

Redesigning the PSC's Internet gateway

Delivering a radically new online experience for Singaporean students

When Singapore became self-governing in 1959, the country's new leaders realized the need to build a pool of civil service talent. The Public Service Commission (PSC) created a special scholarship program to find and groom future government officers. Students who received this award were required to serve in Government for a number of years upon graduation.

Challenge: difficult online scholarship application

The PSC now administers its scholarship program through a website, where students apply for the undergraduate scholarships online. However, the application process itself was very difficult to complete and only continued to increase in complexity as the program grew in size and scope. In addition, new Web interface standards issued by Singapore's Infocomm Development Authority (a government entity) had to be met.

Based on user feedback, the PSC began a bold initiative to redesign this section of its website with a strong focus

"Human Factors International did a good job with the Web usability study for the PSC Scholarships application page. They were patient in understanding our needs and came up with practical solutions to meet our requirements. HFI's proposed redesign of our screens is both presentable and neat. The navigation mechanism is simpler and provides users with a better sense of control. Most importantly, it enhances users' experience with our scholarship application portal."

—Choo Lee See
Director, PSC Secretariat for
Public Service Commission, Singapore

on user experience. The goal was to simplify the entire online application process and reduce the time needed to complete it.

HFI's Approach: strategic design review, recommendations validated with users

Human Factors International was engaged to conduct the redesign in two phases:

1. A strategic review of existing Web pages
2. A thorough redesign of online scholarship application

The strategic review highlighted complexities of the design and provided a benchmark for PSC stakeholders. For example, the navigation scheme forced users to finish a form before moving on to the next one. However, users often proceeded without filling out a form completely because they didn't have all the required information, only to discover that their previously entered data was lost.

The review also gave insight into the potential impact of HFI's design recommendations. Based on these findings, HFI redesigned every single page of the application—including graphical treatment—and tested them with sample users.

Benefits: streamlined application process

In collaboration with the PSC project team, HFI devised a new, clearer navigation scheme for the online scholarship process. The new design met PSC's goals:

- Reduced time to complete the scholarship application
- Increased accuracy and reduction in errors by end-users
- Technically feasible to implement given existing infrastructure

The entire project was also finished in advance of the scheduled completion date.

Before: People could not tell at a glance where they were in the application process, which parts had been completed and how many steps remained.

Personal Information
Please ensure that all mandatory fields marked with * are filled

NRIC / ID: S9030002D
 Name As In NRIC/Passport*: Test Prodn
 ID Type*: Singapore NRIC (Pink)
 Alias:
 Preferred Name*: Test Personal Particulars 6 Sep 05
 Date Of Birth*: 25 / 08 / 1990 (dd/mm/yyyy)
 Place Of Birth*: Singapore
 Title*: MISS
 Marital Status*: Single
 Sex*: Female
 Race*: Chinese
 Citizenship*: Singapore Citizen
 Others, Please Specify:
 Contact (Local)
 Home tel No. *: 12111122
 Handphone:
 Other Contacts:
 020100100

After: The new navigation container allows users to move sequentially or randomly between steps and save their data midway through a form.

Scholarship Application
Welcome Lim Kee Young. Save Print Save and Logout

Part 1: Form
(✓ indicates completed section)
 1. Personal
 ✓ Personal Particulars
 Family Information
 National Service Info
 Notable Achievements
 2. Education
 Schools Attended
 GCE O Level Results
 GCE A Level Results
 Polytechnic Diploma
 IB Diploma
 Other Qualifications
 3. University Applications
 Local Universities
 Overseas Universities
 SAT Results
 4. Scholarship
 Scholarship Preferences
 Other Scholarships
 Declaration

Family Information
Provide information about your immediate family members namely Father, Mother and all siblings.
 Information added. Repeat the process to add other family members.
 * indicates mandatory field

Relation*	Name & Contact	ID	Marital Status*	Occupation
Father	Name* Contact (Tel / email)	ID Type* NRIC/ Passport No.	Select	Occupation Name of Workplace / Employer* Job Title
		Citizenship* Specify Country Previous/Dual Citizenship	Select None	

PSC Scholarship Held [] [e.g. 1995 OMS(Open), Economics, Cambridge University, UK]
 Add this family member

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