



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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VLE guidelines booklet

School of Design Research Team

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Introduction

This guideline booklet aims to assist tutors at The University of Leeds with the design of learning materials in the VLE system, which could potentially contribute to the success of the learning and teaching process. These guidelines arose from the result of research conducted by researchers at the School of Design.

The aim of the research was to identify existing problems in the current VLE system as well as understand how information could be designed from a student's perspective – students as co-designers of education. Furthermore, the principles of information design have been taken into consideration when writing the guidelines

The guidelines presented in this booklet focus on the most used features of the 'learn' menu and each section contains three parts: guidelines, examples and rationale. Clear and brief guidelines can direct tutors on how to provide well-designed information for students. In addition, visual representation of strong and weak design practices are also provided in order to make the guidelines easier to understand. Applying these guidelines on Blackboard VLE has the potential to enhance student engagement with the learning materials and contribute to the success of their studies.



Learn menu

How to design the 'Learn menu'?

Guidelines:

- Choose accurate and clear labels
- Use categories to divide the learn menu
- Use a capital for the first letter of each label
- Simplify the menu by removing unnecessary sections, such as the module catalogue
- Avoid leaving empty sections
- Avoid changing the default order of the main sections

Rationale:

In order to allow easy access to the information in each section, it is important to design a clear and simple navigation menu. This can be achieved by applying clear information design principles. Based on results from our research, students find the learn menu too complex and with too many items. Therefore, the menu should be simplified by categorising its sections based on their function. This could also contribute to reducing the cognitive load of information. Furthermore, the results from research also show that students believe the module catalogue is unnecessary, and it should be removed. Similarly, students have reported that they become confused when empty sections are left in the learn menu. Therefore, tutors should not keep sections unless they have a specific purpose.

✓ Do

Information
Announcements
Staff Information
Module Information
Learning
Learning resources
Reading Lists
Skills and support
Assessment
Assignment overview
Submit my work Ø
My grade and feedback Ø

✗ Don't

Announcements
Staff Information
Module Information
Module Catalogue
Learning Resources
Reading Lists
Media
Assessment



How to design the 'Announcements'?

Guidelines:

- Use announcements purposefully
- Use fonts and colour consistently
- Use a legible type size (10-, 11-, and 12- point)
- Highlight or use bold for key words if needed
- Provide enough information to make sure the announcement is clear
- Use bullet points to make the announcement more legible to the reader

Rationale:

In order to make it more accessible for the reader, it is more effective to apply a single font for all the announcements. Also, bold and/or colour could be used sparingly to emphasise important information. In terms of number of announcements, the results show that students tend to ignore reading all the information when a tutor uploads too many announcements. Therefore, try not to overuse it, and use bullet points and short sentences instead of long sentences.



Do

Year in Industry Talks ✓

Posted on: Wednesday, 5 June 2019 15:20:00 o'clock BST

Time: 12:00 - 02:30 pm

Date: 26-05-2019

Location: LT G23, 28 University Rd.

We will spend the first 15 minutes socialising with guests and students. If you are interested in the possibility of a year in industry after second year, please come along and hear about the adventures of those who did. It is a friendly and informal session. You are free to leave early if you wish.

For more information, please visit the website as attached.

http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/info/6/work_experience/285/your_placement_year_guide



Don't

Year in Industry Talks ✓

Posted on: Monday, 15 July 2019 22:41:14 o'clock BST

We will spend the first 15 minutes socialising with guests and students on 26th May (LT G23, 28 University Rd). If you are interested in the possibility of a year in industry after second year, please come along at 12:00 am and hear about the adventures of those who did. It is a friendly and informal session. You are free to leave early if you wish.

For more information, please visit the website as attached.

http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/info/6/work_experience/285/your_placement_year_guide



How to design the 'Staff information'?

Guidelines:

- Provide detailed information
(Email; Work phone; Office location; Office hours) about yourself
- Provide detailed information
(Email; Work phone; Office location; Office hours) about guest lecturers
- Make sure to add a professional photo of yourself and guest lecturers too

Rationale:

Based on the results of our research, a number of students expressed a wish for the module tutor to provide their contact details such as: email address, work phone, office location and office hours, resulting in more effective communication. In this case, when students have questions they can contact the tutor directly. Also, adding a professional photo with detailed information was found to be helpful for students, and it could also increase their engagement with the course being taught.

✓ Do**Dr Michael Smith** ✓

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Office Hours Wednesday 11.30am - 2pm

**✗ Don't****Dr Michael Smith** ✓

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**Dr Michael Smith** ✓

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How to design the 'Module information'?

Guidelines:

- Place the module handbook and a separate module schedule here
- The handbook should be in pdf format
- Module handbook and module schedule should be well-designed


Rationale:


Based on the results of our research, 84% students usually log on to Blackboard to check the handbook. Some students report that locating the module handbook could be a frustrating and difficult task as some tutors tend to place the handbook in different places. It would be more straightforward to place the module handbook in a place where students would expect to find it. According to our findings, students expect to find the handbook in the module information section.

✓ Do

Module Information ✓

Add Content ▾ Assessments ▾ Tools ▾


 **Module handbook** ✓

 **Module Schedule** ✓

✗ Don't

Module Information ✓

Add Content ▾ Assessments ▾ Tools ▾

 **Module handbook** ✓
 Attached Files:  [Handbook.docx](#) ✓ (86.953 KB)


Learning Resources

How to design the 'Learning Resources'?





Guidelines:

- Update recycled materials before uploading them to the VLE
- Structure lectures thematically and chronologically by folders
- Label folders by week numbers and the theme of the lecture
- Provide a brief description of each folder content in bullet points if needed

Rationale:

The results from our research show that structuring the learning materials thematically and chronologically by folders could be the best design practice to organise information on the VLE. Hence, the clear labelling of folders is essential to help students locate information easily. Furthermore, adding a brief description of the content will provide students with enough information without having to open the folder themselves.

✓ Do

	Week 01 Introduction ✓
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Week 01_Introduction_Lecture
	Week 02 What is research? ✓
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Week 02_What is research_Lecture• Academic Papers• Books• Useful Websites
	Week 03 Annotated bibliography and literature review ✓
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Week 03_Annotated bibliography and literature review_Lecture• Academic Papers• Multimedia• Harvard referencing cribsheets
	Week 04 Interviews and focus groups ✓
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Week 04_Interviews and focus groups_Lecture• Academic Papers• Activities





3.1


Learning Resources


How to design the 'Learning Resources'?


✗ Don't


 **how to conduct a focus group** ✓
[View reading list](#)


 **Introduction 2018-19** ✓

 **What is research 2018-19** ✓

 **Papers, books and Links** ✓


 **Literature review and Annotated Bibliography 2018-19** ✓


 **Papers and examples** ✓


 **Videos and web links** ✓


Learning materials are uploaded randomly

✗ Don't

 **Introduction to module** ✓


 **The research and design process** ✓


 **Literature review and annotated bibliography** ✓


 **Interviews and focus groups** ✓


Folders lack week numbers and description

✗ Don't

 **Week 1** ✓

 **Week 2** ✓

 **Week 3** ✓

 **Week 4** ✓

Folders lack themes and description

How to design the 'Assignments'?

Guidelines:

- Have a different folder for each assignment
- Label folders with the name of the assignment
- Add a brief description of the assignment, and use bullet points if needed
- Emphasise important information by using bold or highlighted text
- In each folder include:
 1. Assignment instructions
 2. Examples from last year (if useful)
 3. Marking criteria

Rationale:

The result of student interviews indicates that 94% of students believe that having a description of the content in each folder is helpful for them to find information. Also, 90% of students think that highlighting key words in the description could make locating information more effective. Therefore, adding a brief description of each assignment folder and emphasising the key words (deadline, instructions, etc.) could be helpful for the student.



Assignment

Add Content Assessments Tools

Assignment 01_Deconstruction

Enabled: Statistics Tracking

- **Submission deadline: 14:00 pm Tuesday 30th October 2018 via online submission portal**
- Assignment 01_Deconstruction_Brief
- A range of papers for you to select for your essay
- Examples of last year's student work
- Compilation of comments

Assignment 01_Deconstruction

Add Content Assessments Tools

Assignment 01_Deconstruction_Brief

Enabled: Statistics Tracking

Academic papers

Enabled: Statistics Tracking

- Select 2 papers.
- It can be from different fields of Design.

Examples of previous student work

Enabled: Statistics Tracking

- Please note that these are examples only of what was submitted.
- They do NOT constitute the "perfect" essay.

Compilation of comments Assignment 1_DESN5150

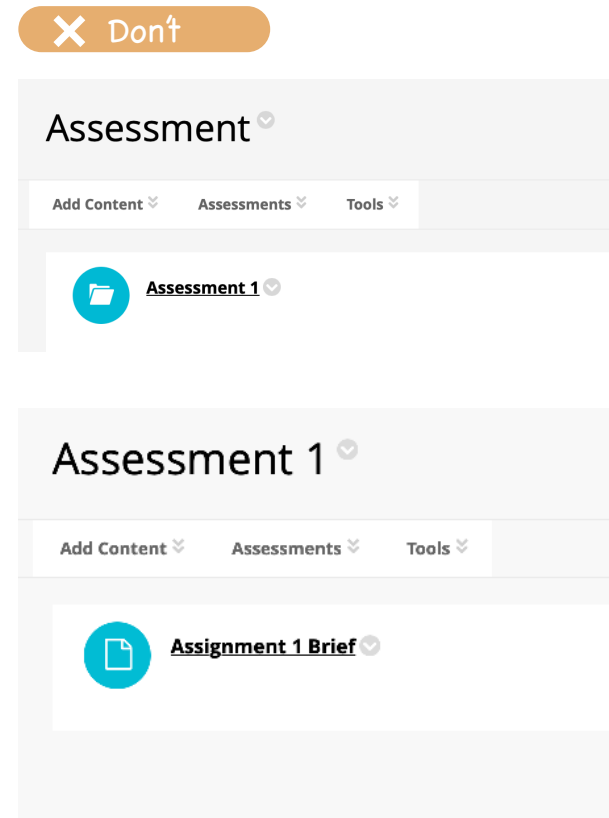
Enabled: Statistics Tracking



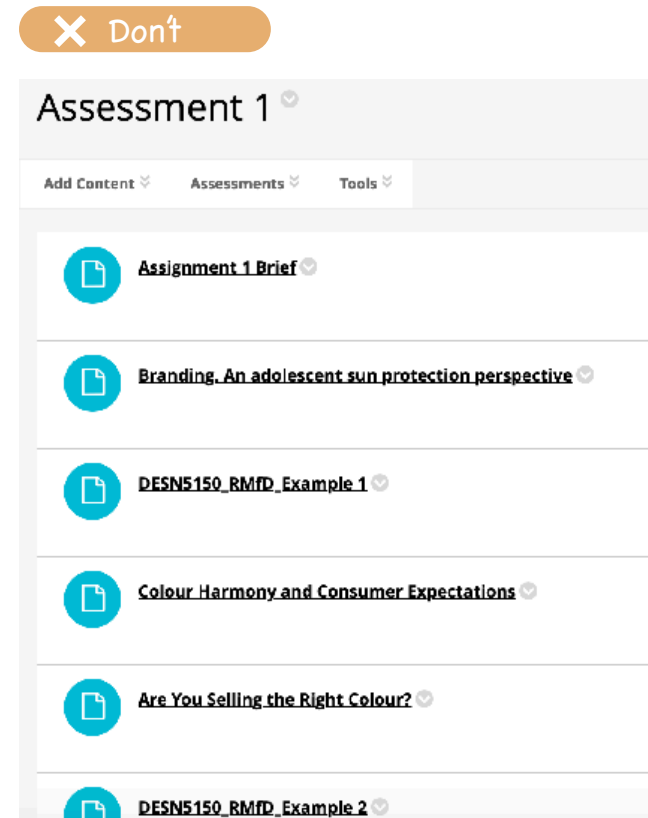
4.1

Assessment

How to design the 'Assignments'?



Lack of relevant information and previous example



Document are randomly placed, they should be placed by folders

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