

Samaha Essakhi (she/her)

UX Researcher

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Toronto, ON

Award-winning and user-centered Service and Experience Designer with a background in finance. Skilled in journey mapping, agile delivery, and data-driven design. Passionate about the intersection of behavioral science and design, I bring systems thinking and human-centered research to every project.

Work Experience

January 2024 – Present

Service Designer | NORC Innovation Centre | Toronto, ON

- Planned and organized incremental launches of **an employee-facing platform** that helps front line staff support over **3,783 residents** across **15 sites** in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).
- Designed, conducted, and analyzed **1:1 interviews** with internal staff post-launch to collect their **feedback** and **iterate** accordingly.
- Championed cross-team initiative to update the platform's **backend**.
- Successfully **prepared** and **facilitated** a **co-design session** with internal staff to build a **Journey Management Dashboard**.
- Successfully executed the co-facilitation of **training sessions**, in collaboration with the PM, before the deadline release of incremental features.
- Successfully increased **platform adoption** and **user satisfaction** which reflected in a **rise in daily active users**.
- Enhanced **user engagement** by improving usability and refining workflows resulting in **higher action-per-user metrics**.
- Contributed to the success of the project, which received **Best Student Project Award** at Service Design Network.

September 2023 – December 2023

Service Designer | Bridgeable | Toronto, ON

- Led **generative research** initiatives to uncover user needs, preferences, and pain points to inform the design and development of a new employee-facing platform in collaboration with key stakeholders.
- Collaborated with **cross-functional teams** (PM, IT, internal stakeholders) to ensure research insights informed product decisions.
- Facilitated **journey mapping workshops** to visualize current state user journeys, identify critical touchpoints, and uncover opportunities for improvements.
- Planned, designed, and conducted **user interviews and co-design sessions** with internal staff.
- **Analyzed** user research findings and translated insights into actionable recommendations, aligning solutions with UX design best practices and stakeholder expectations.
- Designed and tested prototypes **iteratively** during **design sprints** using **remote and in-person** moderated usability testing studies to validate and refine proposed features.
- **Mediated and balanced** modifications suggested by internal staff, **aligning user needs with technical constraints** to ensure feasible, and user-centered design solutions.
- **Automated** manual tasks within the platform, **reducing workload** and improving **operational efficiency**.

July 2023 – November 2023

UX Research Assistant | University of Toronto | Toronto, ON

- Conducted **an environmental scan** of communication and writing support services offered by universities to better understand the problem space.
- Conducted **digital ethnography** via **social listening** to understand students' preferences and pain points regarding the current writing and communication support offerings.
- Designed a **usability testing framework** to evaluate three different digital solutions for communication support.
- **Executed and refined** a **pilot usability testing**, optimizing the testing framework for greater accuracy and actionable insights.

May 2023 – August 2023

UX Project Assistant | University of Toronto | Toronto, ON

- Led **remote** task-based usability testing sessions with **over 20 students** to evaluate the performance and user experience of an IBM Watson technology based virtual assistant : [Navi](#).
- **Supported the expansion** of Navi by helping refine responses, identifying gaps, and improving response accuracy in a new specialty.
- **Synthesized** usability testing insights into actionable recommendations, addressing technical constraints and enhancing the virtual assistant's **content** and overall **user engagement**.

May 2023 – August 2023

UX Designer | UTEST, University of Toronto | Toronto, ON

- Conducted an **accessibility audit** using **automated** and **manual** tools to uncover breaches of **WCAG 2.1 guidelines**.
- **Reduced legal risk** by aligning the website with AODA regulations.
- Conducted a **heuristics analysis** and **remote usability testing sessions** with different stakeholders.
- Identified pain points and areas of improvements and formulated actionable recommendations.
- **Socialized** findings and recommendations to leadership.

Education

2022 – 2024

Master in User Experience Design | University of Toronto

2011 – 2016

Masters in management | Ecole Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion de Kénitra

Publication

November 2024

["Tensions in Emerging Contexts of Care: Naturally-Occurring Retirement Communities as a Liminal Space for Design"](#)

Futures of Care Work, CSCW 2024 Workshop

Co-authored paper exploring service design in healthcare contexts, showcasing the role of digital technologies in supporting frontline health workers.

Awards

[Service Design Award](#) | Service Design Network (2024)

Won the Service Design Network award for Best Student Project that reimagines support services for older adults living in naturally occurring retirement communities.

Student mHealth App Competition | Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (2024)

Runner-up for Cura app, a comprehensive tracking application designed for effective eczema management and care.

Skills

- **Research & Design Skills:** Desk research, user interviews, digital ethnography, moderated remote and in-person usability testing, co-design workshops, design sprints, journey mapping, service blueprints, wireframing, prototyping, information architecture.
- **Design & Collaboration Tools:** Figma, Balsamiq, Figjam, Miro, MS Teams, Zoom.
- **Other tools:** Optimal Workshop, Snaggit, Tableau, Power BI, MS Suite, Google Analytics, MS Power App, Power Automate, Azure DevOps, MS SharePoint, Microsoft SQL Server, Generative AI.
- **Language Skills:** English, French, Arabic.