

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures Website

Web Ergonomics Lab
User testing results
13 November 2012

Background

- User testing conducted on 13 November 2012
- Engineering and Physical Sciences – Web Ergonomics Lab
- 16-17 year old demographic
- Participants were volunteers from the University's Youth Forum
- Session carried out with a user study and focus group discussion

User study

- Participants asked to imagine themselves in a number of scenarios
- Based on those scenarios, participants asked to complete a number of directed tasks
- Outcomes summarised into the following website aspects:
 - Course information
 - Images
 - Employability information
 - Search facilities
 - Menus and navigation
 - Brand consistency
- Suggested recommendations provided by the Web Ergonomics Lab

User study: Course information

- Participant asked to find a degree course
- Participants did not find the task particularly easy
- No problems navigating to subject level page, hard to find course information from here
- Course search largely redundant

Lab recommendation(s)

- Ensure direct access to course information is present on subject level page
- Replace 'Browse our subjects' with 'Browse our courses'

User study: Images

- Are rotating images preferable to static images?
- Three out of four participants preferred the rotating feature
- Participants would prefer more engaging images
- Participants liked images to convey what is happening within the University

Lab recommendation(s)

- Participants prefer the rotating images, so they should be used
- Look to add more engaging images that tell more about the School or subject area, rather than something more 'generic'

User study: Employability Information

- Participants found varying degrees of employability information
- Information presented in disparate locations – Body of text, brochure

Lab recommendation(s)

- Add clear career opportunity information to each subject area page
- Possibly add a generic page to the SALC homepage to demonstrate that SALC graduates can go onto exciting careers

User study: Search facilities

- Participants experienced varying degrees of relevance and success when searching
- Participants did not like the way the search results were presented

Lab recommendation(s)

- Make the course search more prominent or offer a more reliable alternative

User study: Menus and navigation

- Horizontal / vertical navigation was generally well understood after a degree of exploration around the website
- Some of the section names were not entirely clear

Lab recommendation(s)

- Possibly explore the use of a different colour scheme to distinguish from School / Subject level navigation
- Using images as navigation tools are not a useful addition or alternative to website navigation

User study: Brand consistency

- Participants preferred the ‘corporate look and feel’
- However, the main UoM website was preferred as it was less ‘text heavy’

Lab recommendation(s)

- SALC consistency with the UoM brand is what users are likely to expect
- However, the application of a different colour scheme on the tabbed navigation may help to clarify the difference between the School and subject area

Focus group

- Conducted at the close
- Round table discussion
- Informal set of open questions

Focus group: Summary outcomes

- The participants associated website quality and look and feel with trust and legitimacy, but would not see a quality website as a reason for choosing a course if the course was not right for them
- Information and content searching were of paramount importance
- ‘Talking head’ videos would not influence them in making decisions
- Clips of lectures, seminars and tutorials would ‘sell’ the course more effectively
- When asked what kind of things they would look for, the order was:
 - Courses
 - Funding
 - Entry requirements
 - Student life
 - Participants initially said that research was not important at this stage

In conclusion

- The Web Ergonomics Lab offered the following conclusion:
 - Prospective students' top priority is to find accurate details about specific degree courses
 - A good quality website is not sufficient in itself, but it does build trust
 - Prospective students do not read large blocks of text
 - Multimedia content can improve the website but it should tell the story about life at the university

Lab recommendation(s)

- Make course information more prominent
- Reduce the amount of text on subject level pages
- Ensure multimedia videos focus on the real student experience rather than an 'artificial alternative'