



NGN Talks: Usability Studies Video Transcript

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Usability studies are conducted to understand the extent to which a specific group can adequately use a product to achieve defined goals. Conducting usability studies improves an end user experience by addressing certain things during the design process, including learnability, can a user easily accomplish tasks based on the design? Efficiency, can a user easily perform tasks once the design is learned?

Memorability, can a user reestablish proficiency when returning to the product? And errors, common mistakes by users help designers identify flaws with the product. The NGN usability study worked to identify more innovative item types and response types than those used on the current exam.

The objective of the studies was to contribute additional relevant information to the NGN research and evaluation of clinical judgment. Currently, the NCLEX uses mostly multiple choice and multiple response type items. These items have a common layout and well-known methods for obtaining responses from candidates such as radio buttons or check boxes.

Next generation items employ a wider range of response options and item design features. NGN prototypes also have authentic scenarios where a number of questions reference a single scenario. This is a change from the current exam where the scenario in each question is unique. Given the difference between current NCLEX items and NGN items there were a number of important considerations that had to be explored to ensure the new items were easily comprehended and simple to use.

This piece is critical to validating new item and response types to ensure item difficulty is driven by the nature of the item content and required skills and not by irrelevant features of the item presentation such as poor design or ambiguous response methods. A group of nursing students participated in the usability study. Additionally, a group of professional nurses and nursing educators helped identify possible design issues and provided verbal feedback for item content.

This helped ensure all item content represents actual nursing clinical judgment scenarios that align with current practice of entry-level nurses. The results helped identify issues related to the design of the items and response formats that could potentially introduce problems or difficulties for candidates. Once the issues were identified, the items were reworked and reintroduced to both new and returning study participants for further evaluation.

This process continued until the study participants considered all items appropriate. The outcome is a set of item and response types for the NGN that are easy to understand, navigate, and make the process of answering items seamless, ensuring that only clinical judgment factors into a candidate's response. Along with validating design features, feedback on the new items from students and experts was overwhelmingly positive.

Participants indicated that the items are more realistic and a better fit to the type of work they encounter in their internships, practicums, and entry-level practice. The final results of these studies were incorporated into the design and further development of the new next-generation NCLEX items.

These items are now seen by current NCLEX test takers in the special research section as part of item type data collection or ITDC research. The usability studies have provided valuable input to ongoing NGN research. You can learn more about the NGN project at the NGN resource page at ncsbn.org.