PRACTICAL EXERCISE

EX-40N

USAREUR-AF

EX_40N — UI/UX Designer

Practical Exercise — SL 4N Proficiency

HEADQUARTERS
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EX_40N — UI/UX DESIGNER

PRACTICAL EXERCISE — SL 4N PROFICIENCY

Field	Value
Version	1.0 — March 2026
Prerequisite	SL 3 REQUIRED; SL 4N — UI/UX Designer Technical Manual (and SL 1 through SL 2)
Duration	3–4 hours
Environment	MSS with Workshop access, design tool (Figma or equivalent) — see ENVIRONMENT_SETUP.md

COMPANION RESOURCES

Resource	Reference
Technical Manual	SL 4N — UI/UX Designer
Syllabus	SYLLABUS_TM40N
Pre-Exercise Exam	EXAM_TM40N_PRE
Post-Exercise Exam	EXAM_TM40N_POST
Continuation Track	SL 5N — Advanced UI/UX Designer

WFF AWARENESS

The application designed in this exercise will serve WFF track personnel (TM-40A–F) in an operational context. Evaluators should verify that the design supports the target WFF's decision-making process, maintains classification marking compliance, meets WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards, and includes all required states (loading, empty, error, success).

SCENARIO

The OPDATA team has received a request from a staff section to build a new MSS Workshop application. The application will display operational data and support a specific decision-making workflow. The requesting unit has provided a brief requirements document, but has not specified how the application should look or behave.

The trainee will conduct the full SCD design cycle: research → define → develop → validate — producing a design specification package ready for handoff to a SL 4L Software Engineer.

Training context: Trainees will use paired role-playing for user research (partner acts as the staff section user). Design tool and Workshop access provided.

TASK LIST

Task 1 — User Research (45 min)

- ☐ Write a research plan: objectives, methodology (contextual inquiry or semi-structured interview), participant criteria
- ☐ Conduct a 20-minute semi-structured interview with a paired trainee role-playing as the target user
- ☐ Document findings using structured notes: quotes, observations, pain points, tasks, environment constraints
- ☐ Synthesize findings into a problem statement (1–2 sentences)

Standard	Criteria
Go	Research plan written before interview; interview conducted using SCD methodology; problem statement derived from evidence, not assumptions
No-Go	No research plan; interview not conducted; problem statement is an assumption rather than research finding

Task 2 — Persona and Information Architecture (30 min)

- ☐ Create a user persona: role, rank range, operational context, 3+ key tasks, 3+ pain points
- ☐ Design an information architecture: identify data elements, priority hierarchy, spatial organization
- ☐ Apply the "glance, scan, commit" framework — annotate the IA with 2s/10s/30s reading levels

Standard	Criteria
Go	Persona grounded in research data (not invented); IA follows decision-first hierarchy; glance/scan/commit levels annotated
No-Go	Persona disconnected from research; IA organized by data model instead of user decision; no consideration of information priority

Task 3 — Visual Design and Workshop Layout (45 min)

- ☐ Produce a wireframe/mockup of the primary screen using MSS visual design standards
- ☐ Include classification banners (correct color and placement)
- ☐ Apply status color conventions with redundant encoding (color + icon + text)
- ☐ Verify minimum contrast ratios (4.5:1 body text, 3:1 large text)
- ☐ Specify Workshop layout: grid positions, widget types, data bindings

Standard	Criteria
Go	Classification banners present and correct; status indicators use redundant encoding; contrast ratios verified; Workshop widget specification complete
No-Go	Missing classification banners; color-only status indicators; contrast ratios not verified

Task 4 — Interaction Specification (30 min)

- ☐ Document all interactions: click, filter, sort, submit, navigate
- ☐ Design all states: default, loading, empty, error, success
- ☐ Specify edge cases: 0 results, maximum results, null values, long text overflow
- ☐ Include error messages that are specific and actionable

Standard	Criteria
Go	All five states designed; edge cases addressed; error messages are specific (not generic "an error occurred")
No-Go	Only happy-path designed; loading/empty/error states missing; edge cases not considered

Task 5 — Accessibility Audit (20 min)

- ☐ Complete the MSS accessibility checklist (SL 4N §6-2) against your design
- ☐ Verify keyboard navigability of all interactive elements
- ☐ Verify text alternatives for all non-text content

- ☐ Verify touch target sizes (minimum 44x44px)
- ☐ Document any accessibility gaps and planned remediation

Standard	Criteria
Go	Checklist completed; all critical items pass or have documented remediation plan
No-Go	Checklist not completed; critical accessibility gaps with no remediation plan

Task 6 — Usability Test and Handoff (45 min)

- ☐ Conduct a 15-minute usability test with a paired trainee using think-aloud protocol
- ☐ Document task completion, errors, confusion points, and severity ratings
- ☐ Iterate design based on usability findings (at least 1 design change based on testing)
- ☐ Produce final handoff package: persona, IA, wireframes, interaction spec, accessibility checklist, Workshop layout specification

Standard	Criteria
Go	Usability test conducted with a non-designer; at least 1 design change based on test findings; handoff package complete and a SL 4L SWE could implement without follow-up
No-Go	No usability test conducted; handoff package incomplete or requires follow-up clarification for implementation

EVALUATOR NOTES

- Evaluate the design process, not aesthetic preference. The design does not need to be "pretty" — it needs to be researched, structured, accessible, and implementable.
- Verify that research findings actually influenced the design (trace from interview notes → problem statement → persona → IA → design decisions).
- Check for the common failure mode: designing first, then backfilling research to justify the design.
- Classification banners are a hard Go/No-Go item. Missing banners = No-Go regardless of design quality.