ApplyBC-SFU Fall 2012 User Study Report

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Introduction

From November 19th through 23rd of 2012, we performed a user study with eight students to learn how real people use and see the ApplyBC SFU application. Our goal was to discover new usability problems, and to evaluate the interface on these criteria:

- Navigation: Can users easily navigate the website?
- Information Design: Does the interface communicate its purpose?
- Forms/Data Entry: Can users successfully fill out their information?
- Edit: Do users understand how to change previously entered information?
- Payment/Submit: Can users successfully submit and pay for their application?
- Help: Can users find help when needed? Will they use the FAQ?
- Writing: Do users understand the wording on the website?

Our approach was to divide the test sessions into three sections: two video recorded think-aloud scenarios followed by a debriefing. In the first think-aloud scenario we asked participants to apply to SFU using their own information, to imitate a "real" application. After the think-aloud scenarios, we held a debriefing to discuss the scenarios with participants. We asked the participants questions to understand their behaviour and their opinions on the application.

To analyze our results we reviewed the video recordings and notes, looking for points where users encountered usability successes and

Observer's Computer
- Adobe Connect Pro (ACP)

Participant's Computer
- iSight Camera
- Microphone
- ScreenFlow
- ACP

Observer

Participant

Facilitator
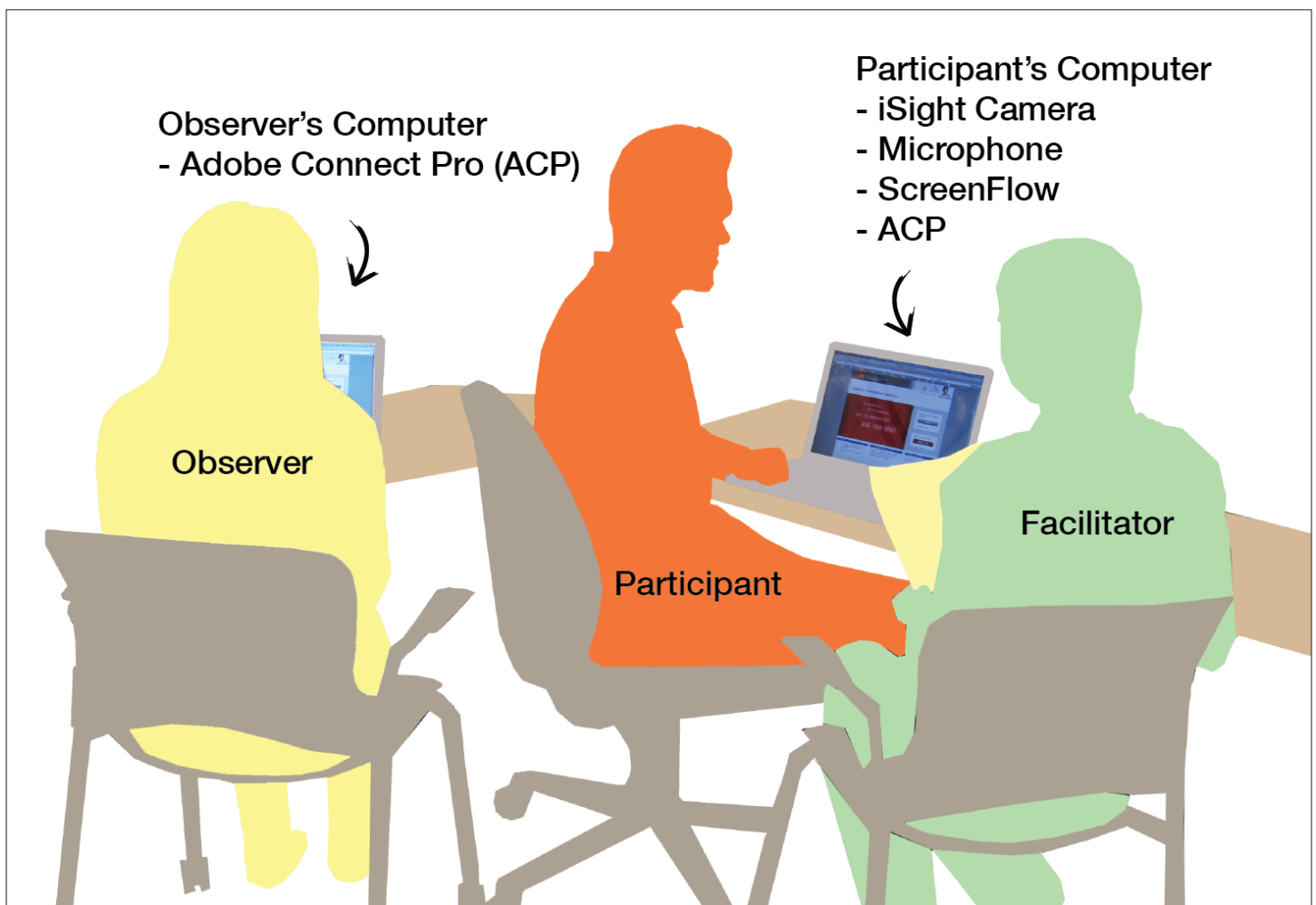
failures. These points were categorized into Jacob Nielsen's ten usability heuristics. This unusual method was inspired by the analysis performed by Withers et al. (2005), whose research collaboration with BCcampus is featured in a poster here in our Vancouver office. Lastly, we compared each participant's list of usability heuristics to find out how common and how serious the issues they encountered were. Our final list of issues is described in the following pages of this report.

In general, we found that the application works well for the most common type of SFU applicant, direct from high school students. Our high school student participants completed the first scenario quickly and with few issues. However, as soon as participants had to perform a task that was slightly different they ran into problems, often critical. We uncovered some serious technical and design errors that were completely missed during our internal testing and design evaluation. The wealth of issues discovered from this user study proves the value of this format, and especially the value of listening to users.

1 The Account Password is Difficult to Read and Recall

Account Details

Email: phil@phil.phil

BCcampus User ID: phil@phil.phil

Password: fPZHcJfm

• Make a note of your BCcampus account information now, in case you wish to leave your SFU application partway through and return to complete it later (or apply to another institution)
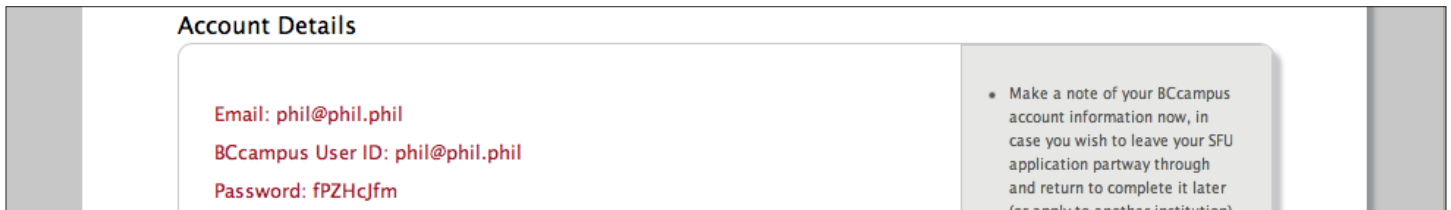
As a string of random letters and numbers, the automatically generated BCcampus account password is not easy to read. Almost all of our participants had difficulty reading the password, with one saying that the password was "annoying". As well, the password does not indicate whether it is case sensitive. We did have one participant who miscopied a lower case j as an upper case j. On their second application they had to check their email to find out their password.

The problem is the font. All participants were easily able to locate the password on the page. But as soon as they tried to record it, they had difficulty. The password uses the same font as the rest of the application, Lucida Sans. For most of the application this is a perfectly acceptable font. For readability, it's ill-suited because it is tightly spaced and renders some letters very similarly.

We saw the worst possible case of this in our first participant's test. They were given a password with an uppercase i. However, when writing it down the participant wondered if it was a one or a l. Even after going to their email, they could not figure out why they could not log in to their account. It was only after the facilitator copied the password into a text editor and changed the font into a twenty point typewriter font (Menlo) that the uppercase i was apparent. Clearly, a better font is needed.

Lucida Sans (Current)	6xp8IBE
Menlo	6xp8IBE
Times	6xp8IBE

Finally, these same characteristics that made the password difficult to read also make recall difficult. Participants spent extra time reading and re-reading what they had recorded to make sure that they had the correct password. Some mentioned that they would have preferred some option to set their password during the application so that they could choose a more memorable password for themselves.

We recommend:
Change the font and provide the user an option to customize their password in this page or provide an Account Profile link at least.

2 Unlisted Schools are Difficult to Select

When a user types in a letter that does not match any of the listed items in the suggestion boxes on the add high school and post-secondary pages, it is deleted. This was intended to make the add high school and add post-secondary pages simpler by preventing errors. Instead, it annoyed and frustrated the participants in our user study. They could not understand why their school was being deleted.

After three letters have been deleted in the suggestion boxes, the application displays an error box giving the applicant two options: to set their school to "other" or to edit their school again. Many participants ignored this box altogether, making it disappear by clicking off to the side or by selecting the edit button again without reading the error message or the "other" school option. The participants were still stuck wondering why they couldn't enter in their school and had not

noticed that unlisted schools had to be entered as "other". The error box was far too easily ignored or misunderstood.

The majority of our eight participants did not notice that they should enter unlisted schools by reading the help text. We discuss that issue in depth elsewhere in this report. However, it shows that not a single one of our approaches to help users enter unlisted schools worked.
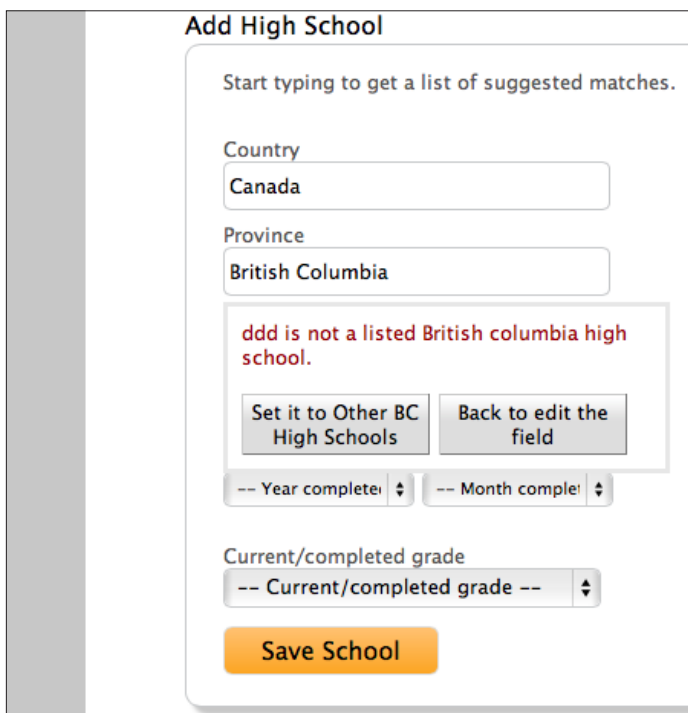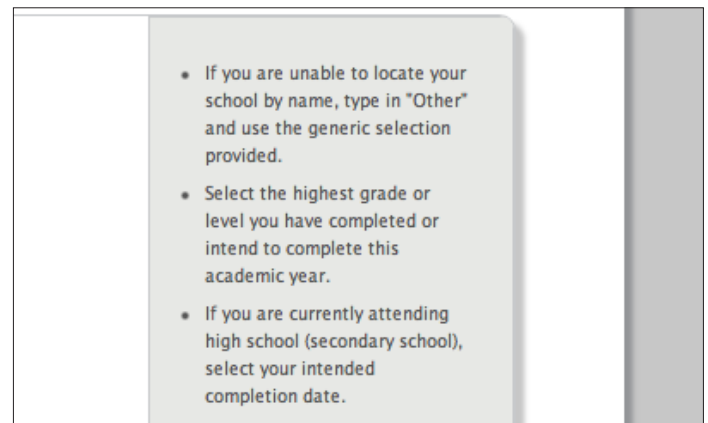
We recommend:
An 'Other school' option should be always available at the bottom of the suggested schools list. It may need to be styled differently to make it more prominent, but we will leave this up to Barb and future co-op students to decide.
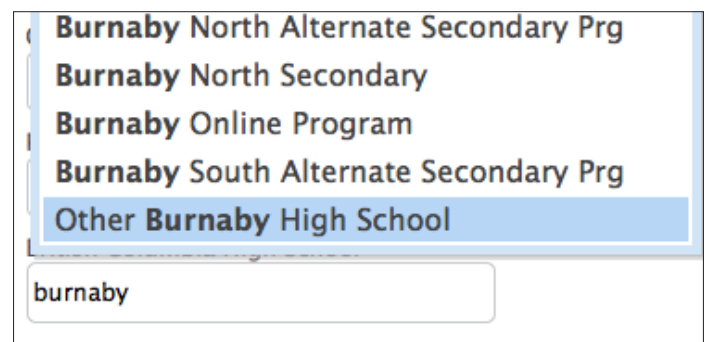
3 Landing Page Poorly Displays Application Status

On their second application, participants found it difficult to tell what they were applying to. The problem seems to be that the application status message box, Start a new application? box, and Application terms available are spread apart and vague.

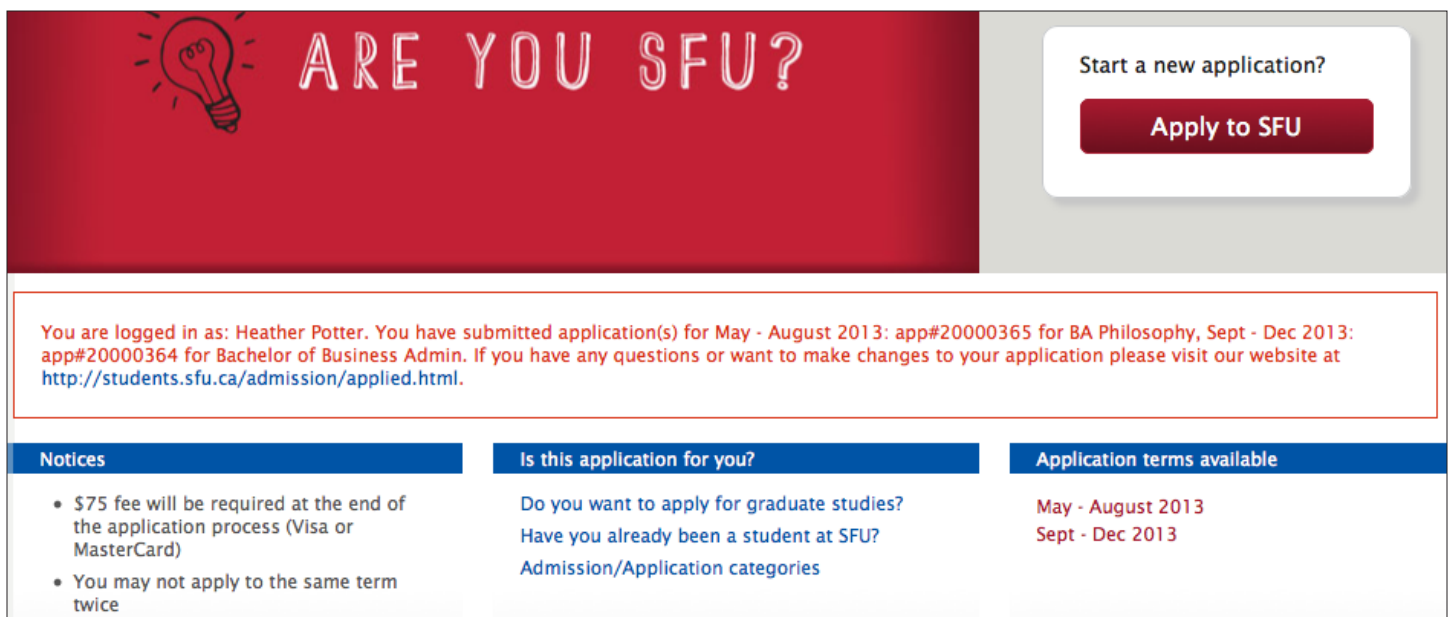First, the red message box about previous applications is not visible enough. Some participants did not notice it until after much searching.

Second, the landing page is vague about applying for another term. During the user study, participants were told to create a new application for another term. Participants one and three were not sure if the 'Apply to SFU' button would create an application for another term. Participant three commented that they felt as if they were editing their previous application, rather than creating a new one.

Third, the 'Application terms available' may have confused participants. After their first application they could still see the term they applied for as an application term available. Some participants tried to click the terms, thinking the terms were a link to creating a new application.

We recommend:
We do not believe it is possible to fix this issue without a significant redesign by Barb. There are currently three spaces that inform user about their login status, and if we were to add in another it would make the landing page only more confusing. That information needs to be consolidated and changed to help users understand what their application status is.

4 The Back Button Works on Some Pages but not Others
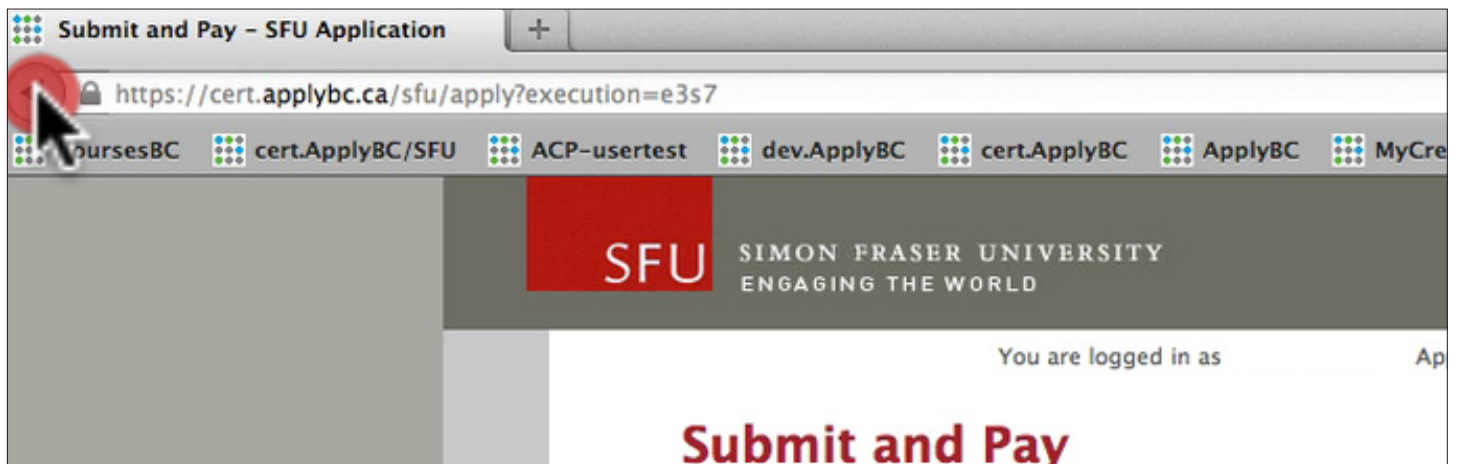
The Back button only works on some pages in the ApplyBC-SFU application, with our participants discovering that on many others the back button is dangerous. This can be frustrating because they are left to guess if the back button will take them back one page, or some seemingly random page.

Participant five accidentally went to the application fee payment page during scenario two while trying to find the Pay Later button. To go back to the previous page, they clicked the back button but they were directed to the landing page. Five wished they could just go back one page.

On the Academic History page, participant six clicked on the 'Add Post-secondary Institution' button by mistake. They clicked on the Back button, which did not bring them back the Academic History. Instead, it bounced them to the bottom of Contact Information.

Supporting the Back button is important for any website. According to Jakob Nielsen (1999), "The Back button is the lifeline of the Web user and the second-most used navigation feature". Further, a Firefox main window usage study (2010) stated that 93.1% of users use the Back button as their main way of navigation.

We recommend:
The back button should be supported on all pages, not just a few. Users should not have to guess when the back button will work. Nor is telling them to avoid using the back button a solution: it is a popular navigation feature and they are likely to use it anyways.

5 Program Selection Bounced to the Landing Page
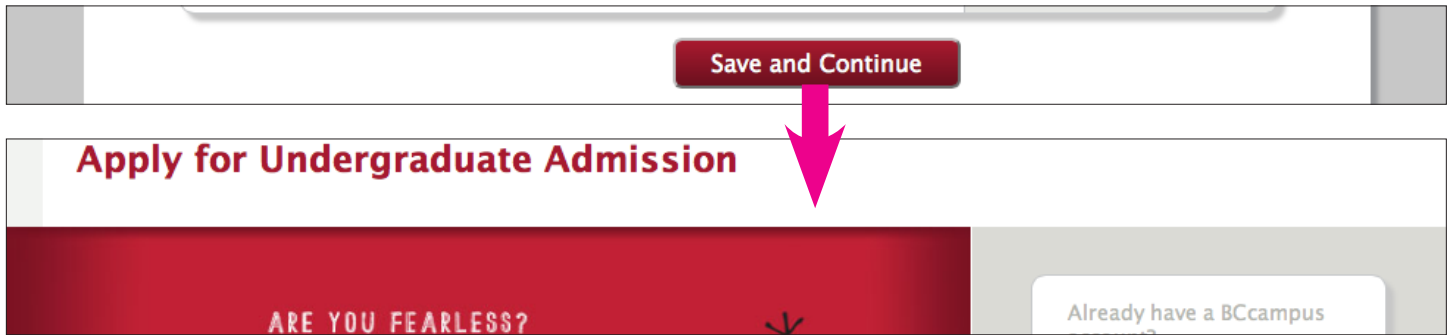
On the second scenario, participants tended to move through the pages very quickly because they already knew what fields to fill in and many had been saved from the first application. However, upon clicking the Save and Continue button two participants were taken back to the Landing Page instead of Additional Information. There is no error message given, the participants were just taken to the wrong page. From the Landing Page the participants were able to return to the Program Selection page, and from there they could complete their application.

The two common traits between the times when this error occurred are that participants were on the Program Selection page and they were creating a second application.

We followed up with further testing, which has revealed a more critical error. If the progress bar is used to quickly leave a page before it has finished loading, it can bounce users back to the landing page. It is more than likely this error is the same root issue as the one encountered by participants in the user study. Thus far, we have found it occurs on three pages:

Academic History: Leaving the Academic History page will often take the user to the landing page.

Sometimes it will take users to a 500 error, which is absolutely catastrophic because it is much more difficult to recover from. Both of these errors have only been found in Firefox 17 on the Mac and PC.

Personal Information: Leaving the Personal Information page will often take the user to the landing page, like Academic History. No other behaviour has been detected. This error only has been found in Firefox 17 on the Mac and PC.

Additional Information: Leaving the Additional Information page, like Academic History and Personal Information will take the user to the landing page. Before that there is frequently a "Failed: 0" pop-up displayed, then the user is sent to the landing page. This error has been found in Firefox 17 and Chrome 23 for the Mac and PC.
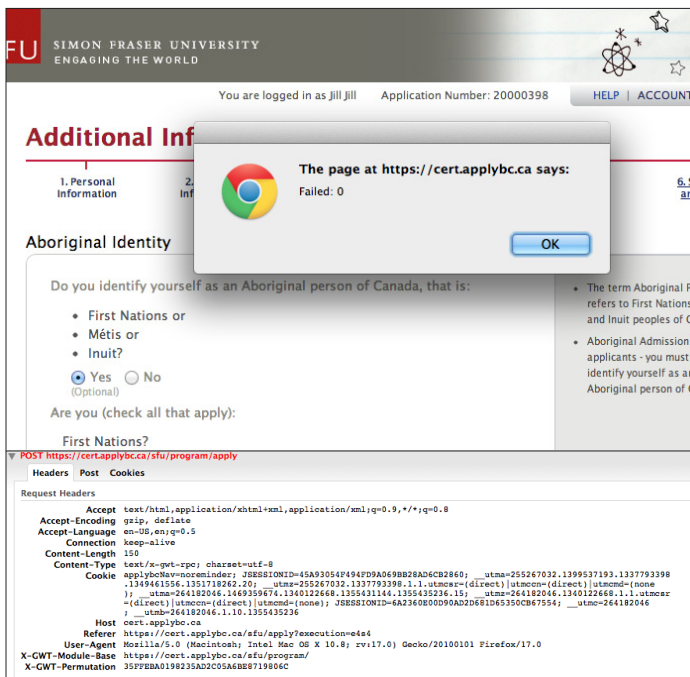
Needless to say, all variants of these bouncing errors are extremely serious and could be major barriers to users completing their applications.

We recommend:
Incorrect navigation should absolutely be fixed. Clicking on Save and Continue should not be a guessing game.

6 Address Verification Provides Unclear Feedback or None at all

Verify your address details

Sorry, we don't recognize your house or building number.
To proceed, please check and choose from one of the options below.

Confirm your House/Building number:

1607   Confirm number

No apt number

You Entered: [Edit]

Use Address As Entered*

1607

*Your address may be undeliverable

The address verification pop-up box confused participants by displaying insufficient information, or by not displaying at all.

Participant three's house or building number was not recognized by the address verification system. They did not know what to enter when they saw the address verification box because they weren't sure if House/Building number included apartment numbers. Then the address notification system asks users to enter a House/Building number every time they visit the page. When participant three was in their second application, their mailing address information was carried over from their first application to the second. However, when participant three tried to proceed to the next page, they were repeatedly asked for her House/ Building number and could not understand why they had to enter it again.

But when the postal code is not validated, it is changed without notice. Participant one entered their postal code in the Contact Information,

which was accepted without bringing up the address verification box. When participant one saw their contact information on their Application Summary, their postal code had been changed to an incorrect one. Participant one tried to correct this error twice to no effect, eventually giving up. It could be a serious issue if SFU sent official documents to the wrong address due to an incorrect postal code. As a rule, users should always be notified and provided with a clear explanation when their information is changed.

We recommend:

The Contact Information page needs a separate apartment number field from the address fields. Doing so would clear up confusion about which number the validation system is trying to correct - so long as the same term is used for the field and the error. Apartment number is more common, but there may be reasons for House/Building number that we are not aware of. This may be an area for Lauri to look into.

Mailing Address

Street address

555 Seymour Street

- Enter your primary mailing address. This should be where you would like to receive correspondence from SFU.
- Enter the full name of the city or town. Do not use abbreviations.

Unit/Suite/Apartment Number

200

City

Vancouver

Verify your address details

Sorry, we don't recognize your unit, suite, or apartment number.
To proceed, please check and choose from one of the options below.

Confirm your Unit, Suite, or Apartment number:

Confirm number

No unit/suite/apartment number

You Entered: [Edit]
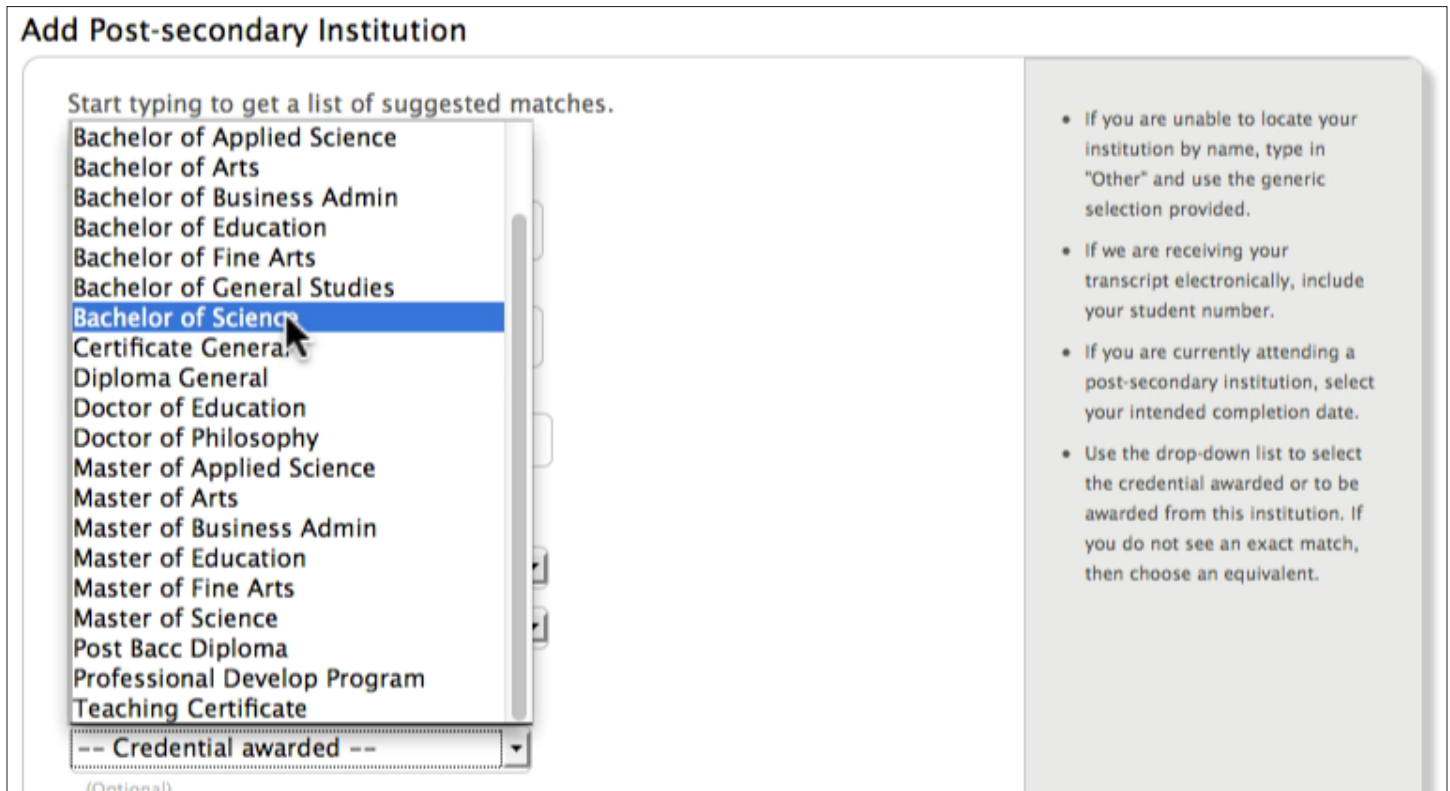
Use Address As Entered*

555 Seymour Street
Vancouver
BC
V6B 3H6

*Your address may be undeliverable

Further, If the system doesn't recognize an address it should always tell the user what it would like to change and give them an option keep what they entered. The system should never change an address without warning, especially when it does not have the most up to date addresses.

7 Credential Awarded Does not Allow for Unlisted Credentials

Add Post-secondary Institution

Start typing to get a list of suggested matches.

Bachelor of Applied Science
Bachelor of Arts
Bachelor of Business Admin
Bachelor of Education
Bachelor of Fine Arts
Bachelor of General Studies
Bachelor of Science
Certificate General
Diploma General
Doctor of Education
Doctor of Philosophy
Master of Applied Science
Master of Arts
Master of Business Admin
Master of Education
Master of Fine Arts
Master of Science
Post Bacc Diploma
Professional Develop Program
Teaching Certificate

-- Credential awarded --

(Optional)

- If you are unable to locate your institution by name, type in "Other" and use the generic selection provided.

- If we are receiving your transcript electronically, include your student number.

- If you are currently attending a post-secondary institution, select your intended completion date.

- Use the drop-down list to select the credential awarded or to be awarded from this institution. If you do not see an exact match, then choose an equivalent.
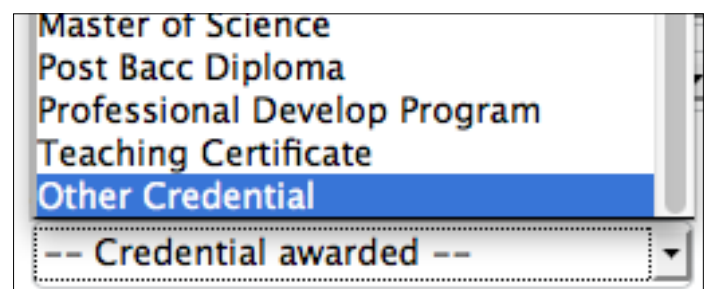
The Post-secondary Credential Awarded drop-down in the Academic History frustrates users when they cannot find their post-secondary credentials. With so many options it is difficult to determine which is close the users' own credentials.
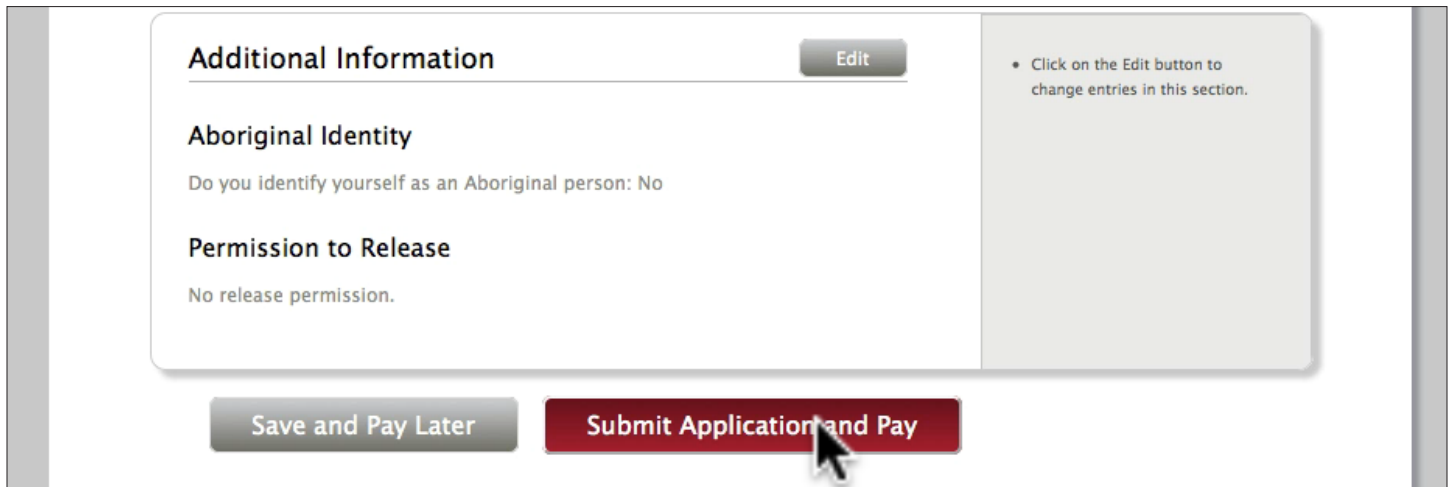
Participants three and six could not find their credentials from the list. Neither read the help text. Participant seven did read the help text, but 'choose an equivalent' was not helpful to them.

We recommend:
The application needs a simple, prominent option for users to select when they cannot find their application in the list. We suggest that like 'Other Schools', there should be an 'Other Credential' for those users to select. This would be more consistent and simpler than trying to explain with help text how users should select an equivalent to their credential.

Master of Science
Post Bacc Diploma
Professional Develop Program
Teaching Certificate
Other Credential

-- Credential awarded --

# 8 Save and Pay Later is Overwhelmed by Submit and Pay

The 'Save and Pay Later' button should be more visually prominent.

When participants were told to save their application instead of submitting it, participants five and six did not notice the 'Save and Pay Later' button beside the 'Submit Application and Pay' in the Submit and Pay page. Participant six commented that they were used to clicking red buttons. By comparison the grey 'Save and Pay Later' button seemed less noticeable and important.
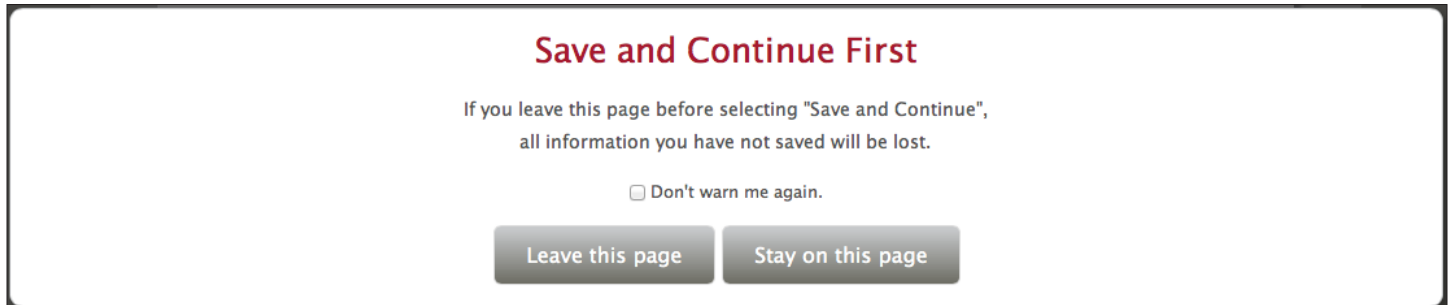
The 'Save and Pay Later' needs to stand out because it is an important element in the application process. The two buttons should have a better color balance.

We recommend:
Our options for making the Save and Pay Later button more prominent are limited because it is already prominent. Compared to its surroundings, it is large and is dark. The exception to this is the Submit Application and Pay button, which is a bold red. By the time they landed on the Submit and Pay page, participants were conditioned to click on a red button on the bottom of the page every time. We suggest aligning the both buttons to the right of the page, which disrupts the pattern of the red buttons. This should indicate to users that this page is different so that they will spend more time reviewing their options. As well, it increases the prominence of the Save and Pay Later button slightly by moving it to the center of the page.
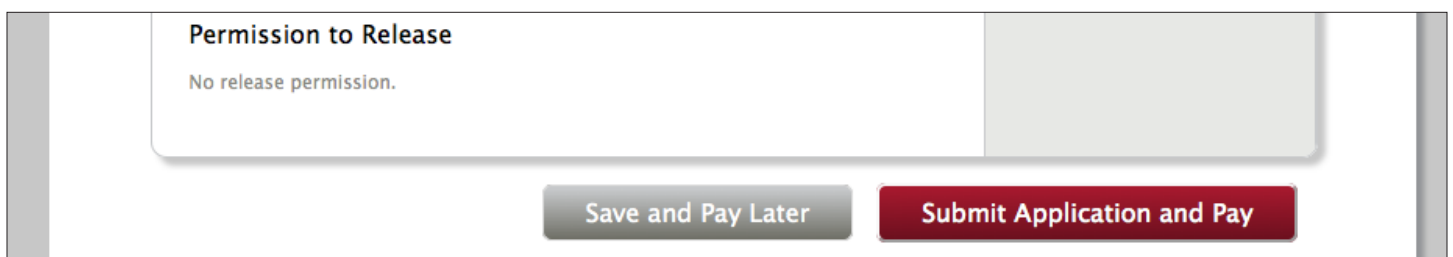
9 Scared off from the Progress Bar by the Save and Continue First box

Save and Continue First

If you leave this page before selecting "Save and Continue",
all information you have not saved will be lost.

☐ Don't warn me again.
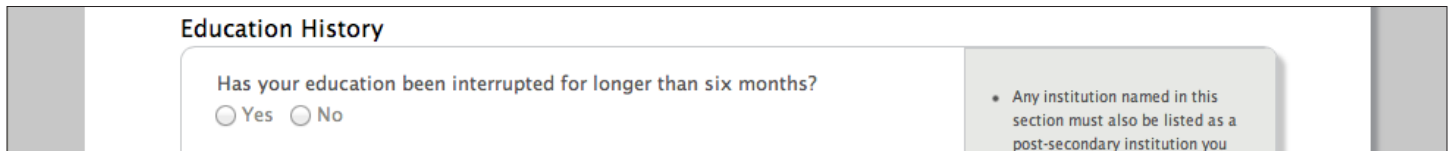
Leave this page   Stay on this page

While most participants in the user study located the progress bar and could understand what function it performed, only one used it. As soon as they tried to use the progress bar, they saw the Save and Continue First box, which they found confusing. Participants said they thought their information on that page - or even their entire application - could be lost if they selected "Leave this page".

We recommend:
If possible, the application should automatically be saved when the user selects a page on the progress bar. This would eliminate the need for the Save and Continue First alert box. If not, then the alert box's text should be rewritten. It needs to explain that only information entered on that specific page will be lost and that to save the user must select the "Save and Continue" button at the located at bottom of the page.

10 Information is Transferred Inconsistently from one Application to the Next

Education History

Has your education been interrupted for longer than six months?

◯ Yes ◯ No

- Any institution named in this section must also be listed as a post-secondary institution you

Participants quickly noticed that there was something amiss with their application when they started a second application. How come the Aboriginal Identity section was filled in? Why was Education History not filled in? Participant two was halfway through saying how nice it was that their information was saved when they pressed Save and Continue on the Academic History page - without filling in the Education History section. This issue was not critical to the application, as participants were able to fill in all the parts that were missing.

The root of this confusion is that unifying the ApplyBC and SFU applications left no visual cues to explain why some sections are saved and others aren't. It looked arbitrary to users. Some participants even said the application looked buggy or broken.

The bigger issue is that participants did not seem to be aware that they were completing a second application. It was not until they reached the Program Selection page that they realized they were applying to a different term. We may be able to take some of the blame because our instructions did not explain throughly enough that

participants were creating a second application. Some were unfamiliar with the idea of applying twice to a post-secondary institution, and did not even realize they could apply twice. However there was nothing in the application to correct participants, and the arbitrariness of the saved information only confused them more.
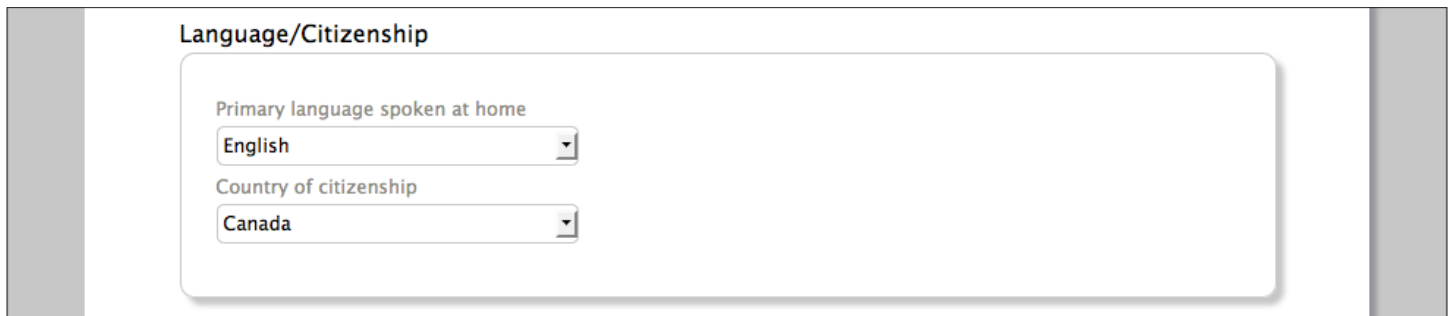
We recommend:
On the top of the Personal Information page, there should be a notice to users that they have created a new application and that some information is carried over from their previous SFU or other ApplyBC applications. The details of this notice should be worked out by Barb to ensure that it is visually coherent with the rest of the page. There are already many other elements (title, progress bar, system error) located there, and it could be risky to add more.

A more ideal solution would be to have a clearer break between common and institution-specific information, and to have this indicated on the progress bar or in the page titles. Of course, this would involve a much larger redesign and likely would require cooperation from the institutions.
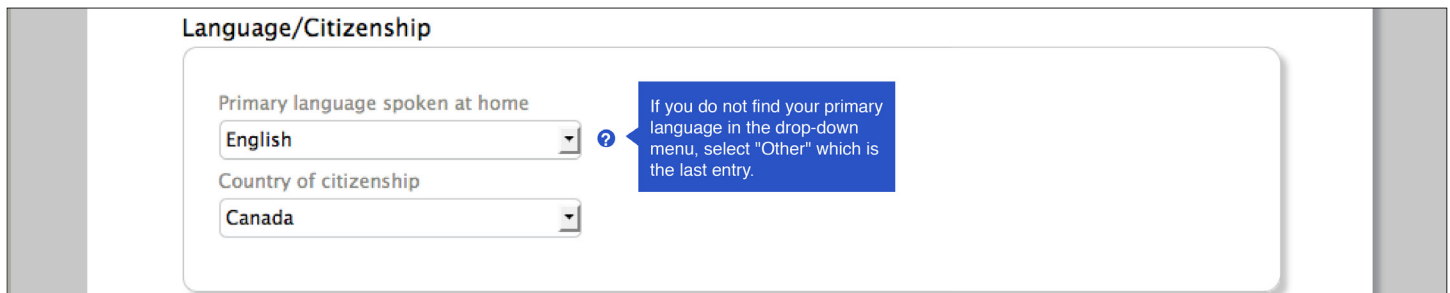
Personal Information

| 1. Personal Information | 2. Contact Information | 3. Academic History | 4. Program Selection | 5. Additional Information | 6. Submit and Pay |

You have started a new application for May-August 2013. Some information is carried over from your previous application.

11 Help Panel Text is Virtually Ignored

Language/Citizenship

Primary language spoken at home
English

Country of citizenship
Canada

Participants were more likely to notice the help text due to the facilitator accidentally pointing it out than by finding it themselves. Most commented that the help panel text was too faint and small. Many sections where participants encountered serious issues (particularly on Academic History) could have been resolved by looking at the help text.

We recommend:
Remove the help panel on the right and make a pop-up message box for help. This will be more noticeable and will locate help closer to where it's needed. A major side benefit of this is that it will allow the main column to expand, which should make many abbreviations (see: Program Selection) unnecessary.

Language/Citizenship

Primary language spoken at home
English   ❷   If you do not find your primary language in the drop-down menu, select "Other" which is the last entry.
Country of citizenship
Canada

12 Hover Help Text was not Seen

First name(s)
Phil

Middle na First name(s)
Phil

shown on your birth certificate or passport (if you did not legally change them later).

• Other names are the ones you use informally or used prior to a legal name change.

The hover help text was supposed to be a useful resource for getting help in the application that was "closer" to the user than the help text on the right. Literally no-one saw the hover help text. On the positive side, the site works better with screen readers and should be more usable for users with vision disabilities.

We recommend:
Rather than trying to make the hover text more useful, we suggest moving the help text closer to the input fields as in the above suggestion. Otherwise, the hover text will be redundant with the help text. The best use of hover is to support users with assistive technologies.

13 Application Number was not Recorded on Second Application

Application Summary

Review this summary of the information you have entered. To make changes, select the Edit button for the appropriate category. After verifying that your application information is correct, you will proceed to the payment page.

Your Application Number: **20000381**

On their first application, all participants were surprisingly dutiful about writing down their application number despite being given no hints by the facilitators. Clearly the bold red text made an impact. However, on the second application almost none of the participants wrote down their application number. This may have been because they were not aware that they were creating a second application. However, the number looked so similar that even the participants who did understand that still glossed over the number. In the debriefing, they commented that they thought the number was still the same.

We recommend:
Include the term the user is applying to (for example, 'May to August 2013'), and provide a clear instruction to record their application number. It may also be useful to explain why users should record their application number.

Application Summary

Review this summary of the information you have entered. To make appropriate category. After verifying that your application information page.

Your **May to August 2013** Application Number: **20000363**
Please record your application number in case you need help.

14 Students can't tell who does what: SFU, BCcampus, or ApplyBC?

SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
ENGAGING THE WORLD
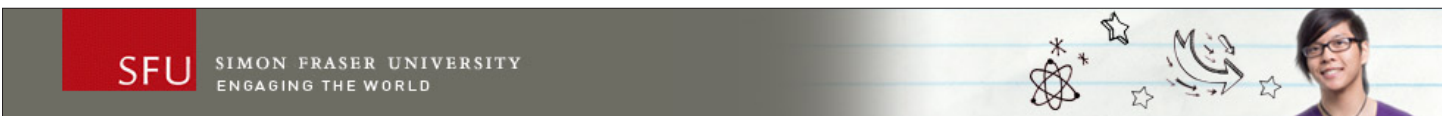
At the time of the user study, we regretted not explaining who we were more throughly. Most of our participants were only dimly aware of ApplyBC, let alone BCcampus. But that oversight has turned out to be a plus, because it made our participants as unaware as any other user about the difference between SFU, ApplyBC, and BCcampus.

Upon first seeing the ApplyBC SFU application, participant seven was confused. Seven thought that they were on a SFU page, and needed to go to ApplyBC. We had to explain that no, this is ApplyBC with SFU branding. Most participants weren't so direct, but we received many hints that they didn't quite realize who was responsible for what. A few didn't understand what their BCcampus ID was, and if it was the same as their ApplyBC ID. Another participant asked if they

should put their ApplyBC ID into the SFU ID field. Their experiences demonstrate that the confusion between the names is not just about branding, it's a usability issue.

We recommend:
When the user hovers over the word 'BCcampus', they should be provided with a description of BCcampus. It can be done using the <abbr> tag, which places a dotted line underneath the word and turns the cursor into a question mark while hovering. This interface pattern dates back to the old Windows help system, and is currently used on Wikipedia to describe how to phonetically pronounce words along with a few other webpages.

A **eukaryote** (/juːˈkæri.oʊt/ *ew-KARR-ee-oht* or /juːˈkæriət/) is an
Eukaryotes may more fo /./ syllable break d to as the taxon Euka

We also suggest flipping the "Start a new application" and "Already have a BCcampus account?" panels around on the landing page. This would put what most applicants want to do on top: apply to SFU. It also puts the word BCcampus lower on the page, so that it is less likely to be noticed by users who only plan on making one application.
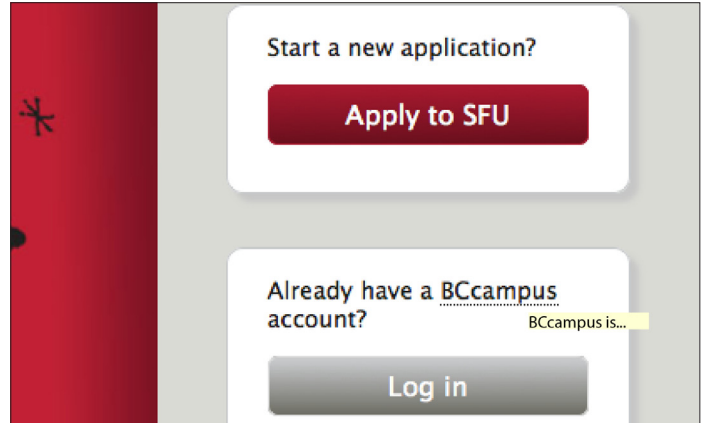
15 Removing and Adding Schools to Edit them is Inconvenient
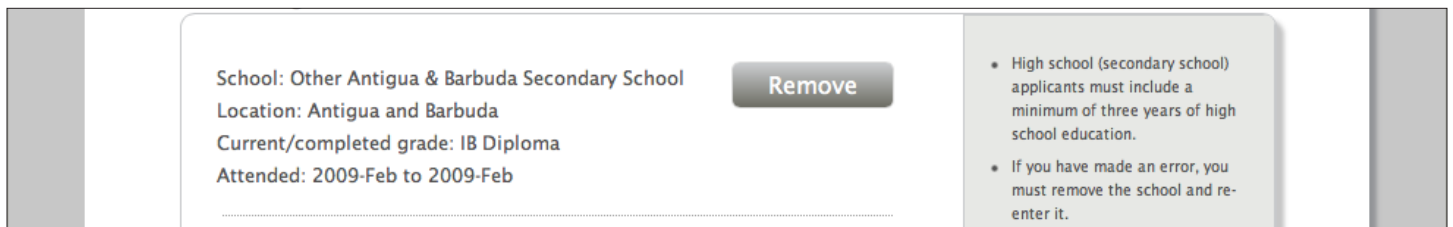
All participants were able to figure out how to edit their schools by removing the old school and adding a new one. However, they also commented that this procedure was cumbersome. Participants one and seven made mistakes in their post-secondary institutions, and wanted to edit just one line but were forced to re-enter the entire school. Forcing them to remove their schools adds unnecessary steps and makes it more likely that users will make mistakes.

We recommend:
Users expect to be able to edit each part of their schools individually, and that is exactly what we should provide.

16 English Language and Quantitative Requirements are Confusing

For six out of the eight participants, the page where they spent the most time was Program Selection. A major reason for that was how long it took to decipher the English Language and Quantitative Requirements. Participants did not understand what the different options were, or what they should choose. The description was not helpful, and the two participants who regularly checked the help text found no help there either. Help is instead provided in a link there, which has been cut off because it can't fit inside the column.

We recommend:
Replace the address for SFU's english and quantitative requirements with a hyperlink in the help panel. At least then the users who read the help text will find the correct explanations. For everyone else it may be useful to place <abbr> tags to define the terms in the description, such as with "TOEFL".

17 **Faculty and Program Selection is Cumbersome**
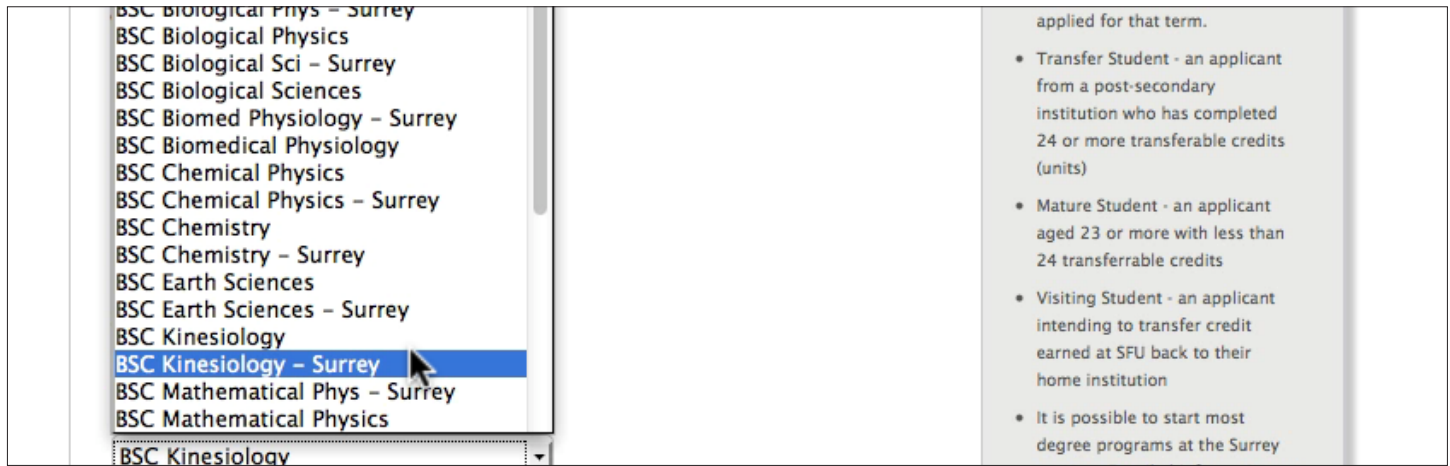
All of our participants took a long time to decide what program to select. For our first three participants, we let participants pick whatever program they wanted, which often led to them deliberating on what program to select. However, even when the participants knew what faculty and program they wanted to select, they still took a long time. Navigating through the drop-downs is cumbersome because there are so many options to browse through. Participants would read a few under one faculty, then to another faculty, and continuing slowly until they found the right faculty for the program they wanted. Adding to users' workload, many of the program names have been abbreviated or are marked "- Surrey". This only makes the options more difficult to read, and to find the programs that they want.

We recommend:
Like with the high school and post-secondary selection, we suggest replacing the drop-down menus with suggestion boxes. This would allow for users to quickly sort through options, and it would eliminate the need for program names to be abbreviated. As a bonus, suggestion boxes should be easier to implement here than for Academic History because there are no "other" programs.
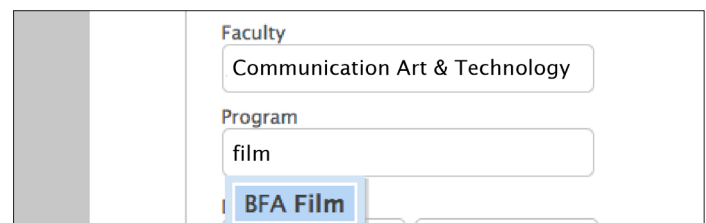
18 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy is a Surprise

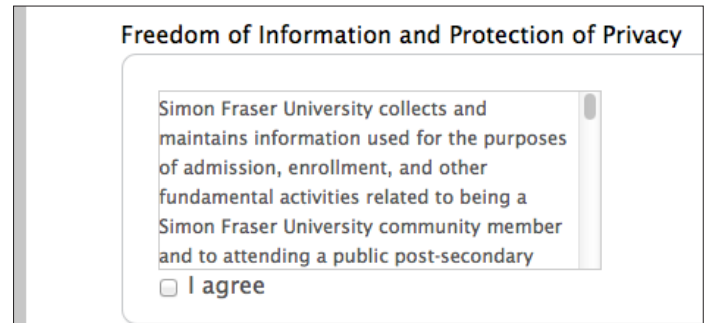**Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy**

Simon Fraser University collects and maintains information used for the purposes of admission, enrollment, and other fundamental activities related to being a Simon Fraser University community member and to attending a public post-secondary institution in the Province of British Columbia. In submitting an application for admission, all

When the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy alert box appeared, Participant four was visibly startled, and most participants expressed some surprise. They probably expected the checkbox in the Consent for Information panel to be a simple check box, and not to reveal a pop-up with more to read.
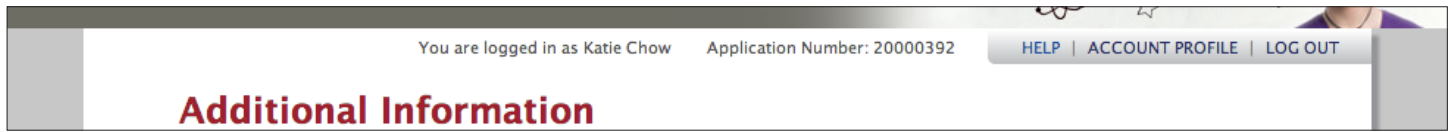
In the original design the intent was to make reading the Freedom of Information and Privacy agreement easier to skip by placing it in a pop-up box. We knew from our own experience that few applicants would read that much legalese. The participants in the user study did little more than skim it, with the exception of participant one. By forcing them to see the Freedom of Information and Privacy agreement we've only inconvenienced users and made them no less likely to read it.

We recommend:
Make a scroll box for both 'Consent for Information…' and 'Freedom of Information…'. This would take up less space on the page and show the users what they're agreeing to, fulfilling both goals of our original design.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Simon Fraser University collects and maintains information used for the purposes of admission, enrollment, and other fundamental activities related to being a Simon Fraser University community member and to attending a public post-secondary

☐ I agree

## 19 Help Link is Rarely Noticed and is not Helpful

All but one participants did not notice the help (desk) link, even when they needed help. Participant one noticed it while trying to find out how to create a new application for a second term because he didn't see how to do so on the landing page. He clicked on the Help link and searched some keywords ('second') but the Help link did not give him any useful results.

We recommend:
Provide a help link in an error message box, which may help users find the help page when they most need it. In the help page, create guides for completing tasks (e.g., How to create a application for another term?). The question format of the help desk seems to require that someone has asked the question before, or that they're having a problem. Guides would help users when they're simply confused.
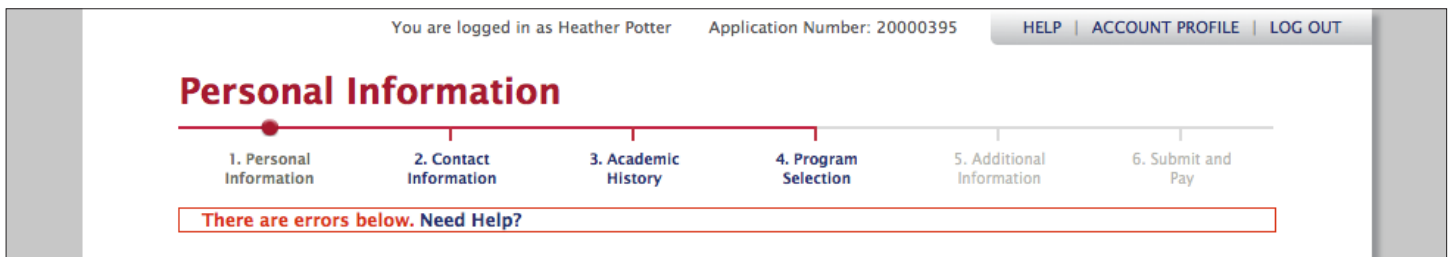

20 Log in Status is not Prominent on the Landing Page
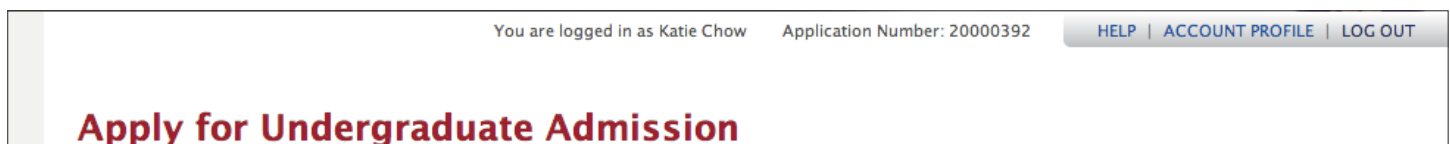
The log in status at the top of the application can easily be missed because it is in light grey and located beside much more prominent items like the title and account tab. Participant six did not realize that they were logged in on scenario two, not noticing the "You are logged in as..." status at all. They went through clicking on the greyed-out Log in button, reading the application status box, and visiting the Account Profile page, until finally understanding that they were logged in.

We recommend:
Provide a log in status in the log in panel on the right. We regard this as a stop-gap solution, as it only makes issue 3 worse. Redesigning the landing page would be preferred.
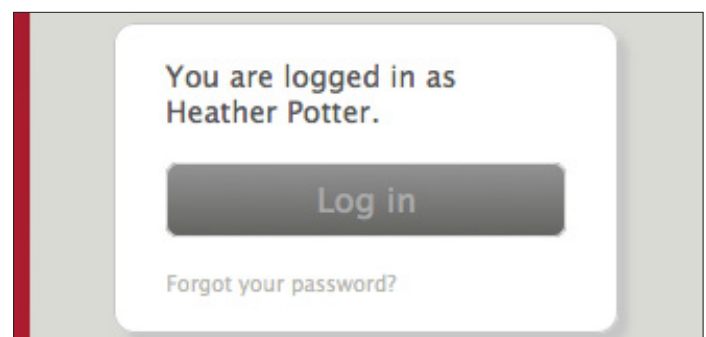
21 The Landing Page is Refreshed when 'Apply to SFU' Button is Clicked

When the 'Apply to SFU' button is clicked, the landing page gets refreshed and does not go to next page. All of our participants had to click the button twice to go to the next page.

After several tests, we discovered that this bug occurs when the landing page is left open for more than 20 minutes, suggesting it may be related to time out. The same behaviour occurred on CERT and Production in Firefox, Safari, and Chrome.

We recommend:
While all participants were able to get past this error, it caused some of them to think that they had missed something on the landing page. There's no reason for users to stress over what is clearly an error, and it should definitely be fixed.

22 The Province field is Cleared When Another Field is Highlighted and the "Dates Attended" drop-down is Clicked
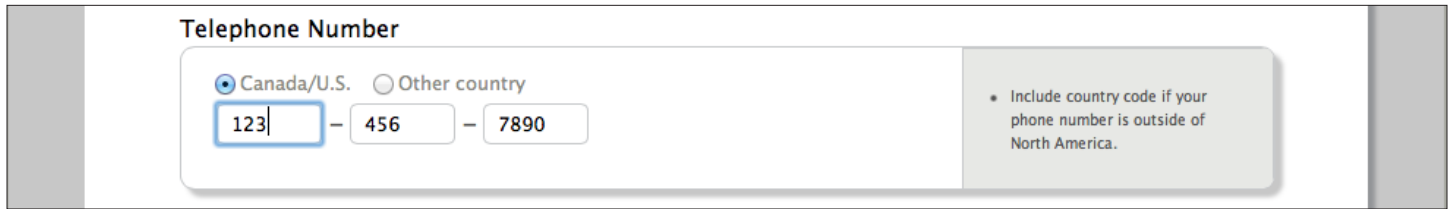

On the Academic History page, the Province field is cleared when the country field is highlighted and then another selection is made with the mouse.

Similarly, the school name field is cleared when the Province field is highlighted and another selection is made.

We recommend:
This is a defect with the logic of the suggestion boxes involving how deselection is detected. It should be fixed because it could waste users' time if they have to re-type in their information.

23 No Cursor Jump in the Phone Number fields

Telephone Number

◉ Canada/U.S.　◯ Other country

[123|]　–　[456]　–　[7890]

- Include country code if your phone number is outside of North America.

Participants were surprised when they saw three separate fields for the telephone number that did not automatically jump from one to the next as they filled it in. It seems there are enough other websites and applications that users have come to expect this functionality when they see a separated field. We can safely assume the same applies to the SIN number too, but none of the participants tested that.

We recommend:
Make an automatic tab function, as seen here:
http://www.javascriptkit.com/script/script2/autotab.shtml

24 School Input Year/Month Date Labels are Unclear

Dates attended

[2012　▾]　[March　▾]

[2012　▾]　[-- Month comple▾]

select your intended completion date.

- Use the drop-down list to select the credential awarded or to be awarded from this institution. If

A few participants had trouble understanding what the Year and Date labels mean on the add school pages. It's not explained whether the starting dates refer to when a student is accepted to school, or when they first start class.

As well, participants were confused by the Year Completed drop-down menu. While setting the Year Completed drop-down to the same year as the Year Started drop-down prevents the user from making an error, it also prevented them from reading the label.

We recommend:

We don't consider the meaning of the Year and Month labels to be a huge problem, but it wouldn't hurt do define them in the help text.

For the 'Year completed' drop down, remove the unnecessary years. (For example, if the user selects '2007' as a 'Year started', he should not see any years before 2007 in the 'Year completed' drop down.

Dates attended

[2007　▾]　[April　▾]

[-- Year completed ▾]　[-- Month complete ▾]

-- Year completed --
2013
2012
2011
2010
2009
2008
2007

Cancel　　Save Institution
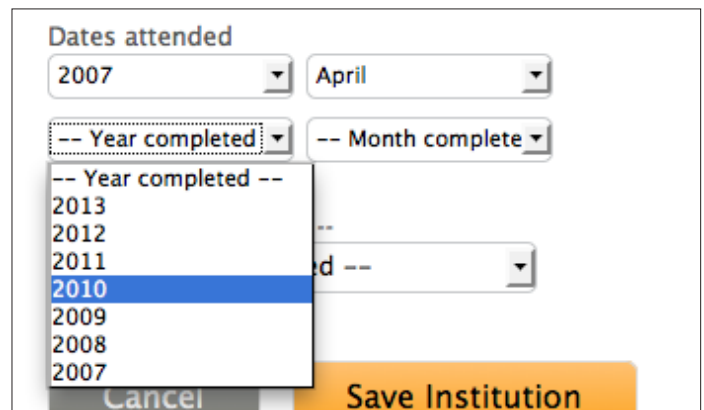
25 Month Complete Error Text is Ambiguous

Neither the error text nor the help text explains what should go into the Month Completed drop down for Post-secondary institutions. It's not clear whether intended completion date refers to date of graduation or transferring to another institution.

We recommend:
Change the "full completion date" to "your actual or intended month completed."

26 High Schools are not Ordered Chronologically

The order of high schools was mentioned by a few of the participants, and presumably made reviewing their schools unnecessarily difficult.

We recommend:
Put the schools in a descending order, i.e. the most recent one should be at the top.

27 Payment Result Page Needs an Actual Print Button

Use your browser's print function to print this page for your records.

Few of the participants even noticed the print this page in your browser instructions on the successful payment page. Those that did notice the instructions thought it was inconvenient that they had to do it themselves.

We recommend:
Include a print button. For consistency, use the same one as on CoursesBC.

Print this page for your records.

28 Frozen Program Selection Drop-Downs Affect Tabbing

First choice

Environment

-- Program --

Second choice

-- Faculty --
(Optional)

-- Program --
(Optional)

institution who has completed 24 or more transferable credits (units)

- Mature Student - an applicant aged 23 or more with less than 24 transferrable credits

- Visiting Student - an applicant intending to transfer credit earned at SFU back to their home institution

- It is possible to start most degree programs at the Surrey campus. Detailed information on Surrey programs and pathways is

Selecting a faculty with the keyboard, then tabbing, takes the user to the next faculty drop-down rather than to the program drop-down. This issue only occurs in Firefox, where the program drop-down is only selectable after the faculty drop-down has been de-selected.

We recommend:
Users should be able to select a program by tabbing in any browser.

29 There are no "required next steps" after the Payment Result Page

Your application number is 20000386

We will email required next steps to kchow433@gmail.com
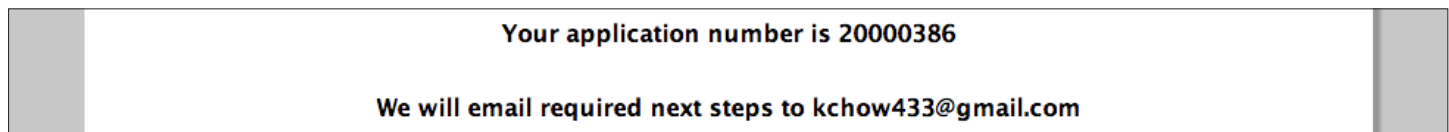
Participants were confused by the line 'We will email required next steps to [applicant's email address]' because right above that is 'Application Successful'. Everything else suggests they have completed their application and there are no more application steps after the Payment Result page.

We recommend:
Change the line "You have successfully submitted your application" to "Your payment is successful". That is a more accurate description of what the

user has just accomplished, indicating there is still more to do. Then change "We will email..." to "Your next steps will be sent to...", which should lessen confusion about who is sending the steps.

Your payment is successful

Your application number is 20000363

Your next steps will be sent to [applicant's email address]

## 30   Province Drop-down List Includes American States

The list of Canadian provinces on the Contact Information page includes American states. This is explicitly stated by the label "Province/State" but it still surprised many participants. We even had one participant select an American state by accident: Participant four lives in British Columbia, but selected Virginia by accident because it was listed along with the Canadian provinces. They corrected it, but it would be better if the Province drop-down does not list American States.

We recommend:
Do not include American States in the Canadian Province list.
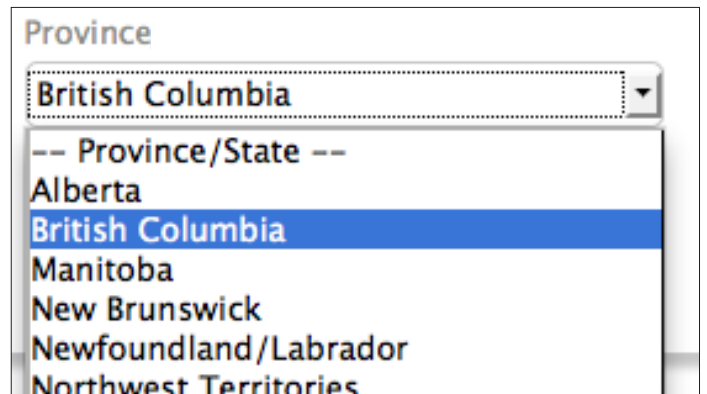
## 31   Hiding the Permission to Release Field adds Steps
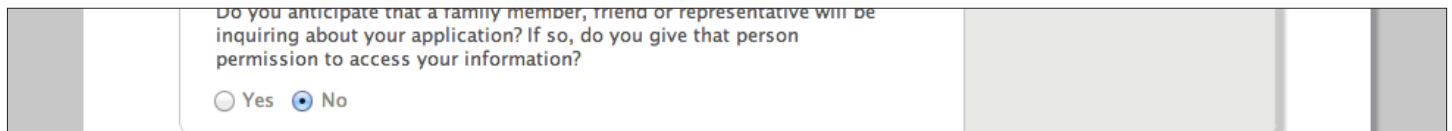
Participant six read through the Permission to Release description, selected Yes, then changed back to No when they saw they needed to enter a full name. Their decision would have been simpler if the Full Name field had not been hidden.

We recommend:
Do not hide the Permission to Release field. Instead, it should always be shown but greyed out when No is selected.
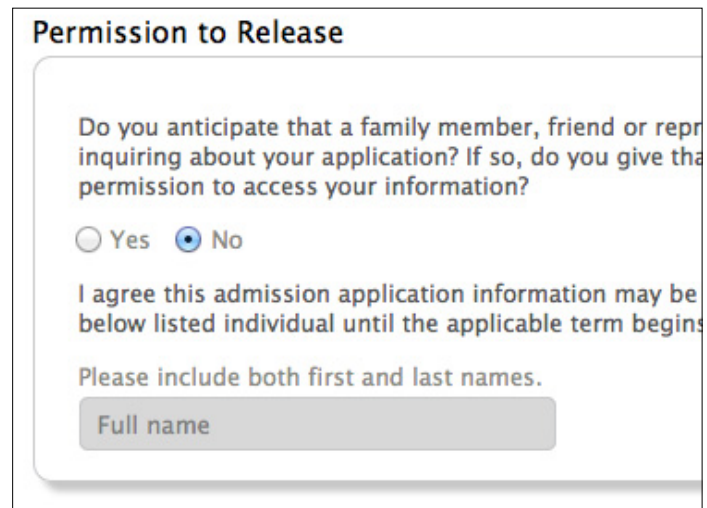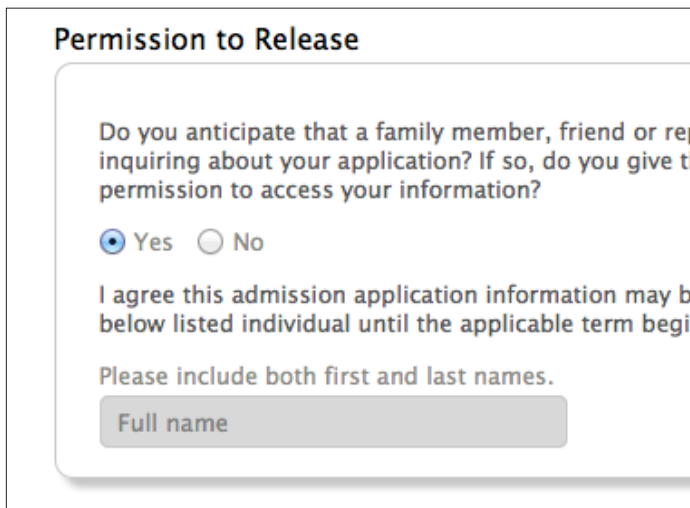
32 The Landing Page Cannot be Accessed From Within The Application
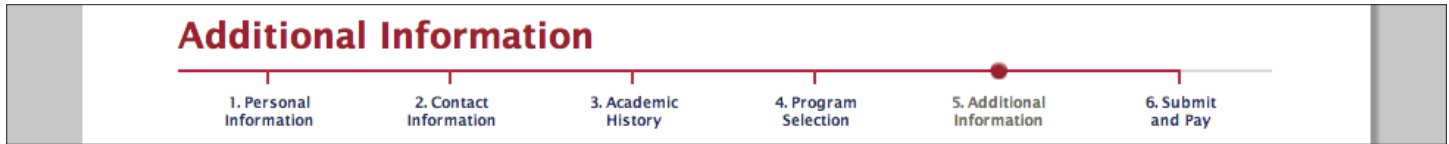

During scenario two, participant one went to the personal information page accidentally while still trying to learn what a second application was. They wanted to go back to the landing page. The only option was to use their back button because there is no link to the landing page from anywhere inside the application. Additionally, there were a few occasions where participants asked if they could go back to the landing page but didn't try because they saw no option to do so.

We recommend:
On the upper right navigation tab, provide a 'Home' link that goes to the landing page.
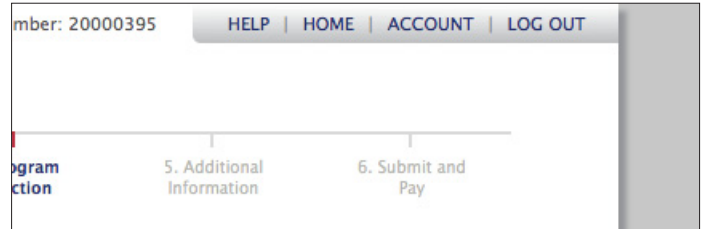
33 "SFU only accepts…" is Displayed After Submitting Payment
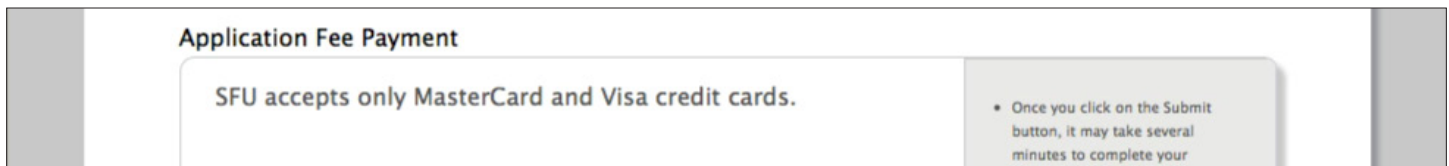
The line "SFU only accepts Mastercard and Visa" was on screen long enough for one participant to read it out. It's shown on the Submit and Pay Payment page while the Eigen iFrame is visible, and remains visible while payment is being processed. This looks like an error, and may confuse users. It should instead indicate that their payment is being processed.

We recommend:
Change the line to "Your payment is being processed..." and show a spinner to inform the user that their payment is processing.

As well, the line "SFU only accepts Mastercard and Visa" could be improved by displaying payment types in a prominent, fixed, location. Visual cues, such as payment card icons are also recommended.
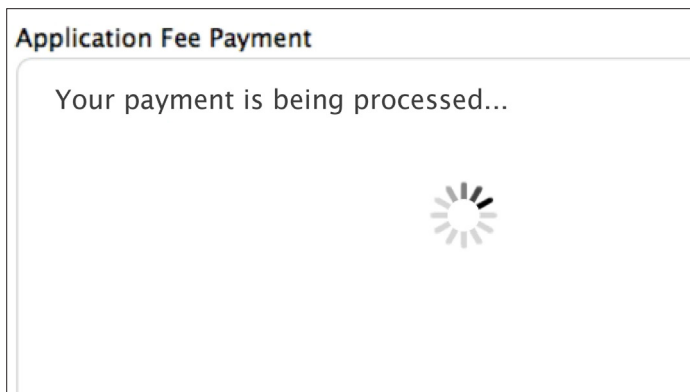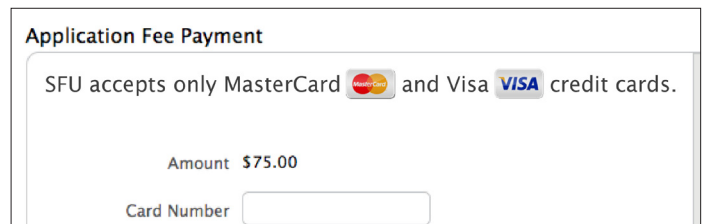
34 The Province Suggestion box does not allow users to Enter Alternate Inputs

In the Academic History, one participant tried repeatedly to enter 'BC' for province British Columbia but the suggested box did not allow him to type in 'BC'. After three attempts, the dialogue box poped up, indicating that "bc is an unlisted province".

We recommend:

Allow the user to enter alternate inputs such as 'BC' for British Columbia.