

# UMass Dartmouth Professional and Continuing Education Website Usability Test

## Final Report

The screenshot shows the homepage of the UMass Dartmouth Professional and Continuing Education website. At the top left is the UMass Dartmouth logo with the tagline "World Class. Within Reach." To the right of the logo is a search bar with a "Search" button. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for ABOUT, ADMISSIONS, ACADEMICS, RESEARCH, OUTREACH, STUDENT LIFE, and ATHLETICS. The main content area is titled "Welcome to Professional & Continuing Education" and features a large photograph of a modern building with a pink flowering tree in the foreground. To the right of the photo is a "Quick Links" section with a list of links: Course Listings, Request Information, How to Apply, Withdrawal & Refunds, Printable Forms, Contact Us, Directions, and PCE Staff. Below the photo is a paragraph of text describing the PCE programs, followed by a list of program categories: Undergraduate Degree Programs, Undergraduate Certificate Programs, Graduate Degree Programs, Graduate Certificate Programs, Online Programs, and Non-Credit Courses. At the bottom of the main content area is a "Register Today!" button and a link for "Winter Intercession". On the left side of the page is a sidebar menu for "Professional & Continuing Education" with sub-links for Academic Programs, Online Learning, Winter Intersession, Course Listings, Cape Cod Programs, Non-Credit Courses, Admission and Application, Registration & Costs, Corporate Programs, Contact Us, and Academic Resources. Below the sidebar menu is a "World Class. Within Reach." logo and a list of social media icons: Apply, Visit, Give, and Share.

**Professional & Continuing Education**

Academic Programs  
Online Learning  
Winter Intersession  
Course Listings  
Cape Cod Programs  
Non-Credit Courses  
Admission and Application  
Registration & Costs  
Corporate Programs  
Contact Us  
Academic Resources  
FAQs

World Class.  
Within Reach.

Apply  
Visit  
Give  
Share

Quick Links:

- [Course Listings](#)
- [Request Information](#)
- [How to Apply](#)
- [Withdrawal & Refunds](#)
- [Printable Forms](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Directions](#)
- [PCE Staff](#)

**Welcome to Professional & Continuing Education**

Professional & Continuing Education (PCE) has designed programs to help busy adults reach their academic and professional goals. Most students attending the University through PCE work full-time or have family responsibilities requiring the flexibility and convenience of evening, weekend, and online courses.

PCE offers the following programs:

- [Undergraduate Degree Programs](#)
- [Undergraduate Certificate Programs](#)
- [Graduate Degree Programs](#)
- [Graduate Certificate Programs](#)
- [Online Programs](#)
- [Non-Credit Courses](#)

Choose from more than 200 credit courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Students may enroll in a single course, a number of courses, or a degree program. [Search for courses](#) in a variety of ways, including by term, session, subject area, and campus location.

[Non-credit](#) courses are also offered each term for personal development. Courses for professional certification may also be offered whereby Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are earned.

**Register Today!**

[Winter Intersession](#)

Prepared by Brian Klotz  
5 December 2012

# Table of Contents

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Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Description of Test Plan and Procedures	6
User Profile	7
Scenarios	8
Severity Codes	10
Findings	11
#1 - High Priority	12
#2 - High Priority	13
#3 - High Priority	14
#4 - High Priority	15
#5 - Medium Priority	16
#6 - Medium Priority	17
#7 - Medium Priority	18
#8 - Low Priority	19
#9 - Low Priority	20
#10 - Low Priority	21
Analysis of Questionnaire Results	22
Recommendations for Changes/Improvements	25
Suggestions for Future Testing	28
Appendix A: Heuristic Evaluation	29
Appendix B: Personas	44
Appendix C: Test Plan	47
Appendix D: Screening Questionnaires	55
Appendix E: Pre-Test Questionnaires	64
Appendix F: Post-Task Questionnaires for Scenario #1	69
Appendix G: Post-Task Questionnaires for Scenario #2	74
Appendix H: Video Consent/Release Form	79

# Executive Summary

This usability test for UMass Dartmouth's Professional and Continuing Education (PCE) website was conducted on the school's main campus in the Fall of 2012. The primary objective of the test was to improve the usability of the site by collecting feedback regarding its user experience. This was a small-scale test, with four testers in total - one of which was a pilot/walkthrough tester, although their data is included because the test remained largely unchanged afterwards.

The testers were all current graduate students attending UMass Dartmouth. They were selected because they match the user profile that was generated through previous research and interviews. Since the test was primarily aimed to make the site more appealing and usable to prospective students (and in order to receive unbiased feedback), current PCE students and those already familiar with the PCE site were disqualified. Graduate students were chosen because they fit the criteria of one of PCE's main target populations: individuals in their mid-to-late 20's who have previous academic experience and balance scholarly pursuits with other responsibilities, such as a job.

The test was divided into two Scenarios. Scenario #1 focused on testers' initial impressions of the site's landing page and the "Why UMass Dartmouth PCE?" page (currently still a test page). The results of this Scenario were generally positive; the testers felt that the copy was effective in communicating to a prospective student the benefits of taking classes through PCE.

In Scenario #2, the testers were asked to locate on the site several pieces of information that a prospective student might commonly seek. The testers each struggled to varying degrees on these tasks, primarily due to navigation issues, as they generally agreed that the text was clear.

The ten major findings of this test were as follows:

The left sidebar is not noticeable enough.	The list of accepted credit cards on the "Payment Procedures" page is not noticeable enough.
The text on the "Admission and Application" and "Tuition and Fees" pages is not scannable enough.	The "Campus Locations" link on the landing page is confusing
The "Quick Links" menu does not appear on every page, and it is not consistent.	One tester wished there were more pictures throughout the site, particularly photos of actual PCE students and facilities.
Testers had difficulty locating items on the left sidebar.	There should be a clearly labeled link to the "Payment Procedures" page on the "Tuition and Fees" page, and vice-versa.
There is not enough information about specific programs on the landing page.	Two of the four testers felt the image on the landing page was unappealing.

This report contains more information about these findings, including a severity scale, as well as the testing procedures, user profile, questionnaire results, and recommendations for changes.

# Introduction

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This report contains the results of a usability test of UMass Dartmouth's Professional and Continuing Education (PCE) website conducted in the Fall of 2012. The purpose of the testing was to collect feedback as to how users navigate the site, how easily they can find the information they need, and what their impressions of the site are.

The study began when Kathryn Salmon, PCE's Director of Marketing, expressed concern regarding the usability of the site. She was particularly concerned that prospective students may have difficulty finding information that would encourage them to enroll in PCE classes. Frustrated users are more likely to leave the site before learning if PCE is right for them, so therefore enhanced usability would aim to prevent this.

Although the PCE website is currently live and in use, it is actively being updated to address usability concerns. These issues include:

- Information may be difficult to find.
- The content may not be clear and understandable.
- The left sidebar menu may be too cumbersome.

Much of the copy has recently been revised in an effort to make it more readable and understandable for users. However, none of the content – new or old – has been user-tested.

The conceptual framework by which this test will define usability is the “5Es” conceived by usability expert Whitney Quesenbery. These are<sup>1</sup>:

- **Effective** – How completely and accurately the work or experience is completed or goals reached
- **Efficient** – How quickly this work can be completed
- **Engaging** – How well the interface draws the user into the interaction and how pleasant and satisfying it is to use
- **Error tolerant** – How well the product prevents errors and can help the user recover from mistakes that do occur
- **Easy to learn** – How well the product supports both the initial orientation and continued learning throughout the complete lifetime of use

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<sup>1</sup> Barnum, Carol M. *Usability Testing Essentials*. Burlington: Elsevier, 2011. Print.

This report contains, in order:

- A description of the test plan and procedures
- The user profile for the study
- The scenarios used in testing
- An explanation of the severity codes used to rank findings
- A list of findings, in descending order of severity
- An analysis of the testers' responses to the post-task questionnaires
- Recommendations for both short- and long-term changes and improvements based on the findings
- Suggestions for further testing

In addition, a number of appendices are attached. These include:

- Appendix A: A heuristic evaluation of a competing website done prior to testing
- Appendix B: The user personas generated to guide the formation of the user profile
- Appendix C: The test plan
- Appendix D: The filled-out screeners for each participant
- Appendices E-G: The filled-out questionnaires of each participant
- Appendix H: The video consent/release form that allowed participants to be recorded via webcam

# Description of Test Plan and Procedures

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After researching the PCE site, conducting a heuristic evaluation of a competing site (**Appendix A**), and forming an appropriate user profile, the test plan for this study was created (**Appendix C**). Current UMass Dartmouth graduate students who passed the screener criteria (**Appendix D**) were recruited to participate.

A pilot walkthrough of the test was conducted with one user. Besides streamlining the testing process, the only major changes made to the procedure afterwards was the addition of questions 6 and 7 to Scenario #2. As such, there are no results from the pilot user for those questions.

As this is a small-scale, mostly qualitative test, a small number of testers were chosen to participate. In addition to the pilot user, the test was conducted with three participants. The pilot test was conducted in a classroom setting, while the other tests were conducted in the Teaching Assistant office on the campus of UMass Dartmouth. Only the tester and the researcher were present. The tester completed the tasks using a Toshiba laptop equipped with Internet Explorer. They were recorded - with their consent (**Appendix H**) - during each task using the laptop's built-in webcam. Participation was voluntary, and the testers were not compensated for their time.

The goals of this test were to learn:

- users' expectations from the site
- if commonly sought-after content is findable and understandable
- if the organization is logical
- whether or not the copy is effective

The knowledge gained from these goals will in turn help the product (the PCE website) achieve its overall goals for improvement, which are as follows:

- increase enrollment in PCE
- decrease complaints about lack of site usability
- enhance "stickiness" of site

The goals for both the test and the product itself were derived from interviews with the client, Kathryn Salmon, as well as individuals who match the criteria of the user profile (see the **User Profile** on the next page).

# User Profile

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This user profile was generated based on discussions with the client as well as interviews with potential users. It is intended to represent one of the two larger populations of potential PCE students, as described below; since this is a small-scale study, the other major group – which includes older students and career-changers – was not included in this particular study, but would be worthy of future study (see **Suggestions for Future Testing**).

Since the primary goals of this test were to improve the usability of the site for *prospective* students who have little to no prior experience with the site, current PCE students were disqualified as testers. As the profile calls for experienced academics in roughly their mid-to-late 20's who balance school- and job-related responsibilities, graduate students were chosen to fulfill the role of tester.

Therefore, the qualifications were that the tester:

- is a current graduate student
- is not already familiar with the PCE website
- has a job (assistantships qualified)
- is between 22 and 30 years old
- uses the Internet at least 7 hours per week (all testers rated their own Internet proficiency as an 8 or above on a 1-10 scale - see **Appendix D**)
- has used academic websites before

The user personas that were created to guide the design of these criteria can be found in **Appendix B**.

On the Pre-Test Questionnaire (**Appendix E**), the testers indicated that their major concerns when choosing an academic program included:

- Cost/financial aid
- Types of programs offered
- Reputation

The ideal tone they would want from an academic website is informative, inviting, and friendly. They become frustrated with academic websites that have difficult navigation, disorganization, or too many links.

# Scenarios

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All scenarios began with the tester on the website landing page ([www.umassd.edu/pce](http://www.umassd.edu/pce)) using Internet Explorer. Since the PCE website is a part of the larger UMass Dartmouth site, if at any point the tester left the pages being tested, they were instructed to return to the previous page.

(Note that Scenario #1 incorporated the “Why UMass Dartmouth PCE?” page, which as of this writing, is still a test page. During testing, the page was open in a separate tab in the web browser, since there is no link to it from the landing page. This has no bearing on the results, however, since Scenario #1 did not test navigation.)

## **Scenario #1:**

“You are considering taking classes at PCE, but aren’t sure if it is the right choice for you. You have gone to their website to find out.”

### *Task*

“Take three minutes in total to look at the main page and the ‘Why UMass Dartmouth PCE?’ page (you may go back and forth as you wish). You will be instructed to minimize the page once time has expired. At that time you will fill out the appropriate post-task questionnaire (**Appendix F**).”

### *Objective*

This scenario was designed to determine whether or not the landing page and “Why UMass Dartmouth PCE?” page are effective in persuasively communicating what PCE has to offer students. This is crucial because if users are not engaged by these pages, they may not remain on the site to look at the rest of the content.

## **Scenario #2:**

“You have decided that you are interested in taking classes through PCE, but want to know some more specific information before you make your final decision.”

### *Tasks*

“Locate the answers to the following questions that you have:

1. In what three towns/cities does PCE hold classes? (Online does not count.)
2. Are there due dates for applications?

3. If you have previously taken courses at UMass Dartmouth, where should you indicate this?
4. How much would it cost (including tuition and fees) to take an online MBA graduate course?
5. Does PCE accept MasterCard to pay for classes?
6. When must you withdraw from a course in order receive a refund of all tuition and fees?
7. On what day do courses begin for the Spring 2013 semester?

After this is completed, fill out the appropriate post-task questionnaire (**Appendix G**)."

### *Objective*

How easily the user can find and interpret the information, how long it takes them to do so, and if they can recover from errors along the way determines if the site's navigation is logical, as well as if the content is findable and scannable.

# Severity Codes

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Each finding in this study will be ranked using a simple three-point severity scale. This will make it easier to determine in what order the issues should be addressed.

- **“High Priority”** indicates an issue of critical importance, in that it severely hinders the user experience.
- **“Medium Priority”** indicates an issue that hinders the user experience, but to a lesser degree – these should be dealt with after the “High Priority” issues.
- **“Low Priority”** indicates an issue that should be addressed only if time and resources allow for it after the other issues have been resolved.

# Findings

For ease-of-use purposes, findings are presented in descending order of severity ranking. Each finding is listed along with which of Quesenbery's 5E's it affects.

The positive findings can be found within the **Analysis of Questionnaire Results** section, as they have no severity level and were primarily displayed on the written questionnaires rather than during the testing itself.

# #1 - High Priority

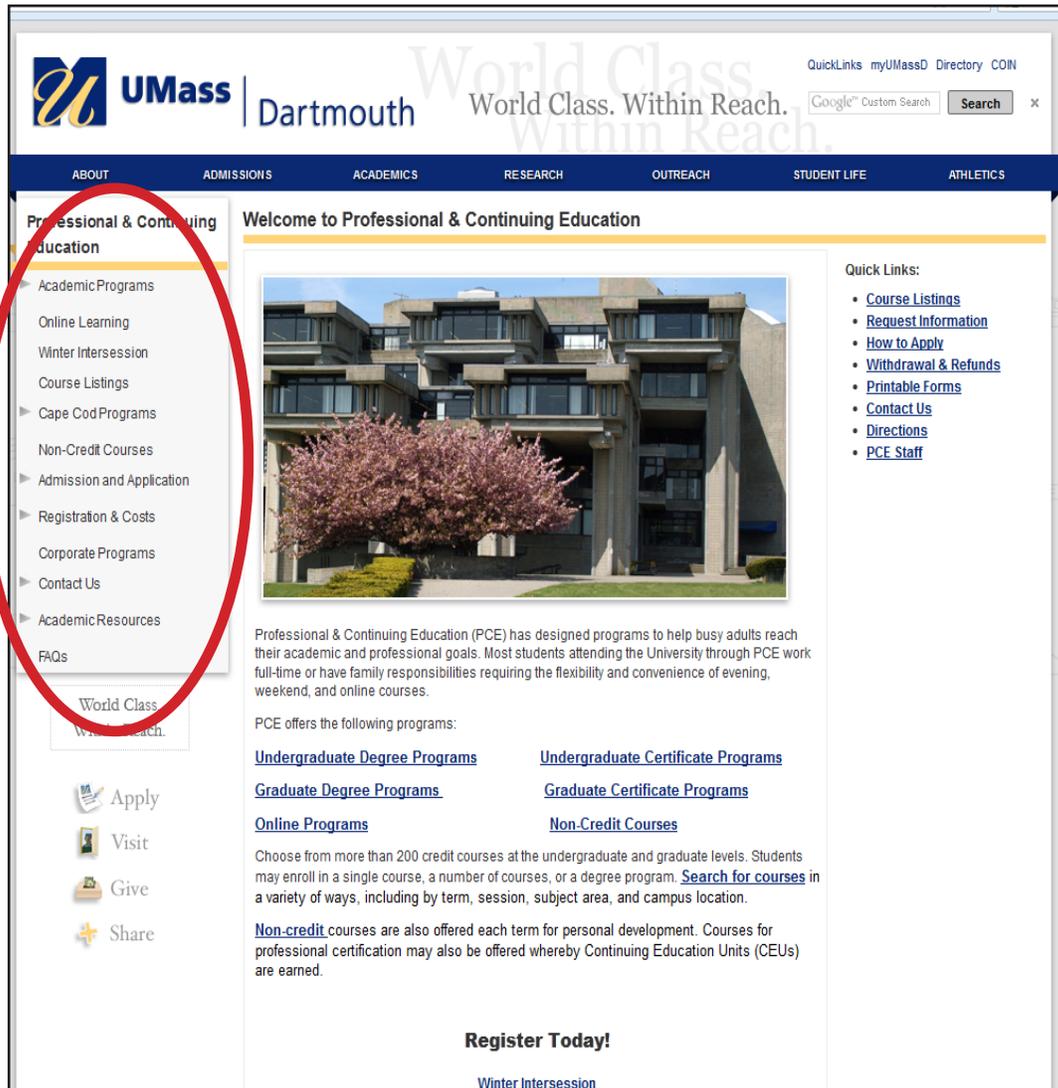
1. The left sidebar is not noticeable enough.

5E's affected:

• Efficient

• Error Tolerant

• Easy to Learn



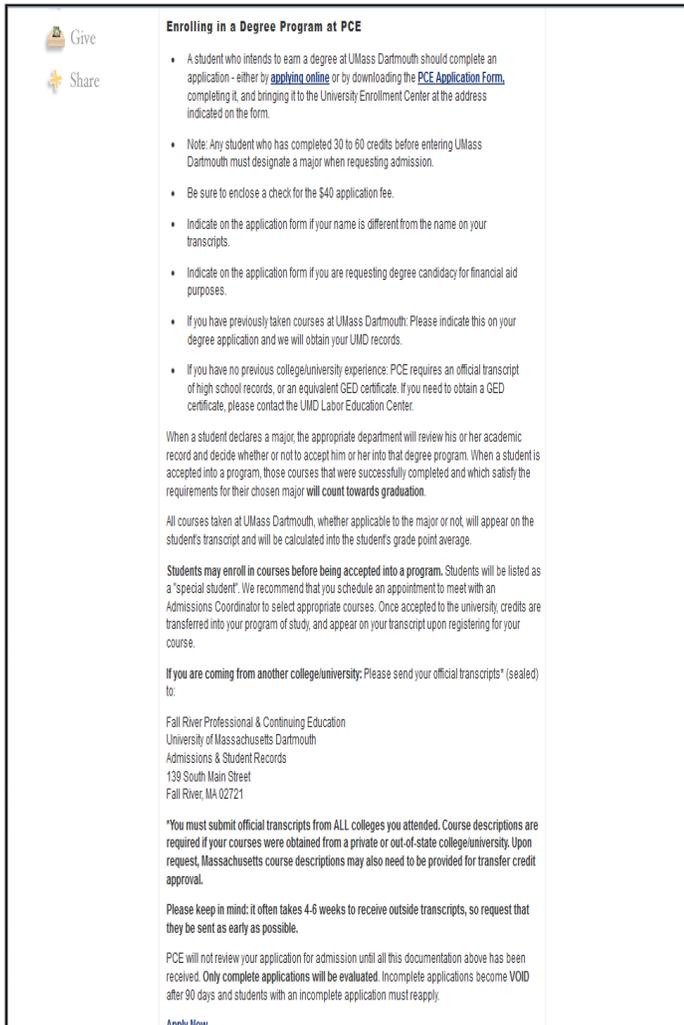
<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/>

**Explanation:** All four testers expressed, either in writing or verbally during or after the test, that the left sidebar was not prominent enough. They struggled to begin the first task in Scenario #2 because they did not notice the sidebar, which is the primary navigation tool of the site.

# #2 - High Priority

2. The text on the “Admission and Application” and “Tuition and Fees” pages is not scannable enough.

5E's affected:  
• Efficient



**Enrolling in a Degree Program at PCE**

- A student who intends to earn a degree at UMass Dartmouth should complete an application - either by [applying online](#) or by downloading the [PCE Application Form](#), completing it, and bringing it to the University Enrollment Center at the address indicated on the form.
- Note: Any student who has completed 30 to 60 credits before entering UMass Dartmouth must designate a major when requesting admission.
- Be sure to enclose a check for the \$40 application fee.
- Indicate on the application form if your name is different from the name on your transcripts.
- Indicate on the application form if you are requesting degree candidacy for financial aid purposes.
- If you have previously taken courses at UMass Dartmouth: Please indicate this on your degree application and we will obtain your UMD records.
- If you have no previous college/university experience: PCE requires an official transcript of high school records, or an equivalent GED certificate. If you need to obtain a GED certificate, please contact the UMD Labor Education Center.

When a student declares a major, the appropriate department will review his or her academic record and decide whether or not to accept him or her into that degree program. When a student is accepted into a program, those courses that were successfully completed and which satisfy the requirements for their chosen major will **count towards graduation**.

All courses taken at UMass Dartmouth, whether applicable to the major or not, will appear on the student's transcript and will be calculated into the student's grade point average.

Students may enroll in courses before being accepted into a program. Students will be listed as a "special student". We recommend that you schedule an appointment to meet with an Admissions Coordinator to select appropriate courses. Once accepted to the university, credits are transferred into your program of study, and appear on your transcript upon registering for your course.

If you are coming from another college/university: Please send your official transcripts\* (sealed) to:

Fall River Professional & Continuing Education  
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth  
Admissions & Student Records  
139 South Main Street  
Fall River, MA 02721

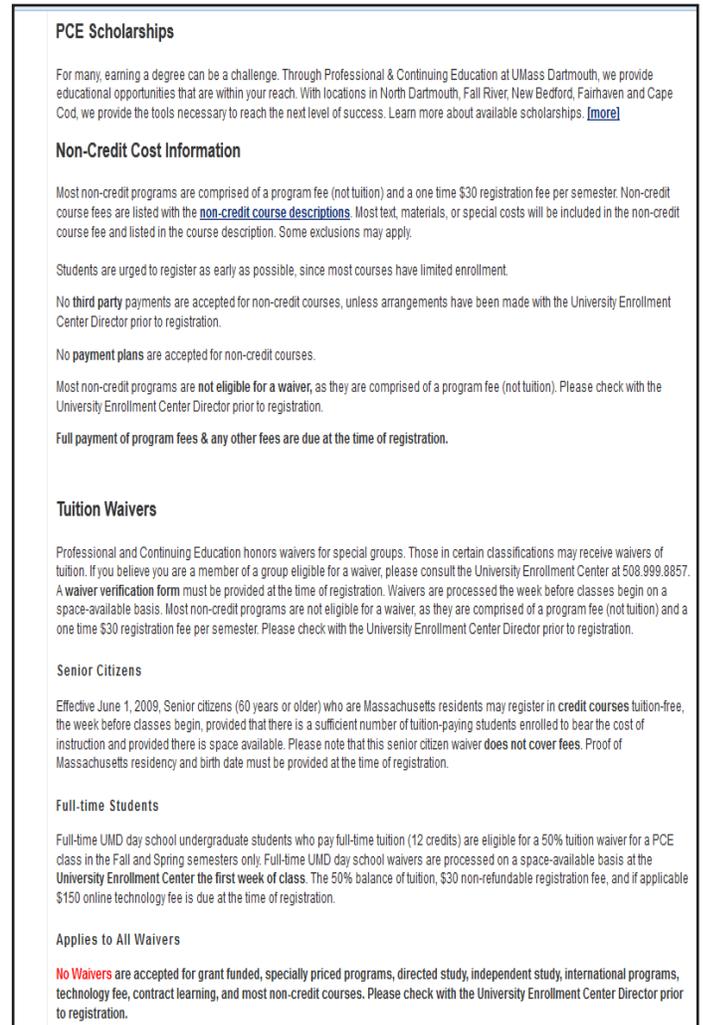
\*You must submit official transcripts from ALL colleges you attended. Course descriptions are required if your courses were obtained from a private or out-of-state college/university. Upon request, Massachusetts course descriptions may also need to be provided for transfer credit approval.

Please keep in mind: it often takes 4-6 weeks to receive outside transcripts, so request that they be sent as early as possible.

PCE will not review your application for admission until all this documentation above has been received. Only complete applications will be evaluated. Incomplete applications become VOID after 90 days and students with an incomplete application must reapply.

[Apply Now](#)

<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/admissionandapplication/>



**PCE Scholarships**

For many, earning a degree can be a challenge. Through Professional & Continuing Education at UMass Dartmouth, we provide educational opportunities that are within your reach. With locations in North Dartmouth, Fall River, New Bedford, Fairhaven and Cape Cod, we provide the tools necessary to reach the next level of success. Learn more about available scholarships. [\[more\]](#)

**Non-Credit Cost Information**

Most non-credit programs are comprised of a program fee (not tuition) and a one time \$30 registration fee per semester. Non-credit course fees are listed with the [non-credit course descriptions](#). Most text, materials, or special costs will be included in the non-credit course fee and listed in the course description. Some exclusions may apply.

Students are urged to register as early as possible, since most courses have limited enrollment.

No **third party** payments are accepted for non-credit courses, unless arrangements have been made with the University Enrollment Center Director prior to registration.

No **payment plans** are accepted for non-credit courses.

Most non-credit programs are **not eligible for a waiver**, as they are comprised of a program fee (not tuition). Please check with the University Enrollment Center Director prior to registration.

**Full payment of program fees & any other fees are due at the time of registration.**

**Tuition Waivers**

Professional and Continuing Education honors waivers for special groups. Those in certain classifications may receive waivers of tuition. If you believe you are a member of a group eligible for a waiver, please consult the University Enrollment Center at 508.999.8857. A **waiver verification form** must be provided at the time of registration. Waivers are processed the week before classes begin on a space-available basis. Most non-credit programs are not eligible for a waiver, as they are comprised of a program fee (not tuition) and a one time \$30 registration fee per semester. Please check with the University Enrollment Center Director prior to registration.

**Senior Citizens**

Effective June 1, 2009, Senior citizens (60 years or older) who are Massachusetts residents may register in **credit courses** tuition-free, the week before classes begin, provided that there is a sufficient number of tuition-paying students enrolled to bear the cost of instruction and provided there is space available. Please note that this senior citizen waiver **does not cover fees**. Proof of Massachusetts residency and birth date must be provided at the time of registration.

**Full-time Students**

Full-time UMD day school undergraduate students who pay full-time tuition (12 credits) are eligible for a 50% tuition waiver for a PCE class in the Fall and Spring semesters only. Full-time UMD day school waivers are processed on a space-available basis at the **University Enrollment Center the first week of class**. The 50% balance of tuition, \$30 non-refundable registration fee, and if applicable \$150 online technology fee is due at the time of registration.

**Applies to All Waivers**

**No Waivers** are accepted for grant funded, specially priced programs, directed study, independent study, international programs, technology fee, contract learning, and most non-credit courses. Please check with the University Enrollment Center Director prior to registration.

<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/registrationcosts/tuitionfees/>

**Explanation:** These are pages which contain a significant amount of information, and each tester experienced at least some difficulty in finding specific information within the text.

# #3 - High Priority

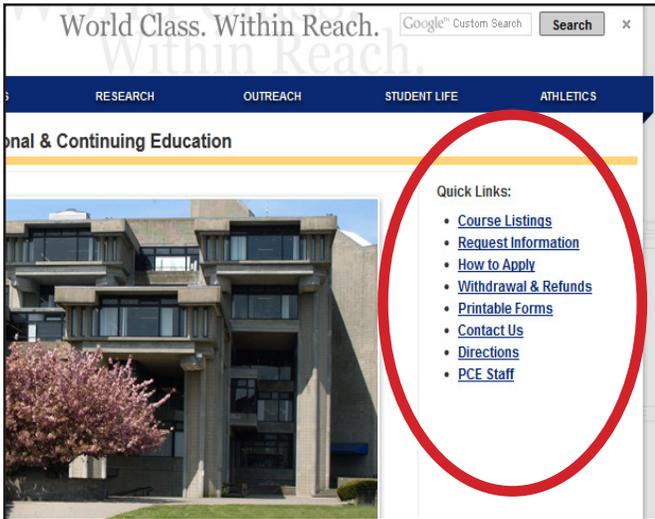
3. The “Quick Links” menu does not appear on every page, and it is not consistent.

5E's affected:

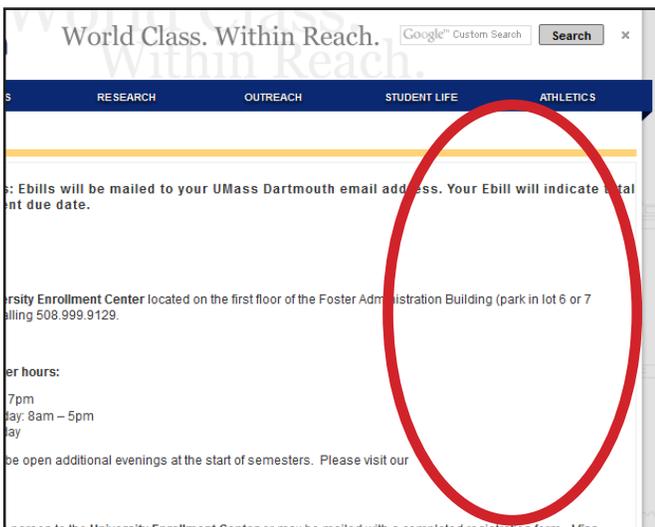
• Effective

• Efficient

• Easy to Learn



<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/>



<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/registrationcosts/paymentprocedures/>

**Explanation:** Testers rarely used the “Quick Links” menu, likely because it is only present on some pages. It appears on the landing page and the “Admission and Application” page, but not on the “Registration and Costs” pages. An abbreviated version of this menu appears on the “PCE Staff List” and “Hours and Locations” pages, which could further confuse users.

# #4 - High Priority

4. Testers had difficulty locating items on the left sidebar.

5E's affected:

• Efficient

• Error Tolerant

• Easy to Learn

**Professional & Continuing Education**

- Academic Programs
  - Online Learning
  - Winter Intersession
  - Course Listings
- Cape Cod Programs
  - Liberal Arts Degree - Cape Cod
  - Management- Cape Cod
  - Master of Business Administration - Cape Cod
- Non-Credit Courses
- Admission and Application
  - Apply Online
- Registration & Costs
  - Tuition & Fees
  - Registration & Academic Calendar Dates**
  - Non-Credit Registration
  - Payment Procedures
  - Veterans' Assistance
  - Scholarships
  - Withdrawals and Refunds
  - Cancellation of Courses
  - Health Insurance Requirements
- Corporate Programs
- Contact Us
  - PCE Staff List
  - Hours & Locations
  - Request Information
- Academic Resources
  - Gen Ed Requirements
  - Prerequisites

**Withdrawals and Refunds**

**Course Withdrawals**

Withdrawals can be processed through [COIN](#) or by completing a [Withdrawal Form](#). Please fax the withdrawal form to 508.910.6420 Attention University Enrollment Center. Withdrawal forms are also available at the University Enrollment Center. We are sorry but, telephone requests cannot be accepted as notification of withdrawal, due to a required signature.

**Attention Students:** If you do not officially withdraw from your class; you will be graded for the course.

If a course should officially cancel, you will be notified before the course begins. **Please keep your contact information up to date with us, or we may not be able to reach you.** You may update your contact information through COIN. If you do not receive such a notice, you are expected to attend the first day of classes to confirm your class is running. Students whose class has been [cancelled](#) are entitled to a **full refund**, including tuition & fees.

Refunds for course drops sent by mail or fax are computed according to the date received. Refunds take approximately twenty (20) business days to process.

**Face to Face Credit Course Refunds**

Refunds are based upon when you officially withdraw from the class:

- **Before the first class meeting:** 100% of tuition and fees refunded, less the *non-refundable* \$30 registration fee.
- **Before the second class meeting:** 80% of tuition only, will be refunded.
- **Before the fourth class meeting:** 50% of tuition only, will be refunded.
- **During and after the fourth class meeting:** NO refunds will be permitted.

[\(Spring 2013 Face to Face Credit Course Refund Policy\)](#)

**Online & Blended Credit Course Refunds**

**IMPORTANT!** Students should be aware that access to online and blended courses is delayed 1-2 business days from time of registration. Consequently, all late registrations are with faculty approval only and are not eligible for any refunds.

Refunds are based upon when you officially withdraw from the class. Withdrawal forms are available in person at the University Enrollment Center or you may FAX it to us, using our printable. We are sorry but, telephone requests cannot be accepted as notification of withdrawal, due to a required signature.

- **Before class start date,** all course charges will be refunded except the *non-refundable* \$30 registration fee.
- **First day of semester:** 100% of tuition will be refunded; all fees are *non-refundable*.
- **Second day of semester:** NO refunds will be permitted.

[\(Spring 2013 Online & Blended Credit Course Refund Policy\)](#)

**Non-Credit Course Refunds**

- **Before the first class meeting,** all course charges will be refunded except a \$30 *non-refundable* registration fee.
- **Once class begins,** NO refunds will be permitted.

[\(Spring 2013 Non-Credit Course Refund Policy\)](#)

<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/registrationcosts/withdrawalsandrefunds/>

**Explanation:** Testers often took an inordinate amount of time to find items on the sidebar, sometimes not finding them at all. As an example: all three testers who were asked to find the first day of classes for the Spring 2013 semester ended up using the link to the academic calendar on the landing page. They did not notice the same link on the left sidebar, which would have been quicker. One tester stated that had they not been in a testing environment, they would have left the site in frustration due to this difficulty.

# #5 - Medium Priority

5. There is not enough information about specific programs on the landing page.

5E's affected:

- Effective

The screenshot shows the Professional & Continuing Education (PCE) landing page for UMass Dartmouth. The page features a navigation menu with categories like ABOUT, ADMISSIONS, ACADEMICS, RESEARCH, OUTREACH, STUDENT LIFE, and ATHLETICS. The main content area is titled "Welcome to Professional & Continuing Education" and includes a large photograph of a modern building with a flowering tree in the foreground. Below the photo, there is a paragraph describing PCE programs, a list of program types (Undergraduate Degree Programs, Undergraduate Certificate Programs, Graduate Degree Programs, Graduate Certificate Programs, Online Programs, Non-Credit Courses), and a "Register Today!" call to action with a link to "Winter Intersession". A sidebar on the left contains a "Professional & Continuing Education" menu with sub-items like Academic Programs, Online Learning, and Cape Cod Programs. A "Quick Links" section on the right provides direct access to Course Listings, Request Information, How to Apply, Withdrawal & Refunds, Printable Forms, Contact Us, Directions, and PCE Staff.

<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/>

**Explanation:** Although responses to Scenario #1 were almost entirely positive, the testers commented that they would like to see more specific examples of programs on the landing page. They believed that it would make the page more persuasive to prospective students.

# #6 - Medium Priority

6. The list of accepted credit cards on the “Payment Procedures” page is not noticeable enough.

5E’s affected:

- Efficient

The screenshot shows a website page with a left sidebar containing navigation links: Calendar Dates, Non-Credit Registration, Payment Procedures, Veterans' Assistance, Scholarships, Withdrawals and Refunds, Cancellation of Courses, Health Insurance Requirements, Corporate Programs, Contact Us, Academic Resources, and FAQs. Below these are buttons for 'World Class. Within Reach.', 'Apply', 'Visit', 'Give', and 'Share'. The main content area has a header: 'The Enrollment Center will be open additional evenings at the start of semesters. Please visit our'. Below this is a section titled 'Paying by Check' with text about check delivery and accepted cards (Visa, MasterCard, Discover). Another section, 'Registration Procedures for Credit Card Users', contains the highlighted text: 'We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover.' Below this is a 'COIN accepts credit card payments' section with a gold coin icon and text about logging into COIN and activating matric. Further down are sections for 'By Telephone:', 'TMS Monthly Budget Payment Plan', and 'Here's What the TMS Budget Plan Can Offer You:'.

<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/registrationcosts/paymentprocedures/>

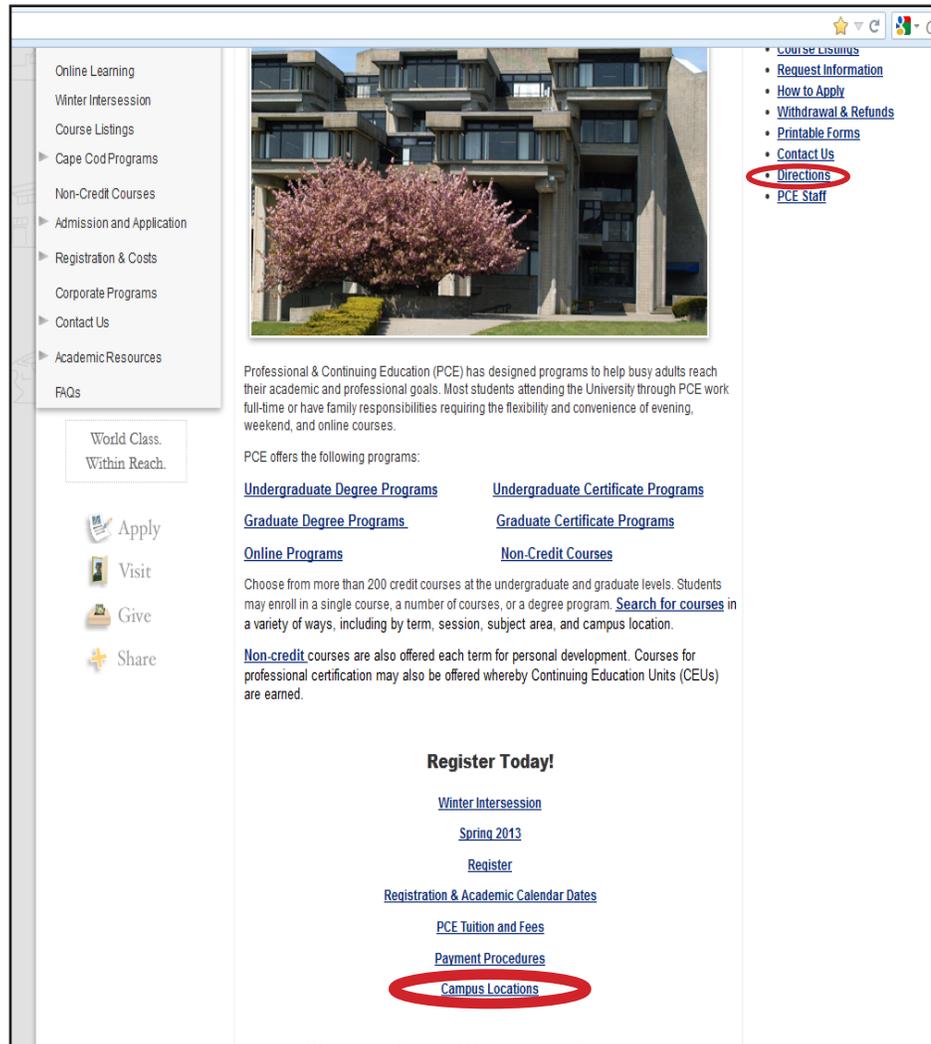
**Explanation:** Testers struggled to varying degrees with Task 5 of Scenario #2, even when on the correct page, because - as they explained - the accepted credit cards were not displayed prominently enough.

# #7 - Medium Priority

7. The “Campus Locations” link on the landing page is confusing.

5E's affected:

- Error Tolerant
- Easy to Learn



<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/>

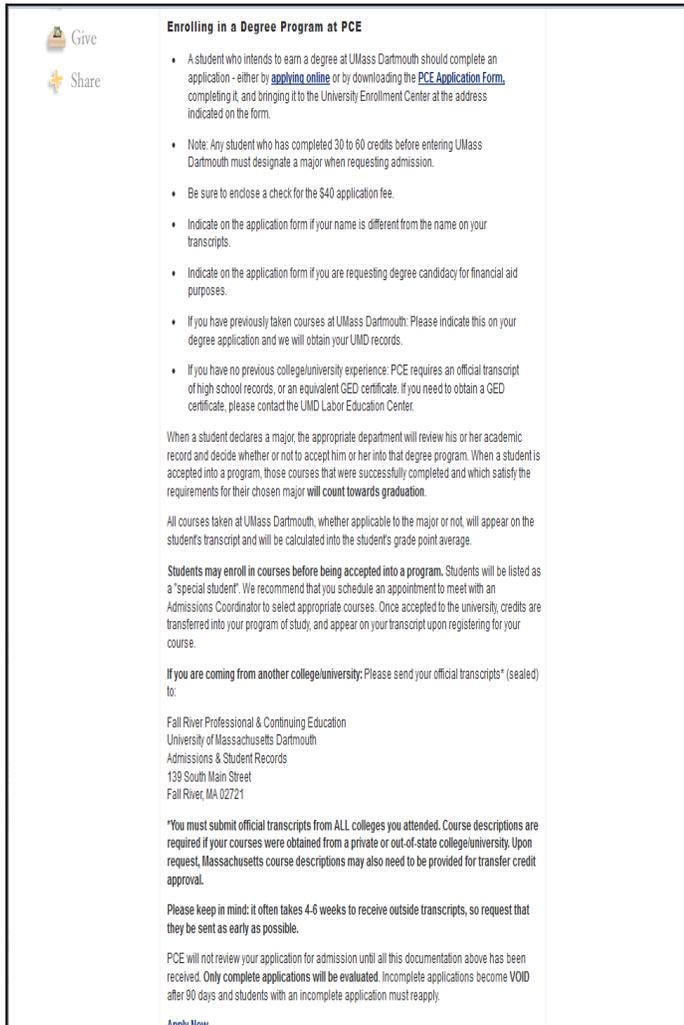
**Explanation:** When asked to find the three locations where PCE classes are held, multiple testers clicked on the “Campus Locations” link, which actually sends them to <http://www.umassd.edu/directions/>, a page that gives directions to the main campus. This same link is listed as “Directions” on the “Quick Links” menu, which could add to the confusion.

# #8 - Low Priority

8. One tester wished there were more pictures throughout the site, particularly photos of actual PCE students and facilities.

5E's affected:

- Engaging



**Enrolling in a Degree Program at PCE**

- A student who intends to earn a degree at UMass Dartmouth should complete an application - either by [applying online](#) or by downloading the [PCE Application Form](#), completing it, and bringing it to the University Enrollment Center at the address indicated on the form.
- Note: Any student who has completed 30 to 60 credits before entering UMass Dartmouth must designate a major when requesting admission.
- Be sure to enclose a check for the \$40 application fee.
- Indicate on the application form if your name is different from the name on your transcripts.
- Indicate on the application form if you are requesting degree candidacy for financial aid purposes.
- If you have previously taken courses at UMass Dartmouth: Please indicate this on your degree application and we will obtain your UMD records.
- If you have no previous college/university experience: PCE requires an official transcript of high school records, or an equivalent GED certificate. If you need to obtain a GED certificate, please contact the UMD Labor Education Center.

When a student declares a major, the appropriate department will review his or her academic record and decide whether or not to accept him or her into that degree program. When a student is accepted into a program, those courses that were successfully completed and which satisfy the requirements for their chosen major will count towards graduation.

All courses taken at UMass Dartmouth, whether applicable to the major or not, will appear on the student's transcript and will be calculated into the student's grade point average.

Students may enroll in courses before being accepted into a program. Students will be listed as a "special student". We recommend that you schedule an appointment to meet with an Admissions Coordinator to select appropriate courses. Once accepted to the university, credits are transferred into your program of study, and appear on your transcript upon registering for your course.

If you are coming from another college/university: Please send your official transcripts\* (sealed) to:

Fall River Professional & Continuing Education  
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth  
Admissions & Student Records  
139 South Main Street  
Fall River, MA 02721

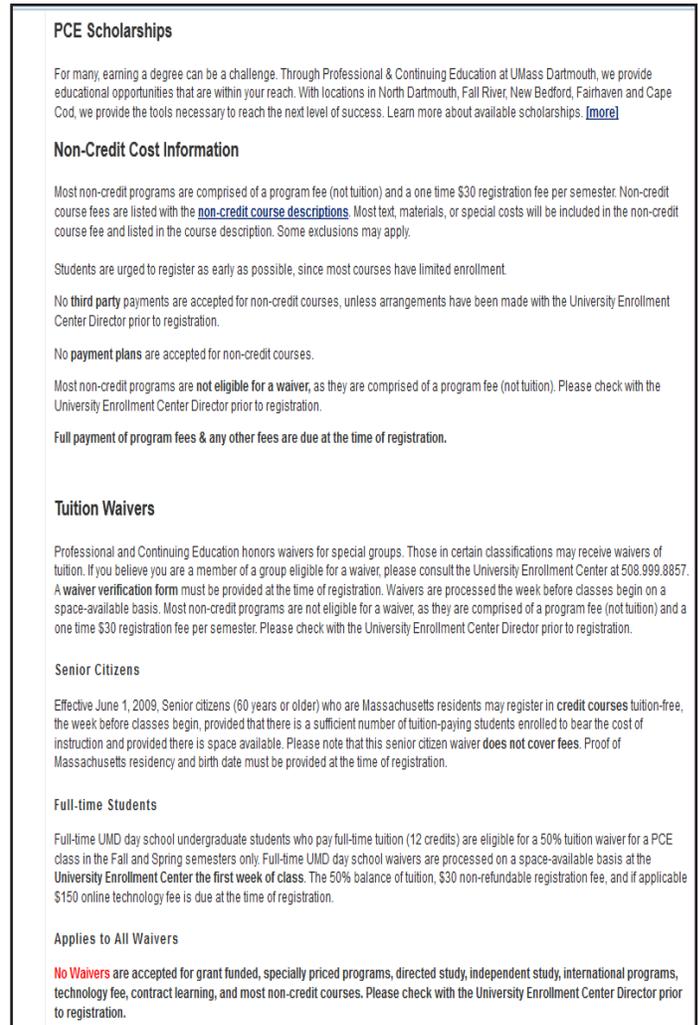
\*You must submit official transcripts from ALL colleges you attended. Course descriptions are required if your courses were obtained from a private or out-of-state college/university. Upon request, Massachusetts course descriptions may also need to be provided for transfer credit approval.

Please keep in mind: it often takes 4-6 weeks to receive outside transcripts, so request that they be sent as early as possible.

PCE will not review your application for admission until all this documentation above has been received. Only complete applications will be evaluated. Incomplete applications become VOID after 90 days and students with an incomplete application must reapply.

[Apply Now](#)

<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/admissionandapplication/>



**PCE Scholarships**

For many, earning a degree can be a challenge. Through Professional & Continuing Education at UMass Dartmouth, we provide educational opportunities that are within your reach. With locations in North Dartmouth, Fall River, New Bedford, Fairhaven and Cape Cod, we provide the tools necessary to reach the next level of success. Learn more about available scholarships. [more](#)

**Non-Credit Cost Information**

Most non-credit programs are comprised of a program fee (not tuition) and a one time \$30 registration fee per semester. Non-credit course fees are listed with the [non-credit course descriptions](#). Most text, materials, or special costs will be included in the non-credit course fee and listed in the course description. Some exclusions may apply.

Students are urged to register as early as possible, since most courses have limited enrollment.

No third party payments are accepted for non-credit courses, unless arrangements have been made with the University Enrollment Center Director prior to registration.

No payment plans are accepted for non-credit courses.

Most non-credit programs are **not eligible for a waiver**, as they are comprised of a program fee (not tuition). Please check with the University Enrollment Center Director prior to registration.

**Full payment of program fees & any other fees are due at the time of registration.**

**Tuition Waivers**

Professional and Continuing Education honors waivers for special groups. Those in certain classifications may receive waivers of tuition. If you believe you are a member of a group eligible for a waiver, please consult the University Enrollment Center at 508.999.8857. A **waiver verification form** must be provided at the time of registration. Waivers are processed the week before classes begin on a space-available basis. Most non-credit programs are not eligible for a waiver, as they are comprised of a program fee (not tuition) and a one time \$30 registration fee per semester. Please check with the University Enrollment Center Director prior to registration.

**Senior Citizens**

Effective June 1, 2009, Senior citizens (60 years or older) who are Massachusetts residents may register in **credit courses** tuition-free, the week before classes begin, provided that there is a sufficient number of tuition-paying students enrolled to bear the cost of instruction and provided there is space available. Please note that this senior citizen waiver **does not cover fees**. Proof of Massachusetts residency and birth date must be provided at the time of registration.

**Full-time Students**

Full-time UMD day school undergraduate students who pay full-time tuition (12 credits) are eligible for a 50% tuition waiver for a PCE class in the Fall and Spring semesters only. Full-time UMD day school waivers are processed on a space-available basis at the **University Enrollment Center the first week of class**. The 50% balance of tuition, \$30 non-refundable registration fee, and if applicable \$150 online technology fee is due at the time of registration.

**Applies to All Waivers**

**No Waivers** are accepted for grant funded, specially priced programs, directed study, independent study, international programs, technology fee, contract learning, and most non-credit courses. Please check with the University Enrollment Center Director prior to registration.

<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/registrationcosts/tuitionfees/>

**Explanation:** The tester mentioned verbally and on their post-task questionnaire that they would like to see more photographs throughout the site. They specifically suggested the photos taken by UMass Dartmouth's Photographix department.

# #9 - Low Priority

9. There should be a clearly labeled link to the “Payment Procedures” page on the “Tuition and Fees” page, and vice-versa.

5E's affected:

- Efficient

The screenshot shows the UMass Dartmouth website. The header includes the UMass Dartmouth logo, the slogan "World Class. Within Reach.", and navigation links for "QuickLinks", "myUMassD", "Directory", and "COIN". A search bar is also present. The main navigation bar includes "ABOUT", "ADMISSIONS", "ACADEMICS", "RESEARCH", "OUTREACH", "STUDENT LIFE", and "ATHLETICS". The left sidebar menu is expanded to show "Professional & Continuing Education", with "Payment Procedures" selected. The main content area is titled "Payment Procedures" and contains the following text:

**Attention PCE Students:** Ebills will be mailed to your UMass Dartmouth email address. Your Ebill will indicate total amount due and payment due date.

**Where To Register**

Please register at the **University Enrollment Center** located on the first floor of the Foster Administration Building (park in lot 6 or 7 [Driving Directions](#).) or by calling 508.999.9129.

**University Enrollment Center hours:**

Monday & Thursday: 8am – 7pm  
Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday: 8am – 5pm  
Closed on Saturday & Sunday

The Enrollment Center will be open additional evenings at the start of semesters. Please visit our

**Paying by Check**

Checks may be delivered in person to the **University Enrollment Center** or may be mailed with a completed registration form. **Visa, MasterCard, and Discover** are also accepted.

Students using any type of waiver or third party coverage: please visit the University Enrollment Center with the proper documentation required and payment. If you have required documentation questions or if you need assistance, please contact the University Enrollment Center: 508.999.8857 or 508.999.8866

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth  
**University Enrollment Center**  
285 Old Westport Road  
North Dartmouth, MA 02747-2300

**Registration Procedures for Credit Card Users**

We accept **Visa, MasterCard, and Discover**.

<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/registrationcosts/paymentprocedures/>

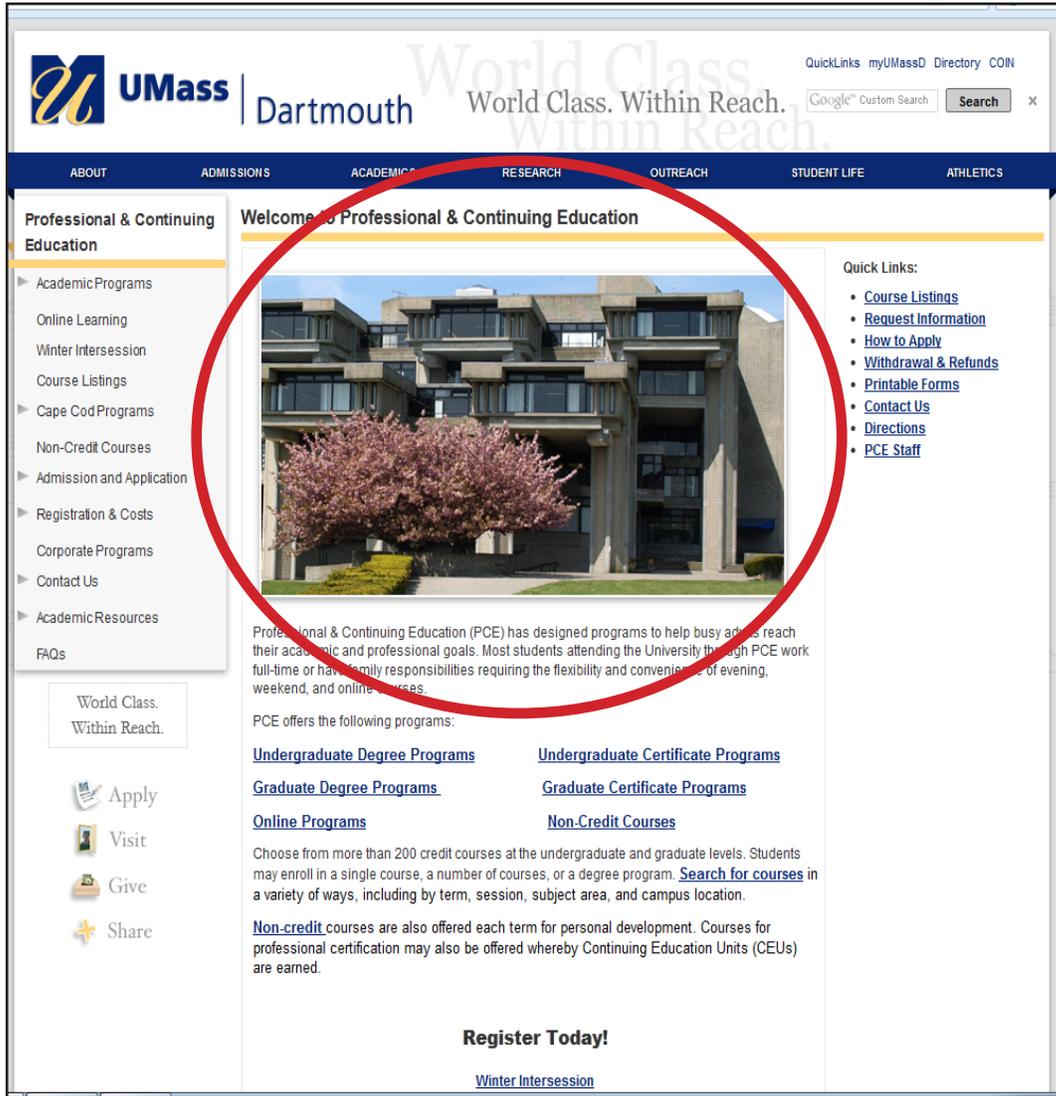
**Explanation:** In Scenario #2, testers had to scan the sidebar to go from one of these pages to the other, sometimes resulting in errors when they did not locate the correct page. These two pages are distinct enough to be separate, but users will logically want to go from one to the other, so a stronger connection between the two would increase users' efficiency.

# #10 - Low Priority

10. Two of the four testers felt the image on the landing page was unappealing.

5E's affected:

- Engaging



<http://www.umassd.edu/pce/>

**Explanation:** Although two of the testers enjoyed the tree and the unique architecture, the other two expressed a strong distaste for the image. One remarked that it was “ugly.”

# Analysis of Questionnaire Results

## Post-Task Questionnaire for Scenario #1:

Scenario #1 called for the testers to spend only three minutes in total looking at the landing page and the “Why UMass Dartmouth PCE?” page. Questionnaire responses were generally positive. Below are representative highlights of these responses.

### 1. What is your initial impression of the site?

- “Informative”
- “Made me want to learn more about the school”
- “Well-organized and reliable”
- “Scannable”
- “While there was a lot of information to read, I think the site did a good job of breaking that content up”
- “Ugly picture on page”

### 2. Why would someone want to take classes at PCE?

- “They have a full-time job or other obligations that require a schooling schedule to be flexible”
- “Affordable”
- “Reputable school”
- “Convenient hours and locations”
- “Wide range of programs”
- “Family responsibilities:
- “Financial concerns”

### 3. How effective do you think these two pages are in persuading visitors to sign up for PCE classes?

(Scale of 1-10, 1 = Not Effective, 10 = Very Effective)

Tester	Pilot Tester (PT)	Tester 1 (T1)	Tester 2 (T2)	Tester 3 (T3)
Ranking	9	9	7	7

Generally, the testers commented that the pages were informative and addressed common student concerns, but noted that, as potential students, they would need more information to be persuaded to sign up for classes, which is reasonable and to be expected.

These results are a positive sign in terms of the initial impression the PCE site gives. Although there are issues with the landing page (see **Findings**), the current copy on both that page and the “Why UMass Dartmouth PCE?” page appears to achieve its goal. After viewing the pages, the testers understood the key selling points of PCE and came away with a positive opinion of the site.

**Post-Task Questionnaire for Scenario #2:**

(**Note:** As explained earlier in this report, PT did not complete the last two tasks in Scenario #2, as they were not present in the test plan for the initial walkthrough.)

In Scenario #2, the testers were tasked with locating a series of specific pieces of information that a prospective student may need to know. Every tester struggled at least somewhat in this Scenario, for reasons documented in the **Findings** section.

Below are the quantitative data from these questionnaires as well as representative samples of the qualitative responses.

**1. Overall, how difficult was it to locate the information you wanted to find?**

(Scale of 1-10, 1 = Very Easy, 10 = Very Difficult)

Tester	PT	T1	T2	T3
Ranking	5	7	9	4

As explained above, all testers experienced difficulty locating some of the information. Both PT and T1, however, noted that navigation became easier as time went on; PT wrote “once I realized where to look I found the info quickly enough,” and T1 wrote “once I got the hang of it, it became easier.” T2 had an exceptional amount of trouble finding information since it took them a long time to notice the left sidebar (**Finding #1**) and they felt that the text was not scannable enough (see next question).

**2. Once you found the information, how clear and understandable was it?**

(Scale of 1-10, 1 = Not Clear, 10 = Very Clear)

Tester	PT	T1	T2	T3
Ranking	10	10	4	9

T2 wrote that the text “wasn’t very scannable” (**Finding #2**). The others thought it was “very clear” and “straightforward.”

### 3. How logical is the organization of information on the site?

(Scale of 1-10, 1 = Not Logical, 10 = Very Logical)

Tester	PT	T1	T2	T3
Ranking	8	8	7	8

Testers commented that the organization of information “made sense for a student looking for more information about the program” and that the left sidebar “made it easy to find what I needed.” T2 noted that the organization was “pretty logical, though some of the categories on the left [sidebar] were confusing.” T1 wrote that the left sidebar “was not prominent.”

### 4. What recommendations (if any) do you have for improving the site to make it easier to use?

**Table 1: Tester Recommendations**

Tester	Recommendation (as written)
PT	“I think that the info was clear and concise. Left side column is organized but there are quite a few links. Perhaps some of these could be combined.” (This comment relates to <b>Finding #4.</b> )
T1	“More stock photos from Photographix (they take photos of <u>our</u> students on <u>our</u> campus) and examples of programs someone could enroll in.”
T2	“Making table of contents links more clear/apparent.” [Tester was likely referring to the lack of prominence of the left sidebar, although they also suggested verbally that they would like to see a table of contents at the top of content-heavy pages.]
T3	“Change up the fonts occasionally to set things apart.”

In addition to the questionnaire responses, the audiovisual recordings also speak to the difficulty experienced by the testers. They frequently displayed furrowed brows and other facial expressions of frustration or confusion. When having difficulty completing a task, they frequently blamed themselves, commenting that they were “stupid.”

Interestingly, no single task caused significantly more trouble, on average, than the others. This indicates that, for the most part, the issues are ones of general navigation and findability rather than simply problems with specific content on the site.

# Recommendations for Changes/Improvements

Recommendations are listed along with the finding to which they apply (for more information on the findings, see the **Findings** section). Their scope is also labeled as either “local” or “global.”

- **Local issues** are those that are contained on one or two pages of the site. These generally require relatively simple solution.
- **Global issues** are systemic, effectively most if not all of the site. These generally require a more involved solution.

**Table 2: Researcher Recommendations to Address Findings**

Finding Number	Description	Severity Ranking	Scope	Recommended Change
1	The left sidebar is not noticeable enough.	High	Global	Unfortunately, despite its significance, PCE may not be able to address this issue, as the sidebar design comes from the UMass Dartmouth site templates. To whatever extent possible, the sidebar should be visually altered to be more noticeable. A more distinctive color and border would likely be sufficient.
2	The text on the “Admission and Application” and “Tuition and Fees” pages is not scannable enough.	High	Local	As one of the testers suggested, a table of contents at the top of these pages should help users to better find the information they are looking for. This can likely be done in UMass Dartmouth’s Terminal-4 content management system using “anchors.”
3	The “Quick Links” menu does not appear on every page.	High	Global	A standardized version of the “Quick Links” menu should be placed on every page of the site. Consistent helps users to stay oriented.

4	Testers had difficulty locating items on the left sidebar.	High	Global	Re-organize the items on the sidebar. There are many ways to do this, but one possible change could include separating the “Registration and Costs” section into a “Registration Information” section and a “Costs and Payment” section. Also, renaming “Registration and Academic Calendar Dates” to something shorter, such as “PCE Academic Calendar,” may help make that particular link more noticeable and help prevent the error that occurred in testing.
5	There is not enough information about specific programs on the landing page.	Medium	Local	Add a few examples of PCE programs, such as the MAT or MBA programs, to the landing page.
6	The list of accepted credit cards on the “Payment Procedures” page is not noticeable enough.	Medium	Local	Emphasize the list of accepted credit cards more. This can be done by adding images of each card, as is common practice on commercial websites.
7	The “Campus Locations” link on the landing page is confusing.	Medium	Local	Create a new page called “PCE Campus Locations,” which lists the locations for the Dartmouth, Fall River, and New Bedford campuses. This page can contain the “Directions” link.
8	One tester wished there were more pictures throughout the site, particularly photos of actual PCE students and facilities.	Low	Global	Add pictures from UMass Dartmouth’s Photographix department to pages throughout the site (although adding them to all of the pages may be excessive).
9	There should be a clearly labeled link to the “Payment Procedures” page on the “Tuition and Fees” page, and vice-versa.	Low	Local	Place links at the top of the respective pages - “For information on [x], click here.”

10	Two of the four testers felt the image on the landing page was unappealing.	Low	Local	Although only half of the testers had an issue with the image, it may be worth changing to avoid potentially putting off prospective students. (As a small-scale test, one cannot necessarily extrapolate that 50% of people will dislike the image, but it is clearly an issue with some users.) Testers suggested using an image of PCE students or classrooms instead.
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When making changes, it would be best to keep in mind Quesenbery’s 5E’s of usability. **Table 3** quantifies the number of findings each of the 5E’s pertained to (note that each finding could apply to more than one of the 5E’s).

**Table 3: Number of Times Each of Quesenbery’s 5E’s was Affected in Findings**

Quesenbery’s 5E’s	Number of Findings it Affected
Effective	2
Efficient	6
Engaging	2
Error Tolerant	3
Easy to Learn	4

This data aligns with the results of the questionnaires (see the **Analysis of Questionnaire Results** section). Testers generally responded positively to the effectiveness and level of engagement of the site; they remarked that the landing page and “Why UMass Dartmouth PCE?” pages are convincing, and that the text was clearly written.

As the table demonstrates, however, the most pressing issue is the efficiency of the site, followed by how easy it is to learn and how well it prevents and handles errors. On the questionnaires, navigation was reported as the primary issue. Two testers also reported that the site was at least somewhat difficult to use initially, but became easier over time, which speaks to “Ease of Use” concerns. In terms of error prevention, misleading or confusing menus in particular caused a number of errors, as documented in the **Findings** section.

The recommendations listed in **Table 2** are by no means the only ways to address these findings. Any changes that are made, however, would be best served if guided by Quesenbery’s 5E’s of usability.

# Suggestions for Future Testing

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After the findings of this study have been addressed on the PCE site, more testing should be conducted. This will determine whether or not the changes made have adequately resolved the issues, as well as possibly find any additional issues that did not come up in this round of testing.

In addition, as explained in the **User Profile** section, this usability test limited its scope to one of two primary subgroups of the PCE site's user population. Future testing with the other subgroup, consisting of older users who may be less proficient with technology, is recommended to ensure that the site meets the needs of all its users. Although many usability concerns are universal, each subgroup of users likely has unique usability-related problems as well.