Equipment

Our equipment is continually updated. Test rooms have work-stations with large-format LCD touch-screens. Video from our dome cameras is mixed with quad, picture-in-picture, and other vision mixing options.

We record onto any combination of SVHS tape, mini-DV, DVD, dedicated hard drive, or directly onto PC or Macintosh hard drives on workstations or laptops. AV editing equipment and software is available for making highlights tapes from user evaluation sessions.

Commercial, research, and teaching missions

The UQUL supports a wide variety of activities: commercial user-centred design and evaluation, industry short courses, basic and applied research, and university teaching.

Applications tested for commercial clients range from websites that will be used by millions of Australians, to multimedia applications that will be used by highly specialist groups.

We can also organise short courses in many aspects of user-centred design and evaluation, based around your needs.

Most daily activity in the UQUL is research carried out by UQ academics and students. In different studies, the UQUL test rooms have been turned into sound studios, anaesthetists' workstations, control rooms, and command-and-control centres. We welcome new researchers to the UQUL.

We also teach advanced classes in the UQUL, giving UQ students the opportunity to experience a state-of-the-art usability facility.

Contact

To learn more about UQUL resources and services, or to arrange a tour of the facility, please contact Professor Penelope Sanderson, the director of the UQUL.

Quotations for use of the UQUL facility and UQUL consulting services can be arranged on request.

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The UQUL is an initiative of the following units at UQ

> School of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering

> School of Psychology

> UQ Strategic Initiative

> The ARC Key Centre for Human Factors and Applied Psychology.

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

University of Queensland Usability Laboratory (UQUL)

A state-of-the-art facility for user-centred design

Test early, test often!

In the rush to market, new products often meet their users too late in the development cycle for developers to act on users' feedback.

Whether it's a website, a PDA application, a multimedia product or a complex information system, we collect user feedback when it's useful – early.

With early feedback a development team gets focused on the right issues.

At The University of Queensland Usability Laboratory (UQUL) consultants are experienced in facilitating participatory design sessions, walkthroughs and user evaluations of various kinds and documenting the results for clients.

Clients who have used UQUL facilities and consulting services include:

> federal and state government departments
> local corporations
> other tertiary institutions
> other units inside UQ.

User evaluation

Whether you're doing a quick user evaluation to test a concept, a detailed evaluation to benchmark performance, or an in-depth research study, the UQUL adapts to your needs.

The UQUL has two state-of-the-art test rooms. Each can take groups of six to eight people, or support testing with just one user.
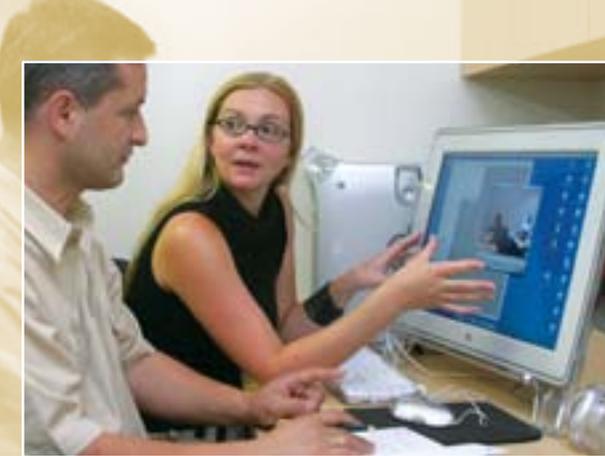
Each test room offers the following:

> Three remotely-controlled ceiling cameras with pan-tilt-zoom-focus. Cameras can be arranged in multiple locations.

> Crisp whole-room audio pickup using pressure zone microphones.

> Optional low-light video pickup that lets us test systems used under low levels of illumination.

Test rooms can be reconfigured to suit a range of purposes, applications and group interactions.

A control room with huge one-way mirrored windows gives observers an uninterrupted view of what's happening in each test room.

Interaction with clients

Our most important role is making sure everything works smoothly and that you get useful, timely feedback.

We work closely with clients to determine the best service we can provide.

> Some clients have key questions and simply ask us to find the answers.

> Other clients get involved in the process and help out throughout the process.

> Further clients already have user-centred design and evaluation skills, and just need to hire the UQUL facility.

Once video data and observer notes have been collected in the test rooms, they are reviewed and analysed in our AV analysis room. Our PC and Macintosh equipment and software helps us quickly collate data, note the most important issues, and assemble the evidence to back up our conclusions. UQUL usability consultants can do this, or clients can hire time on our equipment where available.

Plan   Evaluate   Interact