

Introduction

Registration is an integral part of the college experience. The Kent State University registration system is an online system students use to register for classes. This heuristic evaluation provides insight of the usability of such a system. The target audience is all users that need to register for classes which can involve both students and advisors.

USABILITY TESTING

Usability testing focuses on learnability, efficiency, memorability, errors, and satisfaction. By completing usability testing, results will show if the Kent State University registration system is functioning to the benefit of its users. In addition, completing a heuristic evaluation provides a tool to evaluate the usability of the system. It is quick and inexpensive while giving valuable results. It disregards the need to collect subject data since the evaluators are also able to provide the data. They are able to judge against a set of rules that will guide them throughout the evaluation process and convene with other evaluators.

EVALUATORS

Jessica Kainu
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USABILITY TESTING

Jakob Nielson's principles of usability were utilized in this evaluation. Seven of them include...

- Visibility of System Status
- User Control & Freedom
- Consistency & Standards
- Recognition Rather than Recall
- Aesthetic & Minimalist Design
- Help, Documentation, Recovery from Errors
- Language

Evaluation

METHOD

Seven of Nielson's principles were used for the evaluation. Inside each principle were related items that each evaluator graded from a scale of 0-2.

0 = Poor

1 = Good

2 = Excellent

The median of each category/principle was found by combining each evaluator's results which provided an overall median that could be compared and contrasted against.

VISIBILITY OF SYSTEM STATUS

Median: 1 - Good

Evaluators thought the visibility of system status was good overall. It was not difficult to figure out which page was being viewed. However, evaluator's had difficulty locating what they were looking for because the pages were very cluttered with text. There was not much that visually differentiated one section from another leaving the user in a sea of text. Even though the user could click on class CRNs, that was not enough information to tell them what page they would be visiting from that action.

USER CONTROL AND FREEDOM

Median: 0.5 - Not bad but not good either

Evaluators though user control and freedom was not bad but not good either overall. All evaluators agreed it was difficult to access the homepage once the user navigated away from it. This is detrimental especially when a user feels lost. When they are lost, a suggestion was to have a thorough technology help guide available.

CONSISTENCY AND STANDARDS

Median: 1.5 - Better than good but not great

Evaluators thought that the consistency and standards were better than good but not great overall. Links were not easily differentiated yet that appeared to be the only issue among evaluators. Utilizing different browsers did not appear to effect experience. Though the site had some confusion it was able to hold its integrity and not appear disjointed.

RECOGNITION
RATHER THAN
RECALL

Median: 1.5 - Better than good but not great

Evaluators agreed that recognition rather than recall was better than good but not great overall. Available actions were clearly presented most of the time. The site does an excellent job of describing their labels and links.

AESTHETIC &
MINIMALIST
DESIGN

Median: 1 - Good

Evaluators agreed that the aesthetic and minimalist design was good overall. Errors were clearly labeled in red and information was placed correctly. There are great things about the design but also some heavy flaws. The site is unappealing to look at and though information is placed correctly, there is too much of it that does not pertain to the specific user.

HELP,
DOCUMENTATION,
RECOVERY FROM
ERRORS

Median: 2 - Excellent

Overall, evaluators agreed that help, documentation, and recovering from errors was excellent. It was easy to exit or cancel operations, what the user did not need to complete. There was help available for technical issues with the site but not for registration and account assistance.

LANGUAGE

Median: 2 - Excellent

Evaluators agreed that overall, the language of the site was excellent. The language was simple and easy to understand.

Summary

Median: 1.5 - Better than good but not great

The Kent State University registration system scored well overall. It complies with Nielsen's usability principles. Below is a list of strengths and weaknesses from the evaluators and a few recommendations for improvements.

STRENGTHS

Scored above 1

- It is easy to access all major portions of the site from the Home Page.
- The site supports all major browsers.
- Link labels match destination page titles or headers.
- Overall, the site behaves like one would expect a web site to behave.
- Labels and links are described clearly.
- If needed, an FAQ is available.
- No errors occur unnecessarily.
- If necessary, error messages are clear and in plain language.
- It is easy to cancel or exit from operations.
- The content language is clear and simple.

WEAKNESSES

Scored below 1

- It is not always clear where you can go from the current location.
- It is not always clear what is happening from each action you perform.
- It is not always easy to return to the Home Page.
- Graphic links are not always available as text links.
- Links are not used and appear in standard web style.
- Menus are not used and appear in standard web style.
- The site structure is not simple and clear without any unnecessary complications.

- The site is not aesthetically pleasing.
- It is difficult to contact support through email or a web form.
- A search function is not readily available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The registration site is not perfect. It could benefit from the following recommendations. There is a sea of text that floods the homepage and other pages there after. There needs to be less text, more white space, and perhaps graphics to guide the user to what they need. Links could be color-coded and/or underlined. They need text stylization to make it obvious that they are clickable. Not all links are clear when they are clicked. There should be a button in the navigation to always return to the home screen. Though errors received were relevant to the task, they would not give a suggestion of what user should do instead. There is no visual engagement for the user. Information on the page is not organized well. Both of these issues could be solved by introducing shapes and color instead of a white background with black text. Though there is access to technical help, there should also be access to help with registration and user accounts. There needs to be an accessible back button since using the browser's may result in loss of information and/or errors. There is an ability to search by CRN but it is not simple to use and not easily accessible. A contextual search option should also be available with the navigation. This will aid in a speedier registration process and help the user that feels lost.

Appendix

CATEGORIES & ITEMS	REVIEWER			Median
	1	2	3	
Visibility of System Status				1
1. It is easy to know the current location within the overall map of the site.	1	1	1	
2. It is clear what information is available at the current location.	0	1	1	
3. The current information matches what you expect to find.	1	1	1	
4. It is clear where you can go from the current location.	0	0	1	
5. It is always clear what is happening from each action you perform.	1	0	0	
User Control and Freedom				0.5
6. It is always easy to return to the Home Page.	0	0	0	
7. It is easy to access all major portions of the site from the Home Page.	2	2	2	
8. No unnecessary technologies are used.	1	1	2	
9. Graphic links are also available as text links.	0	0	0	
Consistency and Standards				1.5
10. Links are used and appear in standard web style.	0	0	0	
11. Menus are used and appear in standard web style.	0	0	0	
12. The site supports all major browsers.	2	2	2	
13. There is clear notification if special technologies or browser versions are required.	1	1	1	
14. Link labels match destination page titles or headers.	2	2	2	
15. Overall, the site behaves like one would expect a web site to behave.	2	2	2	
Recognition Rather than Recall				1.5
16. Available actions are always clearly presented.	1	1	1	
17. Labels and links are described clearly.	2	2	2	
Aesthetic and Minimalist Design				1
18. The site structure is simple and clear without any unnecessary complications.	0	0	1	
19. There are no instances of extraneous information.	1	1	1	
20. There are no instances of misplaced information.	1	1	1	
21. Color choices allow for easy readability.	1	1	2	
22. The site is aesthetically pleasing.	0	0	0	
Help, Documentation, Recovery from Errors				2
23. A site map or other navigational assistance is always readily available.	1	1	2	
24. If needed, an FAQ is available.	2	2	2	
25. No errors occur unnecessarily.	2	2	2	
26. If necessary, a search function is readily available.	1	0	0	
27. If necessary, error messages are clear and in plain language.	2	2	2	
28. It is easy to cancel or exit from operations.	2	2	0	
29. It is easy to contact support through email or a web form.	0	0	0	
Language				2
30. The content language is clear and simple.	2	2	2	
31. The vocabulary is appropriate for the intended audience.	1	2	2	
Overall Median				1.5

There were three evaluators and each rated on a scale of 0 to 2.

0 = Poor
 1 = Good
 2 = Excellent