

Hardest Decisions

The majority of this project was spent architecting and discussing how to change the University of Leicester's website in order to make it more coherent, cleaner, and easier to navigate. This was a hefty challenge as the current state of the website is very confusing and after working through 100 use cases, we confirmed it requires a lot of effort to navigate to certain important areas. Because of this, designing an efficient header that allowed different user groups to efficiently navigate the site was thoroughly discussed. This quickly became our hardest decision and it took multiple long discussions to finally agree on our final result.

At first, we analyzed the different websites used in our competitive analysis to come up with ideas for what should be in the header. This was semi successful, we decided upon which major categories we should have in the main navigation. Admissions because prospective students make up a large chunk of potential users to our site. Academics, for prospective students to quickly switch into after after investigating admission requirements (or vice-versa). Research, for prospective graduate students or other potential university employees. Campus as a general section to place all things campus related, a useful top level navigation section due to prospective students wanting to learn about campus life and current students wanting to learn about campus places. However, we realized we would need to look at many more websites, specifically websites in England to solidify our thoughts. We stumbled upon a gem which was the University of Oxford's (<http://www.ox.ac.uk/>) website eventually and realized how efficient a header can be. We had been debating whether to have side bar for additional navigation, but Oxfords elegant solution won us over as it has all the

functionality of a side bar without taking up room and cluttering the main page.

Additionally we decided that an Oxford style header where one can mouse over each further sub topic to see multiple options, is more efficient because if the same were done on a side bar, the expansion would force other information off the screen.

Another tough decision arose when we tried to decide which additional links to place in the header. We noticed that many other university sites had a lot of other links, however, we decided that most had too many which didn't really serve a purpose. We instead decided on having two additional sections, one for tools that any user could make use of and another section dedicated to other user groups besides prospective students. With this in mind, after heavy discussion on where to place these new categories we settled on a simple straightforward layout that can be seen now. The user group links are key shortcuts for advanced users to navigate to their pertinent site area, such as the current student portal.

More discussion was had when we started planning how to make our selected use case better. We decided to modify the action of applying as the Leicester's website makes it very hard to reach an actual application and once you reach it, it is unclear as to what you are supposed to do. We began making changes modeling our process after University of St Andrew's website, which made it easy and clear on how to apply. We adopted Oxford's method of giving sequential steps as well to make the tricky English application process more clear. It was very hard to decide how much information we should put on the application instruction page, as there is a lot to say. Organizing the layout into a succinct and clear message with appropriate links and info was a real challenge. We decided on information by looking through multiple different

top English university websites in addition to Oxford and copied the most important fragments into one clear page.

That wraps up the majority of the challenges we faced. In general choosing what to put in critical areas such as major drop downs or important pages sparked discussion as there are many different ways to display and organize such a large amount of information. Besides the navigation bar, other choices were much easier though, figuring out what to put in the footer and what to put on the main page was not as difficult as our other challenges although it still required discussion.