

Client Report

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What is the UEA Portal?

The My UEA portal acts as a hub from which UEA students and staff can access all online resources the university has to offer. It is meant to live up to its name by delivering the full UEA experience to students and staff alike all from one place. Once a user has logged in they are provided with links to the key UEA systems such as eVision and Blackboard and can access their UEA email accounts and view a myriad of resources provided by the university such as campus news and notices, wellbeing and mental health resources, events and much more.

My UEA serves as a hub of resources where one can reach all aspects of their university's online resource which is why it is especially important that it has excellent usability. The purpose of the site is to make people's lives easier and making resources easier to find meaning if the site is difficult to use then it is redundant.

What are we going to change?

The purpose of this redesign is to accentuate the site's greatest feature; it's comprehensiveness. Having all the resources in one place is excellent but this can lead to too many things in one place which is arguably the case here. Too many things in one place makes things harder to find which places a much greater emphasis on good design and consideration of the human cognition. The critical flaw of the site is that things are too hard to find.

A key focus in the redesign will be accentuating the important features and hiding the less important features. The features that the average user is more likely to use will be larger and easier to spot, for example on the portal page. The vast majority of the time the user is going to select either Blackboard, eVision or My UEA, yet these buttons are the same size as the link to log in as an NHS partner. This sets the precedent for our redesign; putting things that need to be seen in the field of view and the things that don't need to be seen in the extensive dropdown menus.

End Goals and Milestones

By the end of the project we will have:

- Produced an informed design for a new My UEA site
- Produced a working prototype of the redesigned My UEA site
- Conducted a thorough usability evaluation on the completed site

These are the primary end goals for our redesign. In the process of achieving these goals there are some key milestones to achieve on the way:

- Pinpoint the key usability issues
- Gather external feedback through heuristic evaluation
- Produce a lo-fi design for the site
- Implement the design in a new web app
- Perform a usability evaluation on the completed web app

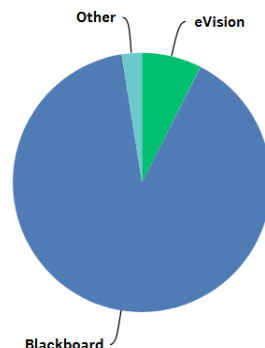
Why is a redesign necessary?

To answer this question we created a survey. A short survey of 5 questions about the usability of the UEA portal was made using www.surveymonkey.com (a free service used for creating and hosting online surveys). A link to the survey was posted on a popular UEA Facebook group in an attempt to hear from the key demographic of My UEA: the students.

The survey was only posted in this group so that only the voices of students were heard and the results posed a lot of questions regarding the usability of the existing My UEA site.

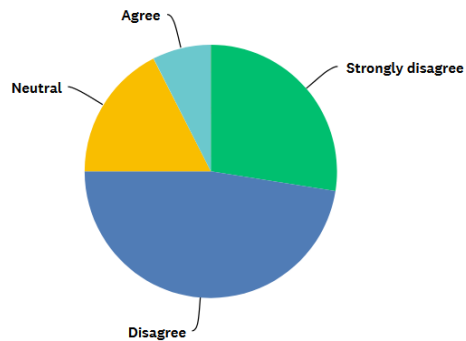
Which of the following do you use most often when on the UEA portal?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



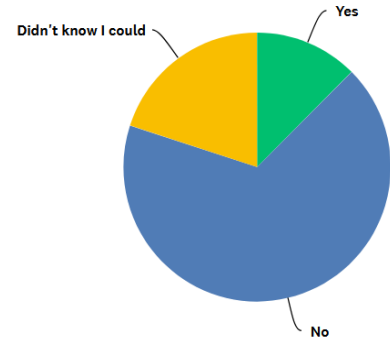
The My UEA website is easy to use

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



Have you ever customised your dashboard on My UEA?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



Pictured above are 3 of the most interesting results, formatted into pie charts. First of all the question 'which of the following do you use most often when on the UEA portal?' was answered with an overwhelming bias towards blackboard, with 90% of respondents saying blackboard, 7.5% saying evision and one single response (assumedly a non-serious answer) being other. This highlights an issue then on the portal page. If students are choosing blackboard and evision 97.5% of the time then why are the links to blackboard and evision the same size as the NHS login links at the bottom of the page. This is the first sign that our proposed redesign appears necessary.

When the survey data is viewed in combination with each other the meaning becomes more clear. It is visible in the data that My UEA is one of the least popular UEA sites, having 0 votes for users most-used site. Looking at the other charts it becomes more clear why. Only 12.5% of students have customised their My UEA dashboard, and 20% had not even explored the site enough to know they could. The data seems to suggest My UEA is critically underused by students despite its intention of being the hub for all services. The final chart tells us the reason for this; it is not easy to use. Just 7.5% of users think it is at least mildly usable, compared to 27.5% strongly disagreeing and 47.5% disagreeing that the site is easy to use. The remainder of respondents were neutral but it is likely that some of these also belong to the bracket of users who have never explored the site. The data is a clear indicator that the site needs a redesign.

This is also reflected in some of the think-aloud experiments. The users initial reaction upon seeing the dashboard is everything, and in the think aloud the users said things such as "Okay I see lots of icons" and that it's "quite confusing" and when looking through the dashboard saying "I'm going to double check as I might have missed it". These kinds of reactions are a telltale sign that the dashboard is too confusing and the dashboard is likely the only page most users will be looking at. No wonder they don't use My UEA after having such a poor visceral reaction!