FE Digital student project

Focus group protocol

If possible, in advance, ask the College organiser to have students seated in groups of 4 or 5, having completed the consent and profile forms.

If necessary, lay out tables for small groups with one flipchart page, one marker pen, blu-tac and sweets on each.

Begin with a short introduction, welcome participants and review the aims of the research as described in the P participant information sheet. Ask if there are any questions, or if anyone wishes to withdraw.

[Ask participants to complete the learner profile form and the consent sheet, unless done in advance]

Card sort activity (approx 1 hour)

» Outline the card sort activity, briefly

» Check groups are of 4, 5 or 6 – issue each group with a piece of flipchart paper/blu-tac/one large felt pen and one theme envelope with the 'group number and theme card' attached to the outside – [repeat this for each theme]

» At the end of each individual theme, ask them to put their flip-charts on the wall, photograph the charts and ask them to consider the theme questions [read from the card sort themes and questions pages below] in their groups and prepare an agreed answer [give them 2-3 mins]

» Whilst they are considering, lay out a new flipchart page on each table, remove flipcharts from wall, in preparation for next theme

» Each theme plenary – gather their table responses to the questions [audio recorded]

Card sort themes and questions

Introduce the first theme and ask them to blu-tac the 'group number and theme card' to the top of the flipchart paper provided. Then ask them to discuss in their group and place the remaining cards onto the flip chart paper in priority order. [Audio recorded]. Point out the 'any other items' prompt cards and encourage them to list any items they feel are missing from the theme on the flipchart in the correct priority order with the marker pen.

Give them the tip:
Only choose items in response to those questions that a) you are confident about and b) the group agrees on.

Access to technology items:

Q. Which of these do you expect your college to provide for you? (Access to technology items)
When you have chosen these, prioritise them with the most important at the top and least important at the bottom.

Items:

» Robust broadband (wifi) connection

» Access to social media (e.g. skype, facebook, last.fm)

» Email account

» Access to cloud storage (e.g. Dropbox)

» Access to industry standard vocational technology (Robotics, Computer Aided Design, Google Earth, Data Analysis tools)

» A Virtual Learning Environment with tutor contact, group forum, etc.

» A Virtual Learning Environment with personal space to store college work; portfolio tool for coursework, digital templates e.g. CV etc.

» Device (laptop, tablet, desktop computer etc) for individual use when required

» Access to a printer when required

» Access to a digital camera when required

» Lecture notes and lecture recordings in electronic format

» Course management aids – electronic diary, timetable, work experience information, rooming information, library catalogue

» Anything else not on these cards

Ask them to consider the following questions [one at a time] on their tables and then gather in their responses – audio recorded only.

Q. What technologies can you not do without, as a student?

Q. How do you use them?

Q. How did you discover them?

Useful Skills items:

Introduce the next theme and ask them to blu-tac the 'group number and theme card' to the top of the flipchart paper provided. Then ask them to discuss in their group and place the remaining cards onto the flip chart paper in priority order. [audio recorded]. Point out the 'any other items' prompt cards and encourage them to list any items they feel are missing from the theme on the flipchart in the correct priority order with the marker pen.

Give them the tip:
Only choose items in response to those questions that a) you are confident about and b) the group agrees on.

Q. Which of these skills do you expect to acquire at college? (Functional skills items)
When you have chosen these, prioritise them with the most important at the top and least important at the bottom

Items:
» Basic ICT skills e.g. use of browser (search engines), email, word processing

» Use of technologies to overcome disability or disadvantage

» Use of College systems (e.g. library catalogue, virtual learning environment, submission systems)

» Use of search engines and online search techniques

» Use of social media to build networks and share ideas

» Writing computer code – opportunities and/or training

» Anything else not on these cards

Ask them to consider the following questions [one at a time] on their tables and then gather in their responses – audio recorded only

Q. Looking back on your career as a student so far, what technologies have made the biggest difference to how you study?

Q. What technologies have made a difference to your grades?

Experience items:

Introduce the next theme and ask them to blu-tac the 'group number and theme card' to the top of the flipchart paper provided. Then ask them to discuss in their group and place the remaining cards onto the flip chart paper in priority order. [audio recorded]. Point out the 'any other items' prompt cards and encourage them to list any items they feel are missing from the theme on the flipchart in the correct priority order with the marker pen.

Give them the tip:
Only choose items in response to those questions that a) you are confident about and b) the group agrees on.

Q. Which of these experiences do you expect to have during your time at college? (Experience items)
When you have chosen these, prioritise them with the most important at the top and least important at the bottom

Items:
» Experience with technologies used in the workplace

» Experience with technologies used by researchers (e.g. for data collection/analysis)

» Experience with presentation software (e.g. PowerPoint, Prezi, animation)

» Experience building/contributing to a public site (e.g. wiki, blog, website)

» Experience creating and editing with digital media (e.g. video, audio, apps)

» Experience working with social media for educational purposes

» Experience participating in online discussions

» Experience collaborating online with others e.g. sharing files

» Anything else not on these cards

Q. What new ways of using technology have been introduced to you as part of your course?

Q. What new ways of using technology have been introduced to you by other students?

Attributes items:

Introduce the first theme and ask them to blu-tac the 'group number and theme card' to the top of the flipchart paper provided. Then ask them to discuss in their group and place the remaining cards onto the flip chart paper in priority order. [audio recorded]. Point out the 'any other items' prompt cards and encourage them to list any items they feel are missing from the theme on the flipchart in the correct priority order with the marker pen.

Give them the tip:
Only choose items in response to those questions that a) you are confident about and b) the group agrees on.

Q. Which of these personal qualities or attributes do you expect to gain from your time at college?

(Attribute items) When you have chosen these, prioritise them with the most important at the top and least important at the bottom

Items:

» Ability to choose appropriate technologies for different tasks

» Ability to judge value/credibility of messages in digital media

» Ability to judge value/credibility of online information

» Understanding of safe, ethical use of social media (cyber-bullying, e-safety, the need to protect private information, adopting a clear moral code, etc)

» Understanding of the latest digital trends (gadgets, media)

» Knowing how to project a positive digital identity / profile

» Ability to enter a workplace and feel confident in the use of technology

» Anything else not on these cards

Ask them to consider the following questions [one at a time] on their tables and then gather in their responses – audio recorded only

Q. How does your college find out your views about digital technologies?

Q. How do you feel they respond to you?

Q. How would you like them to involve you?

Q. What could they be doing better?

Summary question:
Finally, if there was one technology access or skill or experience or attribute you could have that you don't presently, what would it be?

Give them the tip:
Only choose items in response to those questions that a) you are confident about and b) the group agrees on.

Thank learners for their co-operation and point out the benefits of having participated:

» they will be helping organisations understand their needs relating to technology

» the fact that they have participated in this research will look good on their CVs!