

Samiha Essakhi

Service & Experience Designer

samihasdutr@gmail.com | www.samihaessakhi.com

Award-winning Service & Experience Designer with a passion for improving digital products. Adept in leading qualitative and mixed-method research, running co-design workshops, and shaping products that align with user needs and business goals.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Service Designer | NORC Innovation Centre

January 2024 – Present

Toronto, ON

- **Designed and facilitated** 1:1 post-launch interviews with internal staff to gather feedback and iterate on an employee-facing platform, part of a broader digital transformation initiative.
- **Led co-design workshops** with staff and cross-functional teams to collaboratively shape platform features that improved workflow clarity and adoption.
- **Co-facilitated training sessions** with the PM prior to key release deadlines, ensuring readiness and alignment across teams.
- **Created** storyboards, onboarding resources, and training materials to support platform rollout and ensure smooth handoff.
- Worked in an **Agile, cross-functional** team to synchronize service prototypes with delivery milestones and evolving user needs.
- **Improved** platform usability and refined workflows, contributing to increased daily active users and action-per-user metrics.
- **Initiated and led** a backend upgrade project.
- Contributed to an award-winning project that received the **Best Student Project Award** from the **Service Design Network**.

Service Designer | Bridgeable

September 2023 – December 2023

Toronto, ON

- **Led generative research** efforts including stakeholder interviews and journey mapping to uncover needs and pain points for an employee-facing digital platform.
- **Collaborated** with internal stakeholders, PMs, and IT teams to translate research insights into strategic design recommendations.
- **Facilitated workshops** to visualize current-state user journeys and identify critical opportunities for improvement.
- **Planned and executed** co-design sessions, synthesizing findings into clear, actionable insights.
- **Developed and tested** prototypes iteratively through remote and in-person usability studies to validate feature design.
- **Balanced** technical constraints with user needs to deliver feasible, user-centered platform improvements.
- **Implemented** automation features to streamline operations and reduce staff workload.

UX Research Assistant | University of Toronto

July 2023 – November 2023

Toronto, ON

- **Conducted** an environmental scan of university writing and communication support services to identify service gaps and opportunities.
- Used **digital ethnography** and **social listening** to uncover student pain points and preferences.
- **Designed** and **piloted** a **usability testing framework** to evaluate digital solutions, refining the methodology for

deeper insight extraction.

UX Project Assistant | University of Toronto
Toronto, ON

May 2023 – August 2023

- **Led task-based remote usability testing sessions** with over **20 students** to evaluate the performance of an IBM Watson-based virtual assistant.
- **Enhanced system capabilities** by refining responses and identifying functional gaps.
- **Synthesized findings** into actionable recommendations to improve assistant accuracy and user engagement.

UX Designer | UTEST, University of Toronto
Toronto, ON

May 2023 – August 2023

- **Conducted accessibility audits** using manual and automated tools to identify violations of WCAG 2.1 and AODA guidelines.
- **Performed heuristics evaluations** and stakeholder **interviews** to uncover usability issues.
- Presented **actionable design and compliance recommendations** to leadership, directly reducing legal and operational risks.

EDUCATION

University of Toronto

Master in Information, User Experience Design

- Coursework: Service Design, UX Leadership & Influence, User Centered Information System, Accessibility and Inclusive Design, Information Architecture, Usability Assessment, User Interface Design, User Centered System for Communication, Designing Culturally Adaptive Conversational

Ecole Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion

Master in Management, Finance & Accounting

AWARDS, SKILLS & PUBLICATIONS

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:

- **Design Tools:** Figma, Balsamiq
- **Design Skills:** Information architecture, Wireframing, Rapid Prototyping,
- **Research Skills:** Usability Testing, Persona Development, Heuristic Evaluations, WCAG Accessibility Testing, Ethnographic research, Diary studies, Service blueprints, Journey mapping
- **Development:** Power Fx

Publication:

["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.

