.