**Cognitive Walkthrough of Blue Castle website**

**User Goal**

‘*To be able to view a list of the current modules being taken by a student’*

The tasks the user is expected to carry out to be able to achieve the goal are:

Login process

* Open the browser
* Navigate to the Blue Castle website
* Enter the user’s username and password into the login fields
* Click the login button

Navigate from the home screen to the page displaying a list of the student’s current modules

There are several ways of navigating from the student’s home-screen to the page containing lists of their course modules. But the evaluator is expected to identify the optimal path, which is outlined as follows:

* From the student’s home-screen find the button marked ‘My Modules’
* Click the ‘My Modules’ button to navigate to the ‘My Modules’ page.
* From there scroll to view a list of the student’s current modules and past, archived modules.

**Evaluation**

To evaluate the user’s experience whilst completing the tasks at each new point during the walkthrough the following four questions should be used to document the experience.

1. Will the users of the interface understand how to start the task?
2. Are the controls obviously labelled or marked?
3. Will the users know which control/button/link is the correct one to use?
4. Was there feedback to indicate that the user completed (or did not complete) the task?

Lastly when the end goal has/has not been achieved:

1. Was the user able to complete all the tasks?

**Walkthrough**

**Login**

Initial observations

The page is clearly titled ‘Log In’ and the requisite log in fields are clearly marked with ‘user name’ and ‘password’ headings. When the cursor hovers over and the user clicks on the user name and password fields the input boxes change colour and are highlighted to indicate that where the user is typing. Similarly, the log in button also changes colour when the cursor hover over it, to clearly indicate where the user is about to click.

Questions

1. The fields on the ‘Log In’ page are clearly marked, with empty input boxes underneath to indicate to the user that that is where they should input their log in details. This kind of login interface is ubiquitous and should be obvious to the majority of users what they need to do to complete the login.
2. The input fields and ‘log in’ button are clearly labelled and become highlighted when the cursor hovers over them indicating that the user should input their information there and to click the ‘log in’ button when finished. The order follows convention of inputting ‘user name’ then ‘password’ before clicking ‘log in’ so this should be familiar to most users.
3. The controls are clearly marked and because this kind of login interface is so ubiquitous, it should be familiar for users. The three most important controls are also in the centre of the screen and command the user’s attention, so it should be clear that these are the fields that need to be completed to log in.
4. The buttons/fields change colour and are highlighted when the user hovers the cursor over them or is inputting details, however, do not remain highlighted or give indication that the information input into them is correct. To indicate that the fields have been filled correctly they could remain highlighted and/or a check mark could appear next to the information to show the user that what they have entered is correct. There is also no option for the password to be made visible and the characters are only displayed as inconspicuous dots, it can be useful to have the option to make the password visible so that if the user makes a mistake when entering they can amend it. If the details entered are incorrect, however, the password field is cleared and a message stating ‘the user name or password provided is incorrect’ and the user is prompted to re-enter their information.

**Navigating to the current modules page**

Initial observations

The layout of the student homepage is quite simplistic with the possible actions quite clearly marked. The headings used, however, are slightly ambiguous, particularly the buttons marked ‘My Award’ and ‘My Progression’. There is also a key at the top of the page that seems to indicate what the colours of the buttons are referring to; however, they seem somewhat superfluous and are also quite ambiguously labelled. When the user hovers the cursor over the buttons, they are highlighted in one of two colours, green and blue, and one of two symbols is displayed, a mortarboard and pen or pencil silhouette. These colours and symbols are referenced in the key at the top of the page and correspond to the two different categories, ‘My Programme’ and ‘My Assessments’. Although fairly arbitrary, these symbols don’t seem to make a lot of sense and by convention a pen symbol is often used a sign that a certain field or entry on a page can be edited so may mislead the user.

There are also two buttons in the top left corner of the page that are not clearly marked. One, indicated by the user’s student username displays an unlabelled drop-down list of their details including, their name, student ID number, email address and the name of their course, however these are not labelled. The next button is just indicated by the word ‘log off’ and an arrow symbol, although this is quite a common way to signpost to the user how to log out of the account the proximity of the button to the user’s details button and the small size of the button mean that is may be missed.

Questions

1. The ‘My Modules’ button is clearly labelled and the largest of all on the page, so the user should experience no trouble in finding the button and navigating to the relevant page. Since all the available options for navigating the site are presented to the user as soon as they log on, from the home-screen, the user does not have to spend time trying to find the relevant page nested within other pages or links.
2. The user of a colour-coded key to link like pages does not feel very intuitive and the headings and labels for the buttons and the key are a bit ambiguous. However, the use of the large, bright buttons on the home-screen does signpost well to the user what they need to click on to navigate to other pages. Although some of the labels are ambiguous and the key system somewhat superfluous it is easy to find the ‘My Modules’ page and from there the information on the page is clearly displayed, if a bit lacking in information and without links to find out more about the modules.
3. The ‘My Modules’ button is well labelled and unambiguous, so it is obvious what the contents of the page is going to contain.
4. The key at the top of the page has changed to show what page the user is currently on, by highlighting the name of the current page, and offers links to navigate to other pages directly from the ‘My Modules’ page rather than going back to the home-screen. However, there seems to be a slight error in continuity as the ‘My Modules’ page is now shown to be nested in the ‘My Modules’ category rather than ‘My Programme’ as shown on the home-page.
5. Although the links on the pages are sometimes ambiguously labelled and the use of colour schemes and keys is not particularly intuitive it is quick and easy for the user to navigate around the Blue Castle site and to complete the task without following spurious links or spending a long time trying to find pages nested within other pages.