

# Students Online Experience

## Interaction Design Assignment One

### Victoria University Blackboard Background Secondary Research

Universities have been sprung with a pandemic and quickly adapted to online or remote learning strategies. It's safe to say the transition was not easy for students or those in charge but with our digital climate in New Zealand, the initial shift is easier.

However, Data collected from students making the same transition to online learning around the globe has shown alarming rates of dissatisfaction with the quality of online teaching (Alia, 2021). Students are facing learning-related issues as well as loneliness, mental health, time management and also balancing life online. Some studies have shown an increase in student distraction and a decrease in focus as well as ongoing technical issues and connection frustration. Another big problem is the lack of interaction between students and their peers and lecturers. Education institutes must continue to strive to improve the quality of online learning for their students as research and systems update.

Online learning systems should be continually reviewed and adapted to be appropriate and flexible as well as adopting new technologies to advance the overall experience and learning outcomes. Technology is a powerful tool for increasing learning outcomes for students while also benefiting providers by increasing onboarding capacity and having large platforms to distribute content to a wider student audience. Victoria Universities' online system is managed by the company Blackboard from America. The company generates over 1 billion NZD of revenue annually and operates through lots of universities and countries worldwide.

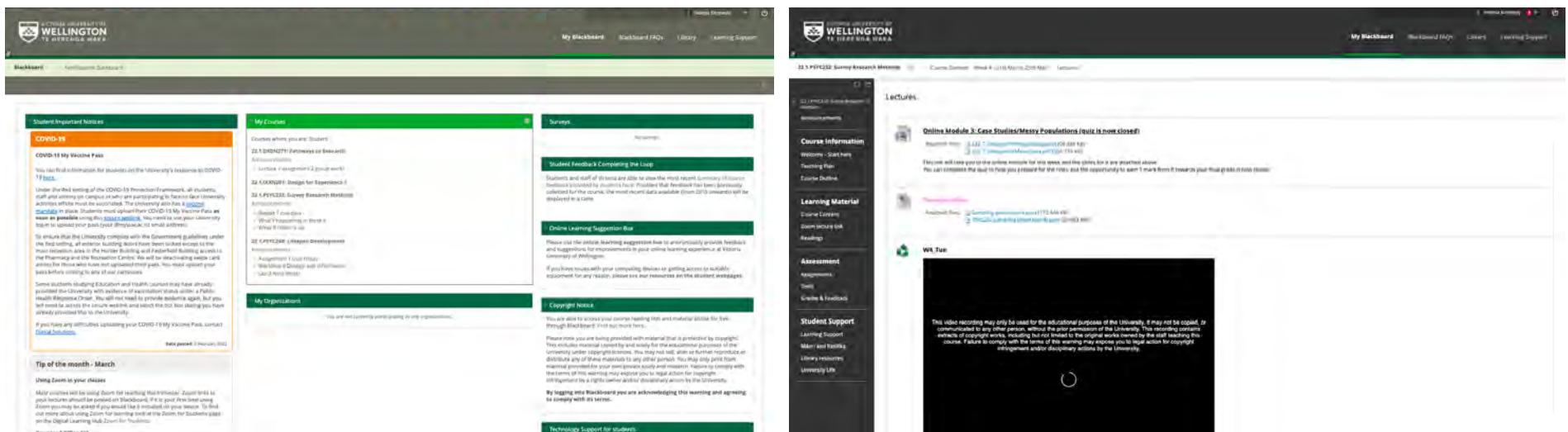
### VUW Students

I will be exploring the relationship between Victoria University (VUW) students and their online learning system Blackboard (BB).

It's important that complex University Systems function well for students to complete their learning. With the shift towards online learning and many students taking part in online lectures and using VUW services to help progress, it's crucial that these systems are updated and consider the influence that systems can have on student's productivity, time and overall learning.

### Identifying Areas of Interest Dashboard + Task Area

These are the screens we were focusing on during the data gathering process as they are the common starting point after logging in to Blackboard. I wanted to explore what the reactions were to questions surrounding the functions of these.



### Qualitative Primary Research Interview Process

I talked to a few students and had extended conversations with others about how their Blackboard works for them, what they struggle with and what they would love to see improved. I figured the process of analysing the way people move about Blackboard might not be super helpful as everybody's looks so different, also a majority of people I've spoken to already find the software tricky. The problems with the UX UI of Blackboard become apparent very quickly but trying to scope out what would actually influence student's productivity was more difficult.

## Blackboard Observations

### Miro sticky notes from five interviews

Interview One [Second Year Psychology Student]					Interview Two [Third Year Marketing Student]				
struggle that all the classes are separate, we are doing them all at once and the separation is hard	need dashboard to be productive	kills my productivity	too long to get to places	not good integration of programs like zoom and panopto	I feel real unproductive when I'm just searching through folders of content	it frustrates me when everything is uploaded as docx to download	im sure its capable of a lot, there is potential	id love it to be as modern as the myDegree site	hard to visualise progress
i hate sub folders	too much info in side bar	announcements and emails and the constant red icon dont work for me	not clear tasks, what is next??	nothing to show you whats complete and what needs doing	the colouring is a bit bland	its hard when we have to use a bunch of different programs	not very consistent	i wish it would keep me logged in	all my lecturers upload their lectures in different ways
different layout across alllll classes	no jakobs law or consistency	dont like it visually - its out dated	i dont do well with lots of text, i need it to be in hierarchy	the icons are not very nice looking	It took a while to get used to	theres still things i dont know how to do	its nice when people post on discussion boards	other teachers do it differently	could be cool if it influenced our online workflow positively
doesn't flow back and forth and in and out of things easily	so much stuff on there that is never used	no element of customisation which is so needed	logging in is SO frustrating	people using other apps to compensate for jobs that bb is trying to do	using BB Zoom Plugins google calendar outlook and my tools all in different places is kind of inconvenient	YEAH you have to really search for you next task	you dont know whats coming up unless you figure it out or if the teacher tells you	you have to go onto all the classes and into the assignments bit and then write it all out somewhere else	ive used it once on my phone
id like to be able to use it on my phone on the go - good for online students	cant use zoom and bb and my notes and word all at the same time!! it doesnt work	I need some way to code it all or organise it by colour	the inconsistency of the UX UI for every class, tutor, lecturer and department frustrates me	i need the timetable to work	possibly would use it if it would work well on my phone	it would be super handy if it was easy and for checking classes/timetable	my marketing classes are so hard to find stuff	just words - nothing to break it up	the icons arent very nice
Interview Three [First Year Architecture Student]					lots of files - cant even see what the content is of	no content titles just lists of weeks	BB is hard for revision	I have to click the embedded lecture and open it again in panopto then it plays twice	40 notifications over the last few days
its atrocious design wise	way too confusing especially as a person with adhd	subtitles are just terribly presented and I cant find the classes	reminds me of my school website of 2009	why cant uni student that studied design to do the website and make it a school project	I mostly just use paper to organise my study	notebook for all my classes coz online is tricky	I have a paper calendar with all my due dates instead of BB	because I can visualize it - I can see it - I can log in - anything to all just right in front of me - its easier	my productivity would increase if BB was incredible
nothing is standing out, im not sure whats clickable	uni logo is good to have on there but the rest of the menu is kinda bland	theres so much writing	takes ages to scan through side menu	i need some colour	my design classes do great on blackboard layout wise	all text labels is not ideal	colour would help a lot	announcements is just WORDS	theres a lot going on
Interview Four [Third Year Design Student]					i use the side bar the most	i dont ever use the big grey bar - I dont even know what the other things are	all grades are uploaded differently - I use the drop down to get my grades	im pretty sure my lectures for all my classes are all different	lecture videos - all the lectures nicely named
when i was first using it it was hard to find stuff	now ive used it for ages i kinda get it	the log in is so frustrating - pressing twice to log in is annoying	accessing student email is SUCH a mish that should be a link through bb	the page that really frustrates me is the little time notification with the clock that has the updates, it scrolls 500 feet - too fast to be able to see things	online class - weekly course content to get to lectures	two different ways you can go to the lectures	link that says vstream but nothing in it	course content - folders with dates and titles and chapters is so handy	out of 24 things on the side bar I do only assignments quite a bit and then using zoom for all the time and announcements quite a bit
just it works well its better in updating stuff and has continuous announcements about what's due and its due date nice weekly announcement about what's due	class involvement with discussion boards is actually being used its good	both design classes giving drawing challenge and uploading to bb is nice collaborating	some of my classes dont even show up on the timetable	assignments dont show up on due calendar	even if I go in person I still go back to the lectures to revise	some pre record lectures and upload them	some of them are over zoom and then uploaded through zoom	some are through zoom and then uploaded through panopto	last year we used miro boards for tutorials
my allocator is legit the worst thing ever and I had to email teachers to enrol me - does work on chrome so that's dumb	not really my cup of tea asthetically	the home page is idk alright - the blue things are clickable	the side bar is very hard to read and have to look at it for so long	nothing stands out at all	we dont use blogs	If a few more things - looking more like a dashboard would help so much if things were more obvious it would make a huge difference	the updates are just PAIN	I only know the date things are due but I dont actually know the time its due	assignments only uploaded before the thing
the discussion board the clickable buttons are just not or they are hiding	I think its good that the classes are separate but maybe having a proper timetable on the home page or something and actually have it working	I have always had to make my own timetable	I dont use it on my phone	I dont even get emails anymore Idk where they go					

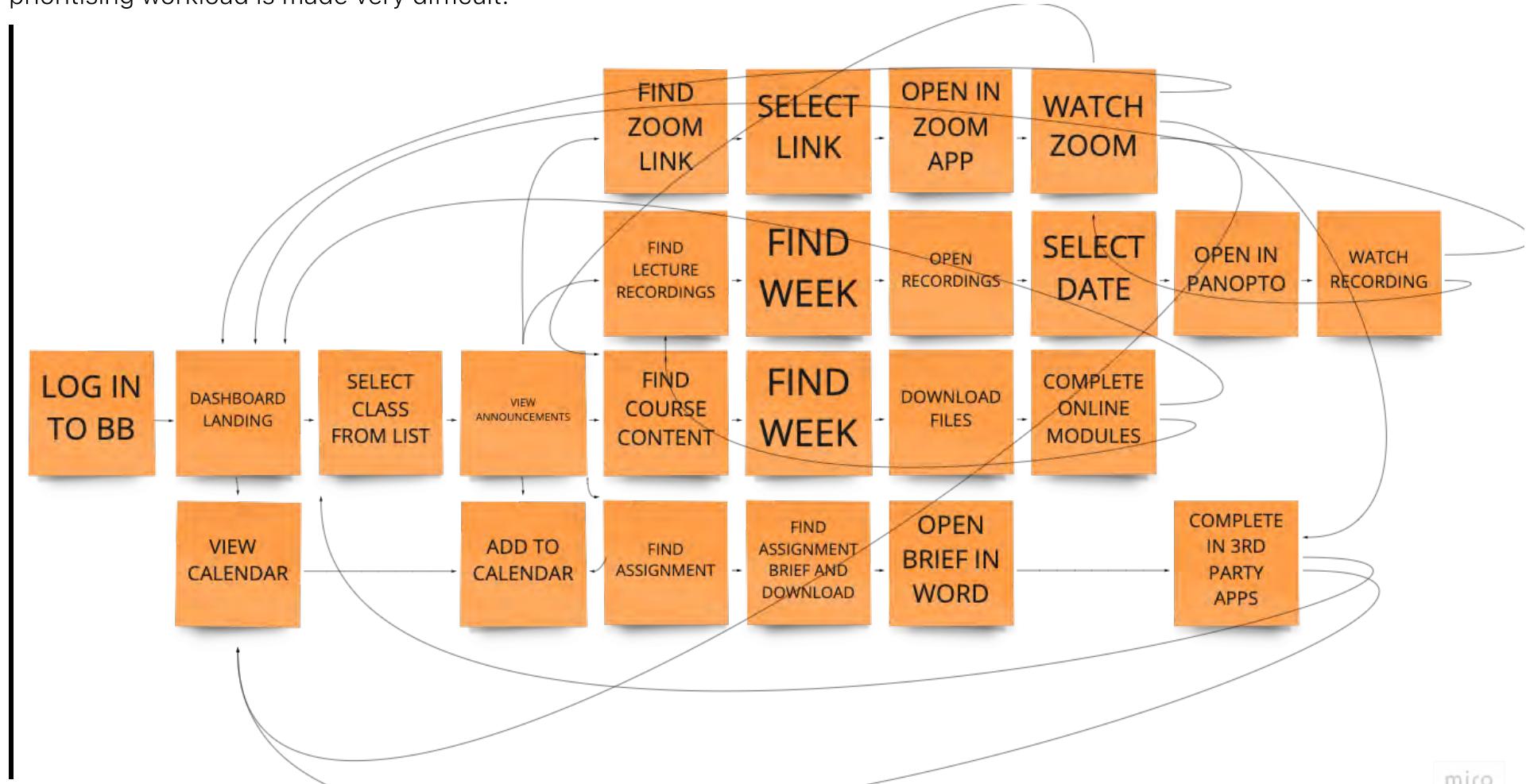
## BlackBoard Affinity Diagram

### Categorised Notes from five Interviews



## Simple BlackBoard Workflow Analysis

This process is likely repeated for each class a student does each day, the process of switching tasks and overviewing/prioritising workload is made very difficult.



# BlackBoard Refined Affinity Diagram

Rearranging the underlying productivity concepts → web systems → visual design considerations

## Productivity

### Progress/Tasks

**hard to visualise progress**

not clear tasks, what is next??  
YEAH you have to really search for you next task  
nothing to show you what's complete and what needs doing  
could be cool if it influenced our online workflow positively

### Productivity

**kills my productivity**

my productivity would increase if BB was incredible  
i feel real unproductive when i'm just searching through folders of content  
too long to get to places  
i hate sub folders  
need dashboard to be productive

### Inconsistency

not very consistent  
im pretty sure my lectures for all my classes are all different  
doesn't flow back and forth and in and out of things easily  
all grades are uploaded differently - i use the drop down to get my grades  
no jakobs law or consistency  
different layout across allllll classes  
It took a while to get used to  
other teachers do it differently

### Time Management

assignments dont show up on due calendar  
you dont know what's coming up unless you figure it out or if the teacher tells you  
i only know the date things are due but i dont actually know the time its due  
some of my classes dont even show up on the timetable  
assignments only uploaded one at a time so cant check times  
i have a paper calendar with all my due dates instead of BB

### Notification System

announcements and emails and the constant red icon dont work for me  
the updates are just PAIN  
40 notifications over the last few days  
i dont even get emails anymore idk where they go  
the page that really illustrates me is the little time notification with the clock that has the updates, it scrolls 500 fast - too fast to be able to see things

## Systems

### Phone App

i dont use it on my phone - its not very helpful  
id like to be able to use it on my phone on the go - good for online students  
ive used it once on my phone  
possibly would use it if it would work well on my phone

it would be super handy if it was easy and for checking classes/timetable

### Adaptations

people using other apps to compensate for jobs that bb is trying to do

i mostly just use paper to organise my study  
notebook for all my classes coz online is tricky  
last year we used miro boards for tutorials  
i have always had to make my own timetable

### Logging In

**logging in is SO frustrating**

i wish it would keep me logged in  
the log in is so frustrating - pressing twice to log in is annoying

### BlackBoard Learning

**BB is hard for revision**

two different ways you can go to the lectures  
some are through zoom and then uploaded through panopto  
some are through zoom and then uploaded through panopto  
online class - weekly course content to get to lectures  
no content titles just lists of weeks  
all my lecturers upload their lectures in different ways  
some of them are over zoom and then uploaded through zoom  
some pre record lectures and upload them  
even if i go in person i still go back to the lectures to revise  
it frustrates me when everything is uploaded as docx to download  
lots of files - cant even see what the content is of

### Program Integration/Interaction

**not good integration of programs like zoom and panopto**

using BB Zoom Panopto google cal term calendar and my tools all in different places is kind of inconvenient  
cant use zoom and bb and my notes and word all at the same time! it doesnt work  
accessing student email is SUCH a mish that should be a link through bb  
struggle that all the classes are separate, we are doing them all at once and the separation is hard  
I think its good that the classes are separate but maybe having proper timetable on the home page or something and actually have it working

## Visual

### Overwhelming Side Bar

out of 5 things on the side bar its assignments cause a bit and then using zoom in all other tabs and announcements cause a bit  
too much info in side bar  
we dont use blogs  
the side bar is very hard to read and have to look at it for so long  
takes ages to scan through side menu

### Colour

**colour would help a lot**

i need some colour  
i need some way to code it all or organise it by colour  
the colouring is a bit bland

### Type/Information

all text labels is not ideal  
i dont do well with lots of text, i need it to be in hierarchy  
announcements is just WORDS  
way too confusing especially as a person with adhd  
theres so much writing

### Hierarchy

**nothing stands out at all**

nothing is standing out, im not sure, whats clickable  
if a few minor things looking more clickable would help so much or if things were more obvious it would make a huge difference  
the discussion board the clickable buttons are just not or they are hiding

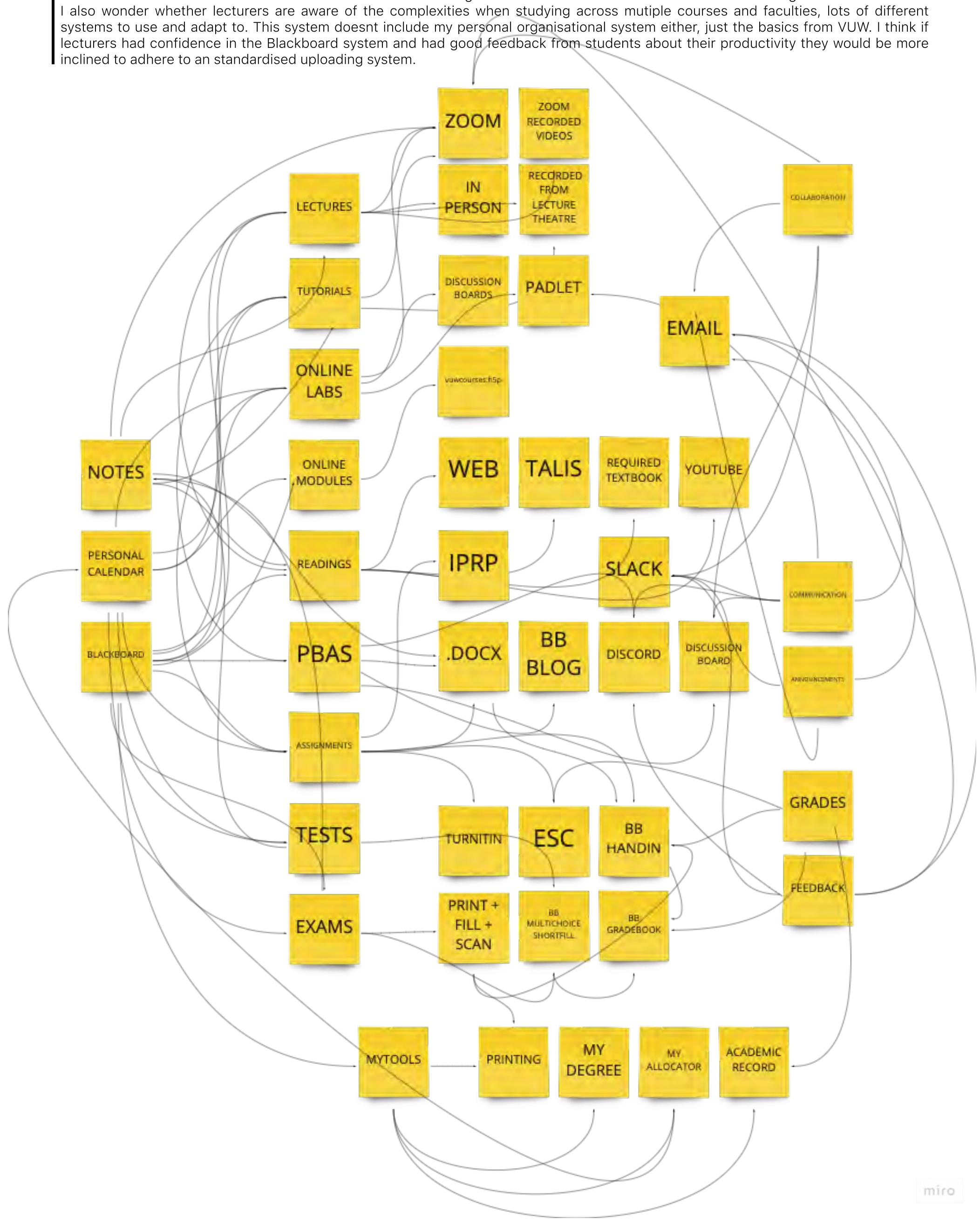
### Design Critisms

**id love it to be as modern as the myDegree site**

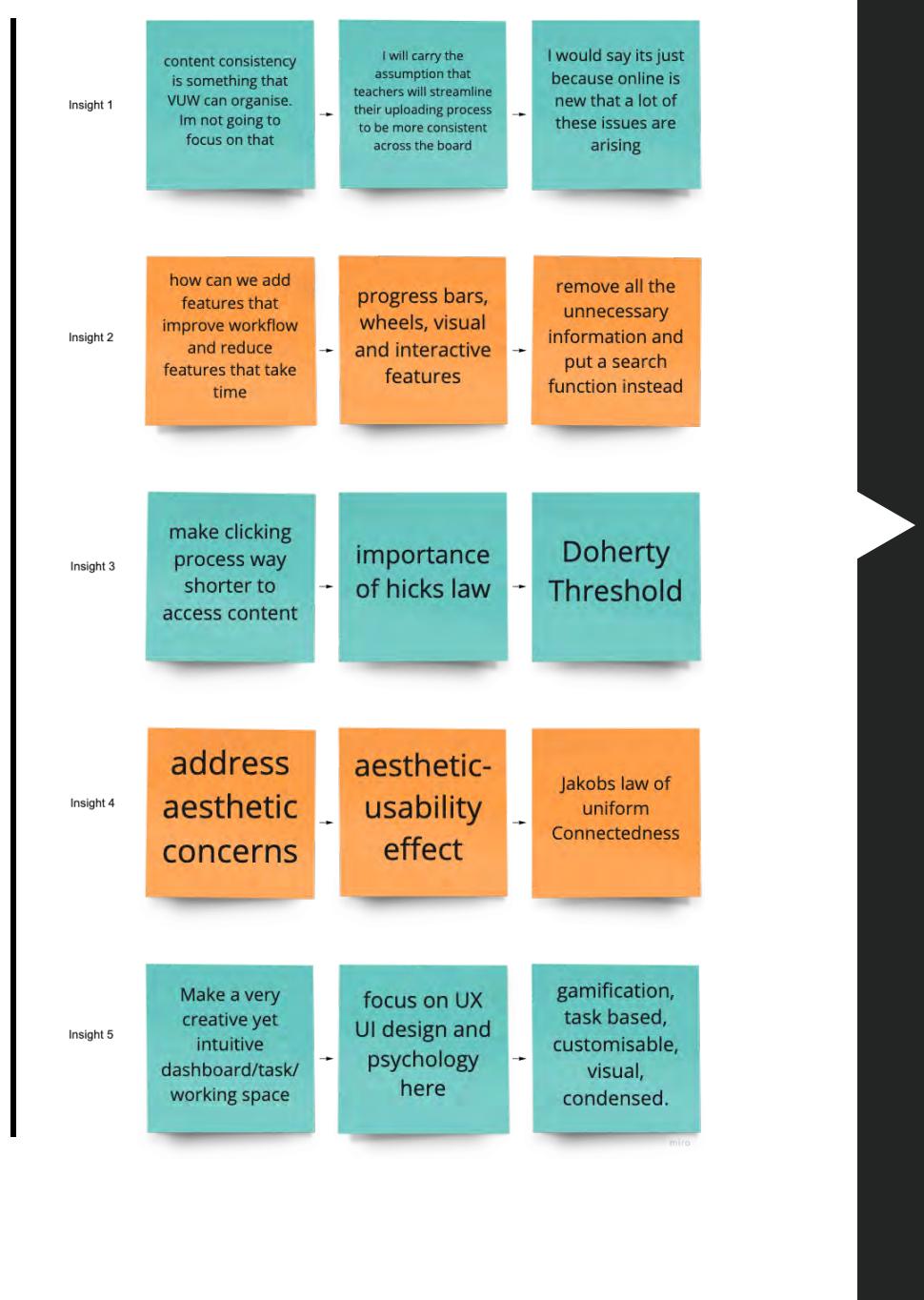
the icons are not very nice looking  
not really my cup of tea aesthetically  
its atrocious design wise  
dont like it visually - its out dated  
reminds me of my school website of 2009  
the icons arent very nice

# **Brainstorm of Online Student Workflow**

This is a complex model for a complex system that I have followed while completing my study at VUW. While everyone's experience differs and I understand it's very complicated to put all these systems in one place I would love to see it simplified for the sake of precious time. I would rather spend more time learning and getting work done than travelling across apps and platforms and websites with no consideration to Jakob's law which is the basic knowledge transfer of website function to make transitioning more comfortable. I also wonder whether lecturers are aware of the complexities when studying across multiple courses and faculties, lots of different systems to use and adapt to. This system doesn't include my personal organisational system either, just the basics from VUW. I think if lecturers had confidence in the Blackboard system and had good feedback from students about their productivity they would be more inclined to adhere to a standardised uploading system.



## The Big Ideas Insights



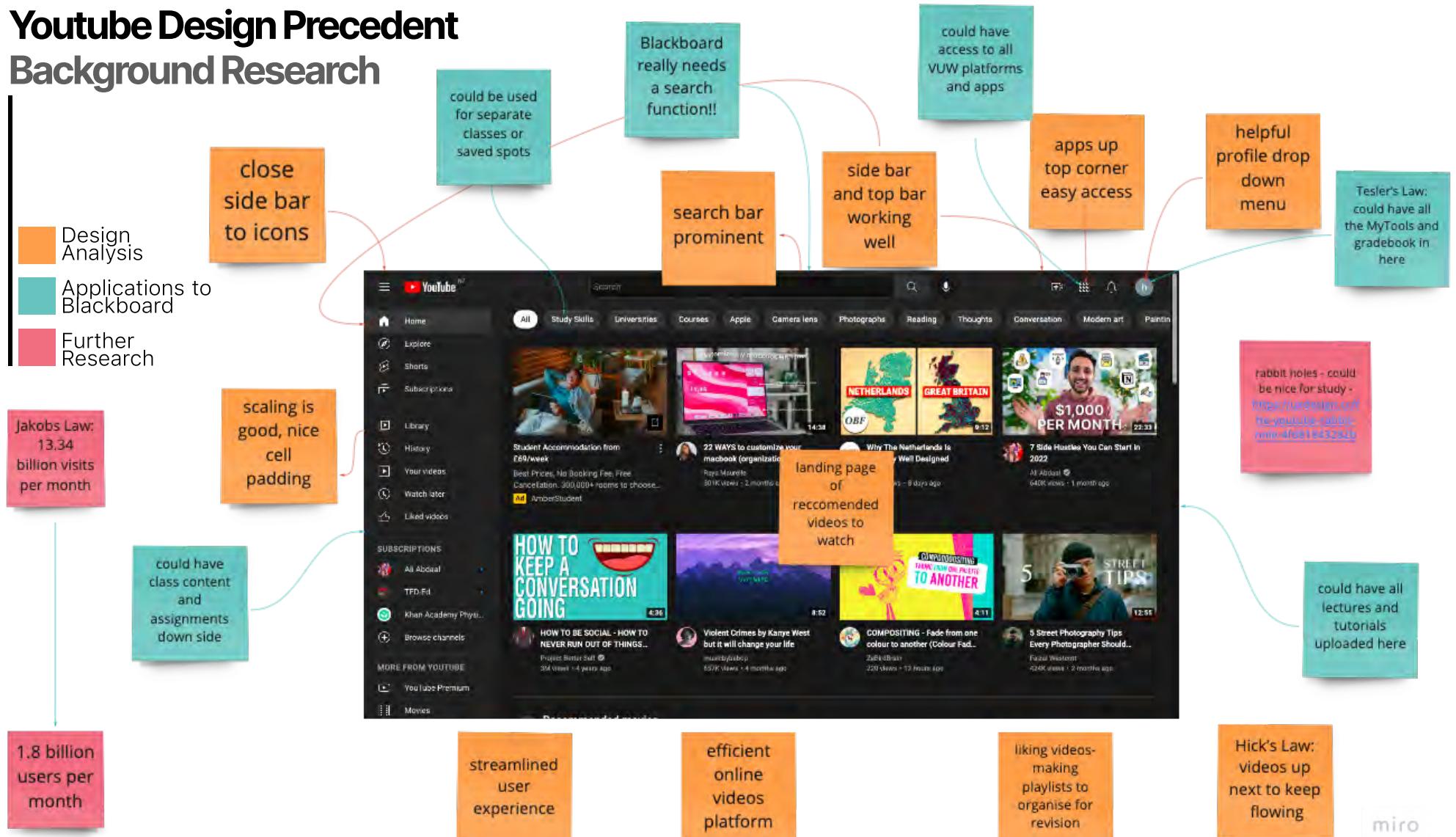
## Laws of UX Background Research

With the complexity of choices displayed on Blackboard, it's no wonder the site is decreasing productivity. Hick's Law states that the time it takes to make a decision increases with the number and complexity of choices. With the number of text labels of similar size and colour and different options, it's not helping make efficient decisions about what to do next. Jakob's Law is not applied well on the site because the site doesn't perform in the same way young people are used to using other sites like Youtube, Facebook or Instagram. According to Jakob's Law Students would prefer Blackboard to function in similar ways to the other sites they are already comfortable using.

The Law of Uniform Connectedness is not utilised on the site as there is a disconnect between tasks, lectures and assignments even though the learning and brain process for this is all the same, there isn't continuity through blackboard. Not only this but Doherty's Threshold explains how productivity soars when neither the user nor the site is waiting on one another, the number of clicks and loading time it's taking to get from one task to the next is not increasing attention or productivity.

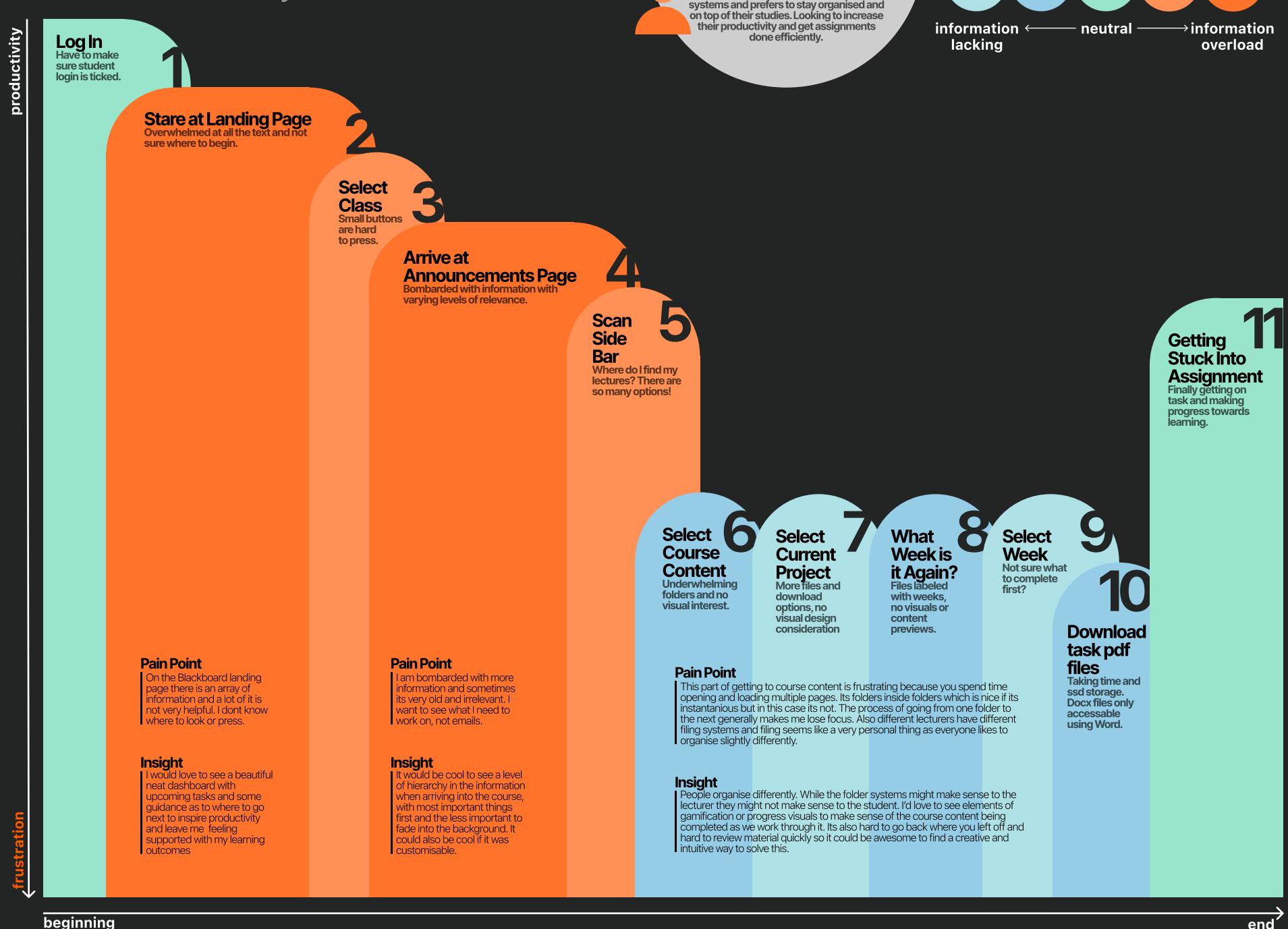
There has also been lots of feedback about the visual elements of the site such as the colours, placement and overall aesthetic consideration and this might contribute to Blackboard being intolerable for students. The aesthetic-usability Effect states that users often perceive aesthetically pleasing design as a design that's more usable, this also would help students to have a more delightful online experience. (Yablonski, 2022).

## Youtube Design Precedent Background Research



# Blackboard Student Journey Map

Decrease in Productivity Over Time



## Design Opportunities

For assignment two, I will address the productivity issues and frustration with information systems within Blackboard.

I want to use my psychological findings of reducing selection options, connecting workflows visually and minimising the time it takes to get stuck into work.

By updating the visual theme, I'll create a comfortable, inviting and inspiring workspace. I will continue to be inspired by YouTube's interactive design that can leave users spending hours engaged through smart algorithms and streamlined interface design.

Applying these concepts to Blackboard 2.0 should help students have clear direction and a simplified online experience so they have more capacity to learn.

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