

# HEURISTIC EVALUATION

Kent State University  
Registrar System

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## INTRODUCTION

Kent State University has one the largest regional systems in the country, with an eight-campus system in the northeastern area of Ohio. More than 22,000 students use the University's registrar system at least two times a year.

The mission of the Kent State University Registrar office is to explore new modern design alternative, to make the user interface of the registration system, and to make it easier to use.

The heuristic evaluation of the current system was conducted by four evaluators who assessed the overall usability and effectiveness of the interface, using a numerical scoring system.

### Evaluators:

- Shannon Boone
- Nick Gonzales
- Jennifer Nickloy
- Michael Saylor

### Evaluations Criteria:

The Kent State University register system evaluation was performed by four reviewers who examined the interface and judged its compliance by using following seven of the ten usability principles developed by Jakob Neilson.

- Visibility of System Status
- User Control and Freedom
- Consistency and Standards
- Recognition Rather than Recall
- Aesthetic and Minimalist Design
- Help, Documentation, Recovery from Errors
- Language

## EVALUATION

### Method:

Each evaluator answered each question one a scale of zero to two.

0 = poor

1 = good

2 = excellent

Raw scores of all evaluators were collected and also the overall medians for each category. The full list of questions, scores, and medians is located in the Appendix section.

### Visibility of System Status

Score: 0 – poor

Reviewers felt the website lacked a good visibility of the system's status. The pages did however have clear elements such as headers and sub-headers, but failed to let the user know where they were on the site due to the fact there is no visible breadcrumb. The site had inconsistencies with the "return to previous" option on their pages. The Class Search page is difficult to navigate, and uses a lot of acronyms that are hard to decipher.

### User Control and Freedom

Score: 1.75 – excellent

In the User Control and Freedom category, the reviewers felt the site performed well in this section. The site as a whole doesn't use unnecessary technologies, and it's clean and assessable. The "Back to Student Tools" and "Courses tab" are always visible and can be accessed at top of the page. The graphics icons did fail to show the text when you click or hover over them.

### Consistency and Standards

Score: 1 – good

Reviewers felt the font sizes are inconsistent across browsers, the menu and the tab options were excellent, but the site failed to notify user of supported browsers. For the most part the labels matched the destination page, but there was a minor difference in one instance.

Reviewers comment:

*While most labels match destination page titles and headers, the following page titles slightly differ from the link label:*

- *Change Course Options (link label) becomes Change Class Options (header)*
- *View Course Descriptions (link label) becomes Detailed Course Information (header)*

### Recognition Rather than Recall

Score: 0.75 – good

Reviewers felt actions are not always clear, and actions sometimes get buried in very heavy content.

Reviewer's comments:

*Multiple Click Here links. User is forced to read the entire paragraph instead of being able to quickly scan for a link and know where it will take you.*

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## Aesthetic and Minimalist Design

Score: 1 – good

Reviewers felt the site was outdated and there is a use of a lot of unnecessary symbols, however the site is a good example of minimalist design by the use of limited color distractions.

Reviewer comment:

The site uses black for text, red for important information, blue for links and various colors for graphic icons. Table headers are light gray, which helps break up sections. Limited color distractions.

## Help, Documentation, Recovery from Errors

Score: 1 – good

Reviewers felt the site had some critical errors, there is no FAQ present, and search function is only available for looking up classes, but the “Site Map” link is readily available at the top right of each page.

Reviewers comment:

*Critical error discovered on the “Check Registration Status” page. When a user selects a term, they are taken to a registration status page. There is no “return to previous page” option, so when a user tries to go back using the browser back arrow, they are automatically signed out of their session. The same error occurs on the “Change Class Options” page.*

## Language

Score: 1.5 – excellent

Reviewers felt the vocabulary was appropriate for college aged audiences, but can be intimidating due to the amount of instructions when looking up a class.

## SUMMARY

Overall Instrument Median Score: 1 – Good

Overall the Kent State University’s registrar site scored good on four principles, excellent on two, and one poor for the Visibility of System Status principle.

Below are the sites strengths and weaknesses.

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## Strengths

- Doesn't use unnecessary technologies, clean and assessable
- Limited color distractions
- "Site Map" link is readily available
- Clear elements such as headers and sub-headers
- Appropriate language

## Weaknesses

- No breadcrumbs
- Site is outdated
- Heavy content
- No FAQ
- Inconsistent return options

## Recommendations

Notify user of browser version required:

When the user first log on there is should be a message to clearing indicate the browser version required to use the site.

Look up class option

Make this simpler more streamlined. A lot of text of instructions is at the top and it's a lot to read, so to make it more clean, it's recommended to us less acronyms and less options. Also on this page, when make the error of not selecting a required option is made, pointing out the error to the user is less frustrating, than what is currently happening where all the options selected is erased and the user has to start over.

Clean up design and make is more assessable

The colors a great but the fewer icons will clean it up a bit and make less overwhelming. Also any symbols or images should have text when hovered or clicked.

## APPENDIX

|   | Reviewers | Median |
|---|-----------|--------|
|   | 1 2 3 4   |        |
| <b>Visibility of System Status</b>  |           |        |
| 1. It is easy to know the current location within the overall map of the site.            | 0 0 0 0   | 0      |
| 2. It is clear what information is available at the current location.                     | 1 2 2 1   | 1.5    |
| 3. The current information matches what you expect to find.                               | 2 1 2 1   | 1.5    |
| 4. It is clear where you can go from the current location.                                | 0 0 0 0   | 0      |
| 5. It is always clear what is happening from each action you perform.                     | 0 0 0 0   | 0      |
| <b>User Control and Freedom</b>   |           |        |
| 6. It is always easy to return to the Home Page.  | 2 1 2 1   | 1.5    |
| 7. It is easy to access all major portions of the site from the Home Page.                | 2 2 2 2   | 2      |
| 8. No unnecessary technologies are used.  | 2 1 2 2   | 2      |
| 9. Graphic links are also available as text links.  | 1 0 2 1   | 1      |
| <b>User Control and Freedom</b>   |           |        |
| 10. Links are used and appear in standard web style.                                      | 0 1 2 0   | 0.5    |
| 11. Menus are used and appear in standard web style.                                      | 2 2 2 1   | 2      |
| 12. The site supports all major browsers.   | 0 1 1 2   | 1      |
| 13. There is clear notification if special technologies or browser versions are required. | 0 0 0 0   | 0      |
| 14. Link labels match destination page titles or headers.                                 | 1 1 2 2   | 1.5    |
| 15. Overall, the site behaves like one would expect a web site to behave.                 | 1 1 2 0   | 0.5    |
| <b>Recognition Rather than Recall</b>   |           |        |
| 16. Available actions are always clearly presented.                                       | 0 0 1 1   | 0.5    |
| 17. Labels and links are described clearly.   | 0 1 1 1   | 1      |
| <b>Aesthetic and Minimalist Design</b>  |           |        |
| 18. The site structure is simple and clear without any unnecessary complications.         | 0 0 0 0   | 0      |
| 19. There are no instances of extraneous information.                                     | 0 1 1 0   | 1      |
| 20. There are no instances of misplaced information.                                      | 1 1 1 2   | 1      |
| 21. Color choices allow for easy readability.   | 1 1 1 1   | 1      |
| 22. The site is aesthetically pleasing.   | 1 0 1 0   | 0.5    |
| <b>Help, Documentation, Recovery from Errors</b>  |           |        |
| 23. A site map or other navigational assistance is always readily available.              | 1 2 2 1   | 1.5    |
| 24. If needed, an FAQ is available.   | 0 1 2 0   | 0.5    |
| 25. No errors occur unnecessarily.  | 1 0 0 1   | 0.5    |
| 26. If necessary, a search function is readily available.                                 | 0 0 1 0   | 0      |
| 27. If necessary, error messages are clear and in plain language.                         | 0 1 2 1   | 1      |
| 28. It is easy to cancel or exit from operations.   | 0 0 1 1   | 1      |
| 29. It is easy to contact support through email or a web form.                            | 1 1 1 1   | 1      |
| <b>Language</b>   |           |        |
| 30. The content language is clear and simple.   | 1 1 2 1   | 1      |
| 31. The vocabulary is appropriate for the intended audience.                              | 1 2 2 2   | 2      |
| <b>Overall Instrument Median</b>  | I         |        |