

Optimising the Student Experience of Using Goldsmiths' VLE

Collaborative field project with Goldsmiths' ITDS

By: Bin Tang

Abstract

The aim of the project was to improve Goldsmiths' Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to increase its ease of use and user satisfaction. A variety of research methods, including questionnaires, interviews and usability testing, were used to provide in-depth information about students' needs and problems. Based on this data, the prototype was designed and tested. The prototype showed significant improvements in information structure, visual presentation, and connection to other software, but limitations remain.

Introduction & Background

The Goldsmiths' VLE runs on Moodle 3.11. Although the current VLE is feature-rich, there are significant shortcomings in the user experience, including a complex information structure, unclear visual design and weak connections to other software. Literature review indicate that the existing VLE user experience is not satisfactory. Therefore, the IT & Digital Services (ITDS) department at Goldsmiths wanted to understand the problems with the existing VLE, what students really thought about the VLE, and make changes to provide a good experience for students.

Study Methodology

The user study used quantitative and then qualitative research

1. Literature review: Finding the improved and unimproved issues of Moodle 4.
2. Questionnaire: Finding the relationship between students' digital skill levels and experience problems, collecting students' extensive opinions about the VLE, and finding participants for the interview.
3. Interviews: Understanding the reasons for the poor VLE experience, the influence of educators on student experience, and virtual learning systems in other schools.
4. Decision matrix: selecting pain points that continue to be solved

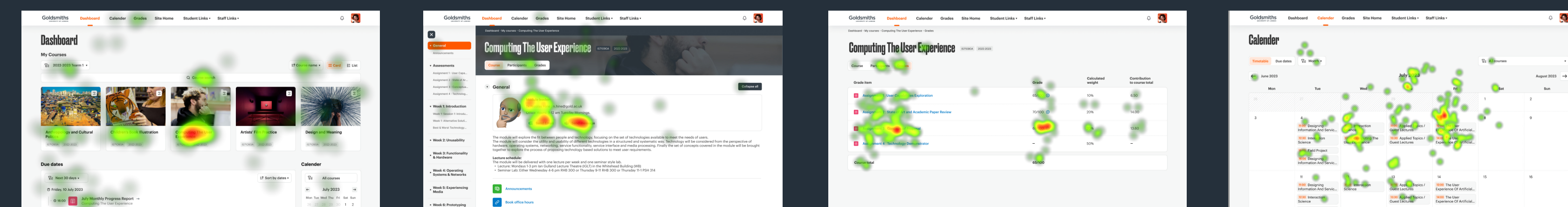
Testing & Evaluation

Users frequently access the VLE via desktop, and due to prioritization on the desktop prototype, only the desktop version was tested. The test group included new, infrequent and frequent users, and users with higher and lower digital skill levels.

1. Comparison test between the prototype and the existing VLE: Participants will use them to complete the test tasks separately, while using an eye-tracker to record the completion process and the time taken to complete the tasks.
2. Participants will complete the Comparative Ease of Use questionnaire and System Usability Scale(SUS), and be interviewed to judge user satisfaction and ease of use of the prototype.

The SUS score is 88.2 and is rated B (excellent). This means that the prototype shows excellent results in terms of ease of use and ease of learning. The time required for users to complete tasks using the prototype was less in the comparison test. And the prototype enhanced ease of use for students with low digital skills and new users.

Eye-tracking data showed that users' eyes were focused on key features and information areas, meaning that the new UI design effectively directed users' attention.



Research Results

39% of students are dissatisfied with the current VLE out of 120 questionnaires. Participants were most dissatisfied with the grades page, calendar page, and finding courses. The course details page is very unfriendly to users with low digital skills.

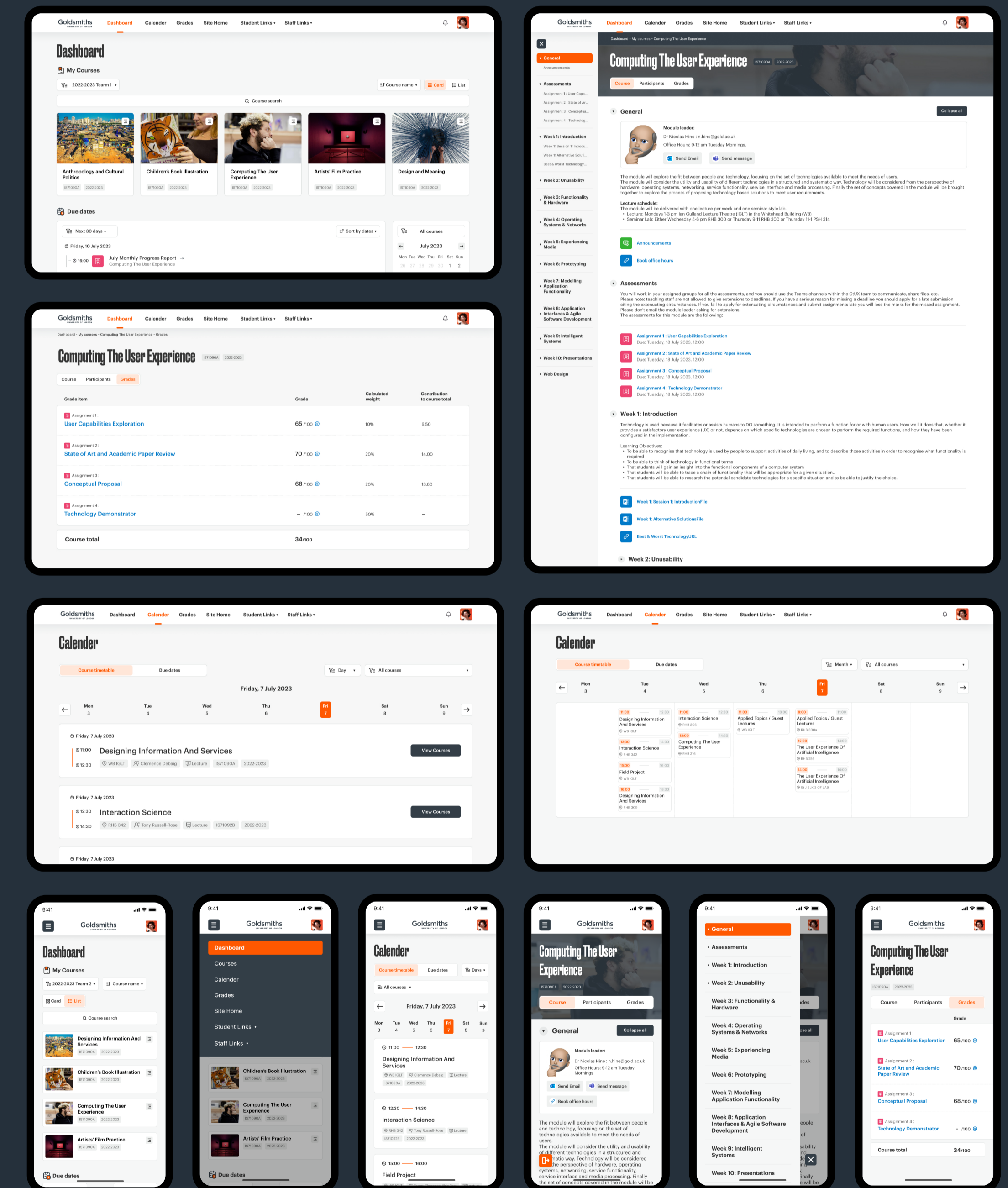
Page functionality pain points:

- Dashboard: Courses hard to find
- Course page: Complex contact process, PPT hard to find, Unclear indexing of content
- Calendar: Missing course timetable
- Grade page: Low usability

Design goal: optimise information structure, visual UI and strengthen the connection with other software.

Design

The prototype modifies the information structure of the VLE and uses Goldsmiths brand colours and fonts to better fit the Goldsmiths brand image.



Conclusions & Future Work

These test results confirm the success of the prototype in improving ease of use and user satisfaction in the VLE. However, these results are somewhat limited due to the small sample size, but the research data provides valuable reference and guidance for future VLE design. Future work will expand the sample size and usability testing of the mobile prototype to provide a more comprehensive solution.