Heuristic Evaluation:
Class Registration Interface

Evaluators:

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Introduction:

Kent State University is a public research institution whose vision is to discover, create, apply and share knowledge. The university's core values include promoting student success, collaborating to bring together diverse talents, promoting excellence and advancing innovation. The university enrolls more than 36,000 undergraduate students each year including 6,000 of which are incoming freshman that have never utilized the online class registration interface. The goal of this heuristic evaluation of the registration system is to rate the current system based on 10 questions and design principles. A group of three evaluators rated and commented on each principle while attempting to register for a course using the registration system through the student center "Flashline".

Evaluation Criteria:

The heuristic evaluation looked at general design principals and basic guidelines put forward by usability design authority Jakob Nielsen. Nielsen created these design principles by looking at hundreds of basic usability errors commonly experienced by users. By using Nielsen's design "commandments" raters looked at each design element and completed 31 detailed tasks while giving each a rating on a three-point scale.

Basic design categories evaluators looked at:

- Visibility of system status
- User control and freedom
- Consistency and standards
- Recognition rather than recall
- Aesthetic and minimalist design
- Help, documentation, recovery from errors
- Language

Method:

Evaluators registered for a course following the task list provided. Each evaluator gave the basic design principle and each task a rating on a three-point scale:

0 = poor
1 = good

*2 = **excellent***

Median scores for each design principle and detailed task scores were calculated and are included in table A.

Visibility of System Status
Median score: 1 = good

Evaluators felt they could find what they needed, but not as easily or seamlessly, as they would have expected. The information provided on the interface is basic, but can be confusing because the user isn't always clear were they are going to with each click.

Comments:

"Lack of breadcrumbs, menu items, and/or site navigation links makes it difficult to know the current location of overall map."

"Clear, but there is a lot of information on the page."

"It is hard to locate the correct link to click on."

User Control and Freedom
Median score: 0 = poor

All evaluators poorly rated this principal; they found the site overwhelming and lacked direction and navigational clues. Functionality of hyperlinks and icons meant for directional clues did not work or describe the action properly.

Comments:

"Tools should reflect students' major and personalization."

"The majority of the icons and graphics do not contain functional hyperlinks."

"I found this overwhelming, too much information."

Consistency and Standards
Median score: 1 = good

Evaluators found the links menu and design to be standard across multiple pages and lacked pizzazz. Errors were not encountered by any in the group. They found the site to behave as a user would expect from a website, but found

some link titles did not reflect destination labels and it was difficult to wade through the information with out a search option.

Comments:

"Links are standard style and functionality."

"Very standard, not exciting."

"There is just way too much going on and not being able to search is a huge issue for me."

Recognition Rather than Recall
Median score: 1.5 = good/excellent

This principal received the highest rating among evaluators. They found links to be simple and accurate. The design choice was clear and basic and could use more creativity. The majority of the information found was accurate, but could be simplified for ease of use.

Comments:

"Tabs are simple, but not as clear as they could be. Too many links!"

"Registration homepage is overall aesthetically pleasing, but progressing into deeper registration takes away from appeal."

"Wish there was more spunk, too much black and white."

Help, Documentation and Recovery from Errors
Median score: 1 = good

The help information is very clear and easily found by the evaluators. Site map was a basic template, but one evaluator could not locate it. FAQs also could not be located. When evaluators did encounter errors the message was clear and they were able to resolve the issue.

Comments:

"The help icon is very clear."

"Unable to locate search function or search criteria input field."

"Help icon is easy to locate, but why do I have to log in again?"

Language

Median score: 1 = good

The language was clear and appropriate for the audience. Most evaluators felt the language used could be simplified and streamlined across pages.

Comments:

"Clear, wordy though."

"Language could be simplified."

"Content language is clear and easy to understand."

Recommendations

Simplify and clarify

-Create breadcrumb trails and links that connect in easy to find formats. Simplify content and reduce link clutter by allowing users to personalize and modify links and content to match their personal needs.

Add more design appeal

-Design all registration pages to match Kent State design family while keeping clean and minimalistic design that allows users to see important content included in the design, don't be afraid of a little pizzazz.

Search functionality

-Add search functionality so users can easily find what they need rather than searching through an endless sea of links.

Table A

Three-point scale of 0-2: 0=poor, 1= good, 2= excellent	Jori's Rating	Mark's Rating	Janie's Rating	Median	
Visibility of System Status				Section:	1
1. It is easy to know the current location within the overall map of the site.	0	0	0	0	
2. It is clear what information is available at the current location.	1	1	1	1	
3. The current information matches what you expect to find.	1	1	0	1	

4. It is clear where you can go from the current location.	1	1	1	1	
5. It is always clear what is happening from each action you perform.	0	0	0	0	
User Control and Freedom				**Section:**	0
6. It is always easy to return to the Home Page.	0	0	0	0	
7. It is easy to access all major portions of the site from the Home Page.	1	1	1	1	
8. No unnecessary technologies are used.	2	1	0	1	
9. Graphic links are also available as text links.	0	0	0	0	
Consistency and Standards				**Section:**	1
10. Links are used and appear in standard web style.	1	1	2	1	
11. Menus are used and appear in standard web style.	1	1	1	1	
12. The site supports all major browsers.	2	2	2	2	
13. There is clear notification if special technologies or browser versions are required.	0	0	2	0	
14. Link labels match destination page titles or headers.	2	1	2	2	
15. Overall, the site behaves like one would expect a web site to behave.	1	2	1	1	
Recognition Rather than Recall				**Section:**	1.5
16. Available actions are always clearly presented.	0	2	1	1	
17. Labels and links are described clearly.	1	2	2	2	
Aesthetic and Minimalist Design				**Section:**	1

18. The site structure is simple and clear without any unnecessary complications.	0	0	0	0	
19. There are no instances of extraneous information.	0	1	0	0	
20. There are no instances of misplaced information.	2	1	2	2	
21. Color choices allow for easy readability.	0	2	1	1	
22. The site is aesthetically pleasing.	1	0	1	1	
Help, Documentation, Recovery from Errors				**Section:**	1
23. A site map or other navigational assistance is always readily available.	2	1	0	1	
24. If needed, an FAQ is available.	0	0	0	0	
25. No errors occur unnecessarily.	2	2	2	2	
26. If necessary, a search function is readily available.	1	0	0	0	
27. If necessary, error messages are clear and in plain language.	2	2	2	2	
28. It is easy to cancel or exit from operations.	0	2	1	1	
29. It is easy to contact support through email or a web form.	2	2	1	2	
Language				**Section:**	1
30. The content language is clear and simple.	0	2	1	1	
31. The vocabulary is appropriate for the intended audience.	1	2	1	1	
	Overall Median:				1