A2: Identifying Performance Problems
Team Two: Amber Burtless, Ashlee Chance, Irielle Davis, and Zion Smith
LTEC 647
Winthrop University

1. Define Your Audience

Winthrop's Office of Online Learning (WOOL) (https://www.winthrop.edu/onlinelearning/) is a division of Winthrop University. Winthrop University is a public university in Rock Hill, South Carolina. The mission of WOOL is to support the delivery of quality online, hybrid, and technology-enhanced courses; the design, development, and assessment of instructional strategies and materials; and the use of Learning Management System (LMS)- currently Blackboard Ultra and integrated software. The intended audience of the performance problem is the students who will be engaging in Blackboard Ultra. WOOL provides support and training for Blackboard for students as well as staff. WOOL is an open system guided by Winthrop University and its faculty, staff, and students' needs.

Based on the data gathered, we found the following demographics of our learners to be:

1. The learners are of various ethnicity, age, and gender.
2. What are the common traits of the members of the learning group?
   a. Equipped with at least basic computing and web knowledge
   b. Access to a device and internet connection
   c. Motivation to succeed in their courses to pass/earn a degree
3. What are the differences among learners?
   a. Some students:
      i. have completed higher education courses; others have not
      ii. have only used the older version of Blackboard for all their courses
      iii. have experience with Blackboard Ultra
      iv. have used different learning management systems
4. What is the motivation for participating in the instructional event?
   a. Being more successful in a course due to less frustration. This is due to being more time effective and efficient with the functionalities of Blackboard
5. Do the learners have non-instruction needs (e.g., rest, food, safety) that must be met so that they may focus on the instructional activity?
   a. The lives of the students are very diverse. This may be true for some of the learners. Regardless, all students are dealing with the stressors of everyday life.
6. What will make the instruction effective, efficient, and appealing to the target audience of learners?
   a. The learners will be provided with a website where they can access all the tools.
7. How has the instructional design team planned for the accommodations of culturally and physically diverse learners?
   a. Accessibility check on all items before it is put out
      i. Alt text, etc.
   b. The learners will not have to complete a task that they would not already be doing. All tasks will fall under items they need to do to succeed in a course on Blackboard Ultra.

8. What evaluation strategies will the instructional design team use to determine the success of the learner analysis and how to refine future analyses for the instructional event?
    a. WOOL sends out feedback surveys to students for Blackboard Ultra. This will be used to determine the success, and it will determine what needs to be refined for better instruction.

2. Identify Performance Problems

a. Analysis conducted and the data source used

Data Source	Cause Analysis	Gap Analysis
Ultra Development Course shell with Blackboard How To's accordion [Blackboard Ultra Outline](#)	Ultra Development course shell reflects a lack of easily identifiable resources/tutorials.	There are numerous functions available while using Blackboard Ultra but the lack of support prevents full use of its functionality.
Ultra Student Survey Data and Winthrop Service Desk Tickets 📄 Blackboard Learn Ultra … 📄 Blackboard Learn Ultra … ➕ Winthrop Service Desk …	Because it was many students' first course using Blackboard Ultra they anticipated training before starting their course in the new Learning Management System. Many students were unsure of the new layout, navigating Blackboard Ultra, and finding their course materials.	WOOL provided service desk tickets and survey data collected at the end of Blackboard Ultra courses in Fall 2022 and 2023. The data reflected a lack of familiarity with navigating Blackboard Ultra which contributed to the overflow of service desk tickets
Winthrop Office of Online Learning (WOOL) Meeting	During the meeting with WOOL, they described an overlap in reusable resources. The limited access to various reusable materials has resulted in students' and instructors' lack of understanding of Blackboard Ultras' functionality.	Our meeting with WOOL revealed instructors are also in need of support resources for Blackboard Ultra. Some instructors are apprehensive about assisting students with technical problems.

Our team conducted a Cause and Gap Analysis to help Winthrop's Office of Online Learning (WOOL) identify and analyze performance problems and their causes. We interviewed WOOL about the performance problems online students are experiencing with Blackboard Ultra. Some students adapt to Blackboard Ultra while using it, while others need resources for additional assistance. Many students contact WOOL seeking help with Blackboard when they experience difficulty.

Using information communicated during the interview and analyzing resources WOOL provided including surveys and Winthrop service desk tickets we were able to locate several gaps in performance and the potential causes of these gaps. Our goal was not only to identify the causes of the performance gaps but to also create additional resources and a better experience for online learners navigating Blackboard Ultra.

Conducting the cause analysis also revealed many students didn't know how to navigate Blackboard Ultra due to the lack of resources and tutorials readily available. Due to not knowing where to locate resources to help understand Ultras functionalities, many students turned to instructors for support; however, some instructors could not aid students in everything they had questions about. This resulted in instructors reaching out to WOOL and Blackboard Support to relay information to students. We determined it's important for students and instructors to understand what resources are available to them to assist them with getting familiar with Blackboard Ultra and issues they may come across while navigating Ultra.

b. Smart Questions

1. Who is our audience?
2. What is the problem?
3. In regards to feedback loops, do you have student surveys from Blackboard use? What do these look like?
4. Which of the components of Blackboard Ultra are students needing the most support with?
5. What format is best for the Blackboard Ultra tutorials? Videos? PDF? Website? A Combination?
6. What do we need to keep in mind when thinking about accessibility when designing our materials?
7. Looking forward, we wanted to identify the gap analysis- what can you tell us about this?
8. What format is best for the Blackboard Ultra tutorials? Videos? PDF? Website? A Combination?

During our client meeting, we implemented Harless' smart questions to help WOOL identify performance problems linked to using Blackboard Ultra, LMS. WOOL explained how some students are having trouble navigating Blackboard Ultra and instructors aren't as confident in providing technical support yet. These questions prompted WOOL to provide us with survey

data from students and service desk tickets submitted by faculty and students to analyze and use to determine where support is needed most while using Blackboard Ultra.

c. Performance Problems

- **Students are unsure of how to navigate Blackboard Ultra**
    - Students had previously used Blackboard Learn which has a different layout than Ultra.

- **Unfamiliar with vertical navigation**
    - Blackboard Ultra uses vertical navigation in its layout. Students were more familiar with side panel navigation.

- **Unsure who to contact when issues arise**
    - When students were experiencing issues with Blackboard Ultra, they were unsure who to contact. In the survey of Fall 2022 students, 61% of students said they contacted their instructor when having issues with Ultra; 58% of students did the same in Fall 2023. This may be fine for some instructors, but many instructors are apprehensive about Ultra and are not always sure what to tell students. The instructors then reach out to WOOL or other Blackboard support.

- **Course Navigation**
    - Due to their unfamiliarity with Blackboard Ultra, some students are unable to navigate within their course.

- **General online learning questions**
    - Students are not all used to the online learning environment and the virtual setting. They are familiar with in-person classes but virtual aspects such as discussion boards are not a strength.

- **Finding assignments from week to week**
    - Because students are unfamiliar with Blackboard Ultra and its navigation, they are unable to find their assignments within the course.

- **Submitting/resubmitting assignments**
    - Some students surveyed stated that they had a hard time finding their assignments within the course navigation. They also did not know how to resubmit an assignment once it was submitted.

- **Marking assignments/tasks as complete**
    - Students can see the progress circles next to assignments and may see when they are marked as opened by a half circle, but may not know how to mark them as complete as they are not automatically marked as complete.

3. Proposed Solutions

- **Infographic**
  - Many students were generally unsure about ways to be successful pertaining to Blackboard. We think an infographic would be beneficial to provide information about ways to be successful in an online discussion board. It discusses the importance of using the course knowledge in their answers and responses to others, being prompt with the initial post and responses, and advice for giving good feedback.

- **Quick Reference Guides**
  - Quick reference guides serve as a convenient resource to students by providing step-by-step instructions for common tasks that may be required while using Blackboard Ultra. The reference guide will include tasks such as how to download and use authenticate, where to go for help, and how to navigate Blackboard Ultra.

- **Checklists**
  - Students are experiencing difficulties finding their assignments, submitting their assignments, and resubmitting their assignments(if necessary). Checklists on "how to submit assignments" and "how to resubmit assessments" may be beneficial for the learners. There are two ways that the students can find their assignments; there will be a checklist for each way. We would include sequential steps for students to find, submit, and/or resubmit assignments.

- **FAQ**
  - Frequently Asked Questions will be helpful for general navigation information and questions that students might have in the beginning. The FAQ is composed of questions from our own experience, questions from surveys, and help desk tickets.

- **Decision Tree**
  - Students need a resource on who to reach out to when an issue or a question arises. They are unsure of who is the correct person or group. The learners end up reaching out to many different people to find their answers. With the use of the decision tree, the students can look for their questions or issues. It will then lead them to who they should contact and how they can contact them. This will decrease the number of points of contact to find their answer.