

SOFTENG 350: Assignment #1

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1 Design Review (800 words)

In this section of the report, the issues within subsections are ordered by criticality. Issues are categorized in the usefulness category if they refer to the content, although this may overlap with the fit for use section. If issues could fit into multiple categories, they are shown in the most relevant category.

The system goal for the AskAuckland web page is to provide information relating to a user's query regarding the University. Therefore, searching should be fast, easy, and accurate. The content should relate to students of the University (both current and future). Issues are things that hinder this ideal experience.

1.1 Usefulness Issues

Searching does not appear to support the Maori language. As Maori is commonly spoken and an official language of NZ, there are accessibility issues.

Search our frequently asked questions by keyword or phrase.

Me pehea taku utu i aku utu

Example: How do I pay my fees?

Search filters applied

Topic

Current students

Refine your search by topic:

Academic information Accommodation Coronavirus Degree Planning Enrolment Exams Fees and money matters Graduation ID cards IT help International students Printing Programmes and courses Postgraduate Records Scholarships Sport and Recreation Student Engagement Summer school Support services

No results found.

A simple search for “academic integrity” has many results relating to academic integrity. However, academic integrity is never defined in the articles. Furthermore, none of the links in the articles leads to a definition of academic integrity.

Next to some articles, there is an “Updated” flag; however, the date of the post/update is not visible. This lack of specificity limits the functionality of this feature. The time posted is essential for these articles as they may become outdated. An article from five years ago is not as relevant as one posted six months ago.

Results 1 - 10 of 2

Calculating your grade point average
You can view your cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) on MyAucklandUni, the Student Portal. If you can't see it, please check Why can't I see...

Logging into Canvas Updated
To log into Canvas, please go to canvas.auckland.ac.nz. Enter your University username (e.g. jbloo07) and password and click on login. Canvas is...

Looking for a lecture room is also difficult. It requires going to the sixth result after searching “campus map” and requires four clicks to reach the city campus map pdf. This also makes it inefficient for use, as this process would need to be repeated each time.

When searching “exam” with the coronavirus topic there is one result which is not relevant to exams. This would be a fairly common question asked, but there does not appear to be information on the AskAuckland site.

There are no search results for “coffee” and “cafe”. This type of search should be covered as it would be a commonly asked question.

1.2 Fit for Use Issues

The search for “covid-19” yields twelve results.

Search our frequently asked questions by keyword or phrase.

covid-19

Example: How do I pay my fees?

Search filters applied

Topic

Current students

Refine your search by topic:

[Academic information](#) [Accommodation](#) [Coronavirus](#) [Degree Planning](#) [Enrolment](#) [Exams](#) [Fees and money matters](#) [Graduation](#) [ID cards](#) [IT help](#)
[International students](#) [Printing](#) [Programmes and courses](#) [Postgraduate](#) [Records](#) [Scholarships](#) [Sport and Recreation](#) [Student Engagement](#)
[Summer school](#) [Support services](#)

Results 1 - 10 of 12

Further specifying the search by adding the “Coronavirus” topic reduces search results to just two results.

Search our frequently asked questions by keyword or phrase.

covid-19

Example: How do I pay my fees?

Search filters applied

Topic

Current students Coronavirus

Refine your search by topic:

[Academic information](#) [Accommodation](#) [Coronavirus](#) [Degree Planning](#) [Enrolment](#) [Exams](#) [Fees and money matters](#) [Graduation](#) [ID cards](#) [IT help](#)
[International students](#) [Printing](#) [Programmes and courses](#) [Postgraduate](#) [Records](#) [Scholarships](#) [Sport and Recreation](#) [Student Engagement](#)
[Summer school](#) [Support services](#)

Results 1 - 2 of 2

The implementation of topics seems to be faulty. The titles of some of the removed articles are “Self-isolation in accommodation”, “Holding accommodation if still in China”, and “Making changes to your graduation application”. These results would be useful for students, so having them filtered out when using the “coronavirus” topic is counter-intuitive and not a good user experience. Therefore, the functionality of “topics” is compromised.

Another potential issue with the topic feature is removing a topic from a search by clicking “Current students” under topic removes the search term.

1.3 Ease of Learning Issues

Hover effects for links are variable, with most being underlined, but some being underlined and highlighted.

The search button does not get underlined or highlighted, only the mouse cursor is changed to a pointer.

Most clickable aspects are shown in blue. However, the current breadcrumb is clickable but not blue. A further question is why the current breadcrumb is clickable, as it provides no functionality.

Another anti-pattern is the “Example: How do I pay my fees?” section, which is blue but not clickable.

[Home](#) / [AskAuckland](#) / [Current students](#) / [Coronavirus](#)

Search our frequently asked questions by keyword or phrase.

 × Q

[Example: How do I pay my fees?](#)

Typing in a word then hovering over the 'x' icon does not change the mouse cursor to a pointer which is an anti-pattern, a little confusing. Also, the 'x' icon has a small hit-box, making it harder to click.

AskAuckland

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[Home](#) / [AskAuckland](#) / [Current students](#)

Search our frequently asked questions by keyword or phrase.

 × Q

[Example: How do I pay my fees?](#)

The page numbers that appear at the bottom of a search page have a small hit-box, making them harder to click according to Fitt's law.

Vaccine for Coronavirus

Currently, there is no vaccine to protect against COVID-19, and no anti-viral treatment recommended for COVID-19 infection. People infected with the...

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [Next >](#)

1.4 Efficiency of Use Issues

Each visit to AskAuckland requires the user to pick either “current” or “future” student. This is a time-consuming step for returning users as it must be done each time.

AskAuckland

Your online help and support centre

[Home](#) / [AskAuckland](#)

Find the answers to your questions about the University of Auckland.

I am a:

Future student

You are thinking about studying at the University, you are applying for admission, or you have just accepted an offer.

Current student

You are enrolling in courses and attending University.

1.5 Error Frequency and Severity Issues

When a user makes a spelling error, no results are returned, and there is no indication that the user has made a mistake.

Search our frequently asked questions by keyword or phrase.

Example: How do I pay my fees?

Search filters applied

Topic 

Current students

Refine your search by topic:

[Academic information](#) [Accommodation](#) [Coronavirus](#) [Degree Planning](#) [Enrolment](#) [Exams](#) [Fees and money matters](#) [Graduation](#) [ID cards](#) [IT help](#)
[International students](#) [Printing](#) [Programmes and courses](#) [Postgraduate](#) [Records](#) [Scholarships](#) [Sport and Recreation](#) [Student Engagement](#)
[Summer school](#) [Support services](#)

No results found.

1.6 Subjective Satisfaction Issues

The top bar seems to have no use other than to hold the University of Auckland logo, which appears to be a bad use of space.



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2 Nielson's Heuristics (1200 words)

Nielson's heuristics are a general guideline on user interface design. In this section, these ten characteristics will be examined in regards to six scenarios:

1. What a current student should do about COVID-19
2. What support for Maori students is available
3. How to find a specific lecture theatre
4. What is academic integrity
5. Find out where to get a coffee on campus
6. Ask about something in the Maori language

The process for gathering issues started with an observation and exploration of the main AskAuckland web page, looking specifically for anti-patterns and visual issues. Following this, the scenarios were carried out whilst constantly examining signs of usability issues. These were all recorded and then categorized into the ten heuristics. The criticality of each issue is noted and determined by the impact on users trying to perform a scenario. There are three levels of criticality: low, medium, and high. If an issue completely blocks a scenario then it is of high criticality, while an issue that annoys a user would be of low criticality.

Make sure you're using the correct heuristic for the problem

Even if a heuristic is not violated, make a note of it

Severity rating = can i complete this task i want to

2.1 Visibility of system status

The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.

2.1.1 Previous Clicked Link Not Purple - Low Severity

A convention across many websites is to color links purple if they have been previously visited. This helps the user recognise what they have used before for future searches.

2.2 Match between system and the real world

The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

2.2.1 Maori Language Support - High Severity

Searching does not work if the language used to search is Maori.

There is also no option to change the language of the site to be in Maori.

Search our frequently asked questions by keyword or phrase.

Me pehea taku utu i aku utu

Example: How do I pay my fees?

Search filters applied

Topic

Current students

Refine your search by topic:

[Academic information](#) [Accommodation](#) [Coronavirus](#) [Degree Planning](#) [Enrolment](#) [Exams](#) [Fees and money matters](#) [Graduation](#) [ID cards](#) [IT help](#)

[International students](#) [Printing](#) [Programmes and courses](#) [Postgraduate](#) [Records](#) [Scholarships](#) [Sport and Recreation](#) [Student Engagement](#)

[Summer school](#) [Support services](#)

No results found.

Solution: Either translate Maori and search that way, or implement Maori language support with a switch language button

2.3 User control and freedom

Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo.

Can I ask my question in Maori?

2.3.1 Search Term Not Saved

When in an article, clicking “Current students” breadcrumb does not preserve the search term used to find the article.

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Search our frequently asked questions by keyword or phrase.

Ask your question

Example: How do I pay my fees?

What if I go into an article and find it is not the right one, can i go back? No!

2.4 Consistency and standards

Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform conventions.

2.4.1 Choosing Topic Eliminates Relevant Results - High Severity

Searching for “covid-19” yields twelve results, adding the “coronavirus” topic reduces the number of results to two.

2.4.2 Inconsistent Link Styling - Low Severity

While most links are colored blue, there are some exceptions. The “Example: How do I pay my fees?” paragraph is not a link even though it is blue. The current breadcrumb is a link even though it is not colored blue. Links in the footer are not blue but white.

Solution: Make links consistent in styling

2.4.3 Inconsistent Hover Styling - Low Severity

Links and buttons do not have consistent styling

search covid-19 gives 5 results, adding the coronavirus tag gets 2 results

2.5 Error prevention

Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.

2.5.1 Misspelling Not Checked - Medium Severity

The screenshot shows a search interface with a search bar containing the text "coronaavirus". Below the search bar, there is a message "Example: How do I pay my fees?". Underneath, there is a section titled "Search filters applied" with a "Topic" filter set to "Current students". Below this, there is a link "Refine your search by topic:" followed by a list of links: "Academic information", "Accommodation", "Coronavirus", "Degree Planning", "Enrolment", "Exams", "Fees and money matters", "Graduation", "ID cards", "IT help", "International students", "Printing", "Programmes and courses", "Postgraduate", "Records", "Scholarships", "Sport and Recreation", "Student Engagement", "Summer school", and "Support services". At the bottom, there is a message "No results found." which is underlined in red.

This is quite a common mistake for user's to make. So the fact that there is no indication that there has been a misspelling (something like "No results, please check your spelling") is an issue.

Can i search something with a misspelling?

Do i get error messages (no results found, try something else, or ask at email)

Undo and redo?

2.6 Recognition rather than recall

Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.

Do links open in new tabs

2.6.1 Search Term Not Shown

When inside an article, it is not clear which

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Unable to return to New Zealand because of travel restrictions

What should I do if travel restrictions mean I cannot return to New Zealand?

Solution:

2.7 Flexibility and efficiency of use

Accelerators — unseen by the novice user — may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

Can hit enter instead of clicking the search button

2.7.1 Mandatory Selection of Future or Current Student - Medium Severity

This feature is a roadblock for experienced users. It limits the speed at which users who are used to the site can ask a question.

AskAuckland

Your online help and support centre

[Home](#) / [AskAuckland](#)

Find the answers to your questions about the University of Auckland.

I am a:

Future student

You are thinking about studying at the University, you are applying for admission, or you have just accepted an offer.

Current student

You are enrolling in courses and attending University.

Solution: Save the previous answer in a cookie and use that for future sessions. Or on the homepage, have a search bar on top which can be used immediately.

2.8 Aesthetic and minimalist design

Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

Is there a difference between the current students and future students search? Seems to be slightly different

2.8.1 Top Bar Emptiness - Low Severity

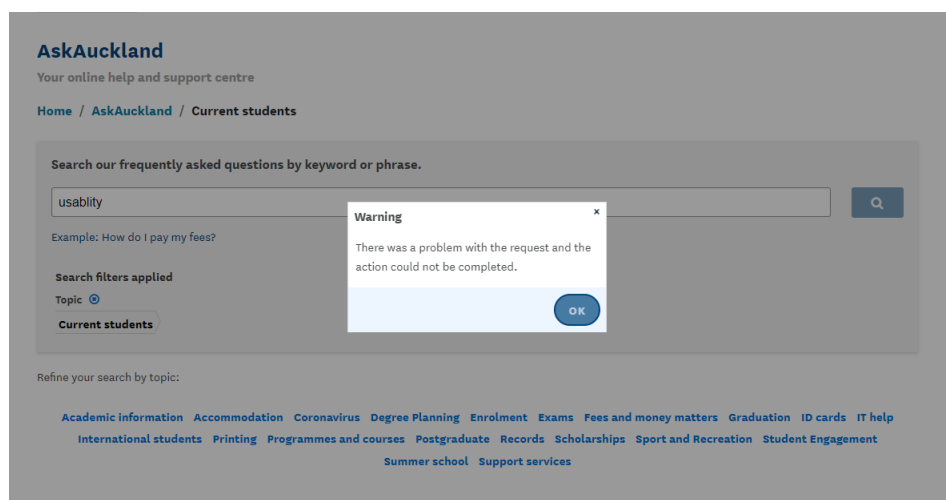
The top bar containing the University of Auckland logo and link is sparse and takes up a lot of screen real estate.

2.9 Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors

Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

2.9.1 Unclear Error Message - Medium Severity

Although error messages were rare, there were occasions where searching for something after the site had been idle results in an error message. The error message is not useful for the user. After searching again, the warning did not occur again. This is a confusing experience for the user.



Solution: Use a more meaningful error message for the user such as “Please try again, you have timed out.”.

Tell me you can’t recognise languages other than English

2.10 Help and documentation

Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.

2.10.1 No Help Page/Tooltips - High Severity

This might be the same as the next one and is doubtful for such a simple site to have a help page

There is no help

Where else can i go for help?

Can't ask a question directly if it not answered, no contact button

No tooltips/help page

2.10.2 No Contact Page - High Severity

The main purpose of the AskAuckland website is to get answers to commonly asked questions. If a question returns no results, there is currently no indication of how else the user can receive an answer.

Solution: In the footer add a link "Contact for specific questions" where the user can submit custom questions to be answered.

3 Impacts of Human Memory (500 words)

Something about breadcrumbs functionality?

Topics

Search stays (unless you remove a topic)