

Benchmark

“The central question we should ask in our work is can the people who use our designs do X. ... Our job is to ensure that if they want to do X, our design will help them and make their actions possible.”

The previous investigation showed that in the case of the UDLA’s information, students do not perform as wanted. Therefore, in the benchmark stage of the process of information design, I carried out ‘diagnostic testing’, which means letting a possible user carry out *“the tasks he might normally carry out when using information,”* to find out how the user actually uses the provided material and to understand where problems originate.

Sless reminds us that *“Direct one-on-one conversations with people using information, observing their actions and discussing their actions with them, is the most reliable method for diagnosing information usage problems and arriving at workable solutions. Such collaborative conversations with users, in which designer and user together diagnostically test the usability of a design, offers not only the most productive investigative methodology, but also one of the most economical.”*

The performance test of existing printed information

To get to know how the information material UDLA hands out to students is performing, I looked for international students on campus to ask for their participation in this testing. 8 students answered my questions and looked up certain information in printed UDLA publications. For the questionnaire, see Appendix B.

In information design, tests with few people are sufficient to detect problems with the existing design, as experts such as Sless state. *“Conversations conducted one-on-one with as few as 6 people in each round of a series of iterative design and modification cycles offers the best return on investment of time and effort in exploring the dynamics of interaction between people and information.”*

Observations during the performance test

A most interesting fact is that most of the students stated that all information UDLA provides is very good and sufficient. But when I asked them to perform some task, like to look up certain information, or to find contact data or the sender of this information, they could not locate the information solicited.

I think there are two issues responsible. First something is related to what a foreign student said, *“UDLA is providing a lot of information, therefore people have the feeling to be informed because of amount of information they are receiving, but do not understand what is important and what not.”* Here what information design is about it becomes clear. Data is not information—it has to be transferred into information to be accessible and usable.

Or, on the other hand, it could be a sign of the phenomenon that oftentimes during a questioning people try to say what they think the investigator wants to hear, and do not want to make negative statements.

Context of use of the given information

Most of the information is given to the students before they arrive to Mexico.

David Sless, *A pragmatic point of view: implications for information design*, CRIA www.communication.org.au: 1999, available from the World Wide Web:

Sless, *lecture’s material*, MDI 2004

Sless, *Theory for practice*

Sless, *Theory for practice*

It contains information about UDLA, some administrative procedures, some health issues, some brief information about what to pack, the arrival procedure at the airport, inscriptions, accommodation, culture shock, and some general information.

Problem boundaries

The problem to be solved in this case is that students do not read or understand the given information. Therefore they face a lot of problems in relation to arranging paperwork, communicating with Mexicans, living in a foreign culture and health and security.

Results of the performance test

Background information on students

I questioned students from different universities; a lot of them had previous experience staying abroad for a longer period than three weeks of vacations. The majority came to the UDLA because of an exchange program between their home university and UDLA. Some decided to study at the UDLA because they wanted to study in Latin America, or had been to Puebla before on holidays.

The majority had some knowledge about the UDLA and Mexico before their arrival—they got information from friends who have been to UDLA before or from the internet and travel guides.

At least for some students, 'word of mouth' has been an important factor for deciding where to go. This shows that the recommendations of other foreign students or testimonials could help students to decide on the UDLA. And not only could these could increase the number exchange students, but also for paying students who come on their account.

Identification of information

During the test, the students only performed as wanted in two tasks, (questions 6+9). All could identify what the information, in general, is about (e.g. student-guide, information about visa or home-stay). In all other tasks the requested task of looking up certain information failed. Just a few students could identify who is sending the printed document I gave them for testing. These results show why the UDLA has problems with foreign students in the form of missing papers, incorrect forms and the students getting upset because they cannot identify the relevant information. If a person cannot identify who is sending the information and if it looks unclear and confusing, the probability that he will read the information is very low. Therefore not all students read the information the UDLA had given them. For most students their first impression of the information material has been that it is unclear or unstructured. Also, the Spanish texts caused problems because of misunderstandings, resulting from a lack of knowledge of the language.

Just 1 out of the 8 questioned students found which documents he had to bring to the UDLA from their information material. All others got this important information from their home university, or had to ask several times, or arrange papers after their arrival to Mexico, because the information given to them by

the UDLA was unclear. Only one person understood how the paperwork process would be in Mexico. Some did not understand how many photographs to take and which rules corresponded to them. Most of the students could understand how many copies of paper they had to take of their documents, but just very few could identify the costs of the administration work. No one knew what an apostille was or where to get it in their home country. All understood the due dates for handing in papers, but a lot of students did not get this information from UDLA, rather from their home universities.

Not knowing exactly what to bring to Mexico, what things like accommodation or living will cost and how administrative processes will be can lead to insecurity for the foreign student. If because of missing papers or missed due dates, there are delayed or complicated administration processes resulting in the student paying for things he did not foresee, frustration or anger can arise, leading to the foreign student's withdrawal from the Mexicans. Therefore many of the UDLA's employees have had to deal with frustrated and upset foreign students.

Most problems of understanding arise because of the foreign language, as reported by a majority of the students. Not understanding information or personal communication because of the foreign language causes frustration, confusion and insecurity. Most of the foreign students would like to have additional information about certain topics. In their final comments about the information, they stated that it should be bilingual in Spanish and English, they would like to receive only one information and not several from different departments and that the text should be shorter.

In this investigation as well as in the scoping stage, a lot of students stated that they would like to have a mediator or contact person at the UDLA who could help them in case of questions or problems. They would like to have additional personal help and not only printed information.

Nearly all of the students want the information they need before their arrival to Mexico in form of a PDF-file in an e-mail, or to be found on the university's international webpage.

Conclusion of the performance test

The performance test clearly showed that the information's form has to be the reason for problems that arise. Students do not perform as wanted or claim that information is missing because they cannot find it in the extensive and unclear structured material, although it is provided.

As a summary, the following problems can be defined:

1. A lot of students do not read the given information because of the provided format (PDF), or unclear structure in case of printed information.
2. They do not read it because they could not identify that all information is provided bilingual.
3. They cannot identify sender and contact data.
4. They cannot find relevant information.

Reasons for the arising problems

Some **information overlaps or is contrary to others**, because different UDLA departments provide their own information material. The student gets information about the needed visa three times: first in the student-guide, but just as a brief description about how to get it in the home country. Here the possibility to arrive with tourist card is mentioned, but nothing about the needed registration process. At the same time, he receives a booklet containing information about the registration process and the order of not to come with a tourist card. But no information about required documents for the registration is provided. The student gets this information after his arrival from the Migration Service Office in form of a leaflet, but only in Spanish. These three different information materials cause confusion, because they contain contrary information, and the student has to decide which one to follow.

The current student guide, which contains 40 pages, is **only provided as PDF-format**. *“Forcing users to browse PDF files makes usability approximately 300% worse compared to HTML pages. Only use PDF for documents that users are likely to print.”*

But as I found out during my investigations, many students had problems printing the mailed PDF, and most of all, did not want to print a 40-page guide. Also, reading it on a screen is tiring and difficult. Additionally a PDF-document is not designed for screen reading. As says Nielsen, **“PDF content is thus optimised for letter-sized sheets of paper, not for display in a browser window. I often see users getting lost in PDF because the print-oriented viewer gives them only a small peephole on a big, complicated layout and they can’t scroll it in the simple, linear manner they are accustomed to on the Web.”** Therefore PDF’s should just be used for forms or useful checklists which can be downloaded to help the student prepare for his sojourn, and not for long or extensive documents.

Language is another problem, most of the information is given just in Spanish, but a lot of foreign students do not speak proper Spanish when they arrive and therefore have problems in understanding the information. In other information, Spanish and English information are separated in different parts of the publication and therefore it is not clear to the student that information is provided in both languages.

Therefore the next step is to analyse the UDLA’s printed and digital information material in order to understand where its form could be changed to improve its performance. And at the same time, it is necessary to compare it with publications for international students that other universities provide. This could help to evaluate the UDLA’s publications in relation to others and to see what successful strategies others use, or likewise to discover the design’s faults, which afterwards could be prevented in the redesign of UDLA’s information material for foreign students.

Jakob Nielsen, Avoid PDF for On-Screen Reading, Jakob Nielsen’s Alertbox, June 10, 2001, available from the World Wide Web: www.useit.com

Printed information for international students – how to make it functional?

As could be seen in the previous section of ‘diagnostic testing’, many students did not read the given printed information material, or could not identify or understand relevant information, and therefore faced many problems when coming to study at UDLA. In order to understand why the students either do not read or have problems identifying relevant information, I analysed the printed publications that the UDLA presently hands out to its international students. The areas I looked at are in relation to its **design** (meaning form, layout, typography and used graphic elements), its **content** in relation to what was identified in the scoping stage as needed information and the used **language**, briefly, to understand how international students are addressed throughout the information. UDLA has still not determined its complete visual identity. Only logotype, institutional colours and typography have been determined, but as is shown in the following analysis, even these facts are not respected in the designs for foreign UDLA students.

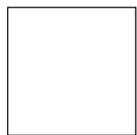
After UDLA’s printed publications, I analysed publications the UDLA’s competitors hand out to international students. I chose four universities who have signed agreements with UDLA: Colorado State University/USA, Copenhagen University/DK, Leiden University/NL and RMIT University/AU. I count these universities as direct competitors, because a potential UDLA exchange student can chose between all universities who signed agreements with his university. Therefore it is possible that he checks information material from different universities to decide where to go, and the given information can be important for his decision of where to spend his sojourn.

Information material handed out by UDLA

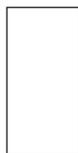
The first problem that was detected is that there is no coincidence of appearance between all the material handed out. This confuses students, because it is not obvious that all material is sent out by the same institution. Each department designs its own information in the way they like, and not one visual identity is applied for UDLA’s publications.

Variety of formats:

Each publication has a different format, which makes it difficult to understand that ‘Student guide, Visa Information and Home Stay Flyer’ contain additional information and belong together.



17,2 x 17,2 cm



10 x 19,8 cm



21,5 x 28 cm

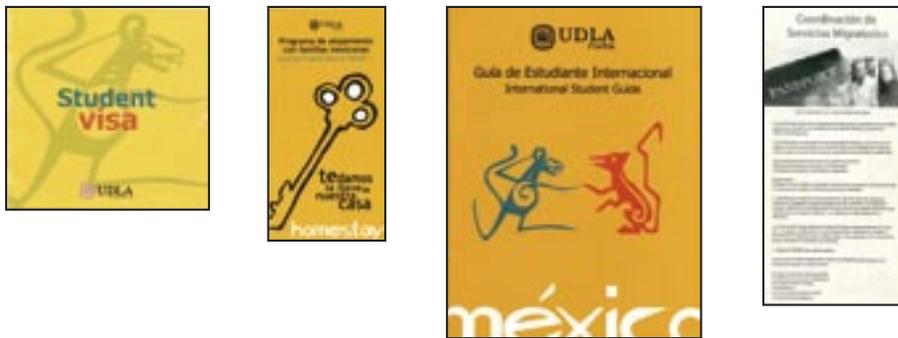


12,2 x 25,2 cm

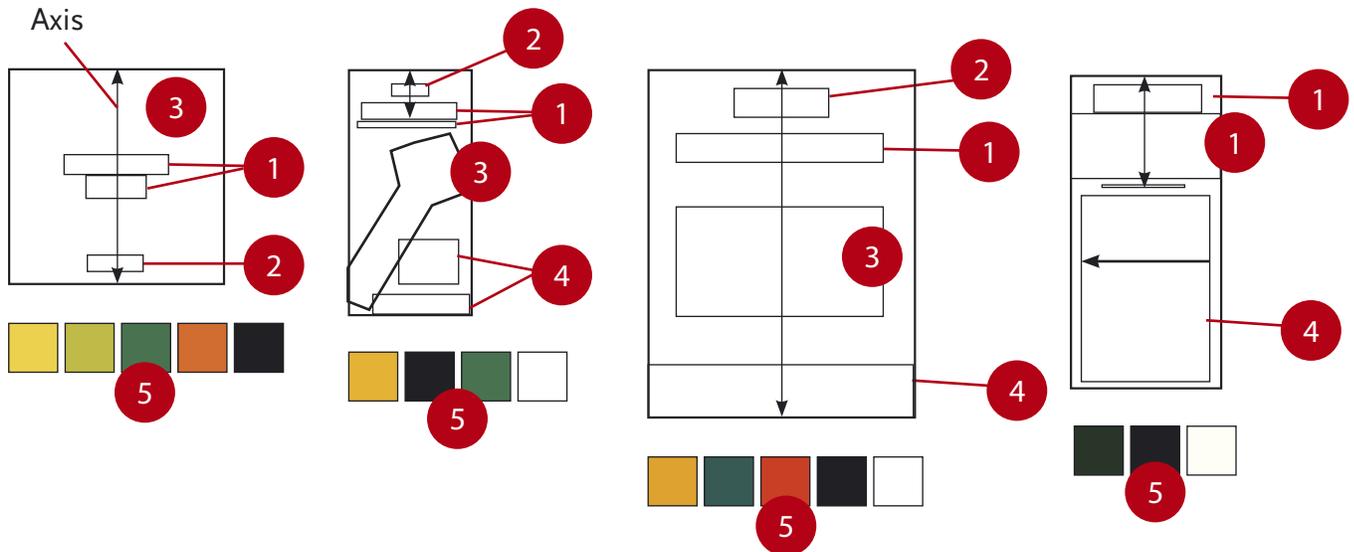
And because the information will be used internationally, its format should be storable in different format-systems. The UDLA uses formats based on the US-letter format, but more than 60% of all international students who came to UDLA during the last four years come from countries that use different format systems, for example, Din A. Because US-letter format is 5.9 mm wider than Din A (21.0 x 29.7 cm), it is difficult to store it in the Din storage systems. If information is not storable, it is more probable that it will get lost or will not be at hand if needed.

Variety in appearance:

All publications have used different layouts. If every publication looks different and similar elements are placed in different ways, it is difficult to understand that all contain related information or belong together.



In the following I detailed the layouts differences, by marking placement and alignment of all graphic elements and the used colours on the publication's title pages. If elements which are always used, like logotype, title and images are always placed in a similar way on a series of publications, it is easier for the user to identify who sends the information and what it is about.



1. The publication’s title is always positioned differently.
2. The university’s logotype is most of the time positioned differently, either on the bottom or the upper part of the publication. On the visa flyer the Migration Service hands out, it is not placed at all.
3. Each publication contains images. For Visa Information and Student Guide that the International Office hands out, Pre-Hispanic animal drawings are used. These drawings have been found in Cholula’s pyramid and it is said that these animals brought fire to Cholula. But nowhere in the whole publication can this information be found, which makes its use not understandable for the foreign student. The Home Stay Flyer shows a picture of a key, that, like the previously described drawings, does not give a clear link to the publication’s content. Only the photo-collage on the Visa-Flyer the Migration Service hands out is related to the publication’s topic. But the pictures are manipulated by ‘Photoshop-filters’ and they appear unclear and diffuse, which is unwanted in an information material.
4. Some title-pages contain additional text-elements. All are placed and aligned differently.
5. All publications use different colours or colour shades.

Typography

UDLA has determined three typographies (Century Schoolbook, Garamond and Frutiger) as to be used for its publications.

Century Schoolbook to be used for title and headlines.

Garamond to be used for extensive text, as in books.

Frutiger to be used for the signage system.

But each publication for international students uses different typography:



Colours

UDLA has determined certain green and orange colours as institutional colours, which should be used as main colours on all publications. But as it could be seen on the previous page, most publications use these colours only rarely and use other colours, such as a yellow one, instead.



UDLA-green	UDLA-orange
C 100%	C 0%
M 0%	M 70%
Y 60%	Y 100%
K 15%	K 0%

Universities logotype

The most important element of UDLA's visual identity is its logotype. It is a combination of pictorial and word mark. It should be used in colour on white background only. On colour it has to be used in black or white:



Although the versions shown above of the logotype have been determined for use on UDLA's publications, most of the printed material I found used different versions. A reason for this could be that most of the brochures are designed by external designers, who are probably not informed about the definition of a certain logotype version and its use.

Visa-Flyer



Wrong: Full-coloured version is used on coloured background

Homestay-Flyer



Wrong: 'Puebla' is set in wrong typeface, it has to be Frutiger regular.

Student-Guide



Wrong: 'Puebla' is set in wrong typeface, it has to be Frutiger regular.



Wrong: On the backtitle of the student-guide, 'Puebla' is set in wrong typeface, it has to be Frutiger regular. And above all, colours are used completely wrong.

Visa-Flyer 2



RIGHT: On the backpage of the Visa-Flyer only, published by Servicios Migratorios, the logotype has been used correctly.

Text structure

To increase the possibility that the reader actually reads the given information or failing that, that he at least finds all relevant information, the text has to be structured clearly. "In addition to relying on contextual clues, the reader depends on the typographical makeup when selecting print information for actual reading." states Rolf Rehe. In the following I will analyse the textual structure of UDLA's publications for international students to find out where the problem of students not reading the given information is, or not finding what is relevant to them.

Rolf F. Rehe, *Typography: how to make it most legible* (Carmel, Indiana: Design Research International, 1984) 13.

The student-guide

The image shows two pages from a student guide. The left page is in Spanish and the right page is in English. Red circles and arrows highlight specific areas:

- 1**: Points to the top of both pages.
- 2**: Points to the English page header.
- 3**: Points to the Spanish header.
- 4**: Points to a central area on the English page.
- 5**: Points to a paragraph in Spanish.
- 6**: Points to a paragraph in Spanish.
- 7**: Points to a paragraph in English.
- 8**: Points to a paragraph in Spanish.
- 9**: Points to a photo in Spanish.

- Spanish and English Version are located in different parts of the guide, it is not clear for the student that this publication contains bilingual information.
- In English part of the brochure, topics that are not related are placed on one page. For example 'Admission Documentation', 'Visa requirements', 'Immunization' and 'Health Information' or 'Universities Stores' and 'Free time' are all on one page. The combination of unrelated topics on one page can lead to the confusion of the reader. If he is looking for a certain topic, he has to consult the whole information, because it is not clearly divided into topics.
- Different textparts are competing for the reader's attention, as for example the welcome message and main text. Both are set in the same typeface but in

different size, the welcome message is set in bigger typesize. What normally is the first thing to read – the welcome message to the student – starts lower than the main text.

- 4 Contrast is important to structure text typographically. But too much contrast, as in this example, meaning the use of many different typesizes, style and weights rather irritates the reader than helping to distinguish the difference. Robert Bringhurst therefore recommends, “*Change one parameter at a time.*” That means to change either to a different typeface, or different type-weight or to different typesize only, or not changing anything at all. It has to be determined how to make distinctions within the text, that means, how to set headlines, additional information, or how to emphasize important text parts. This makes it easier to scan the page for certain typestyle if the reader needs certain information.

Robert Bringhurst, *The Elements of Typographic Style* (USA: Hartley & Marks, 1996), 60.

Here it changes – some headlines are set in regular sans serif-typeface, others in bold. In some cases bold serif type is used to highlight internet or e-mail addresses, in other cases to highlight important keywords. Some side notes are set in small sans-serif type, others in regular text.

- 5 The text is set with too much positive leading. That means that the space in between the text lines is perceived as white space. Type needs “*room to breathe*”, but too much room will make it fall apart. The text won’t be perceived as a unit and therefore its legibility will be reduced.

Robert Bringhurst, 37.

- 6 Paragraphs are separated by white lines. This separates the text into parts, although different paragraphs belong together. It is recommended to better use just “*a white square ... as the most unmistakable ... way of marking paragraphs*”.

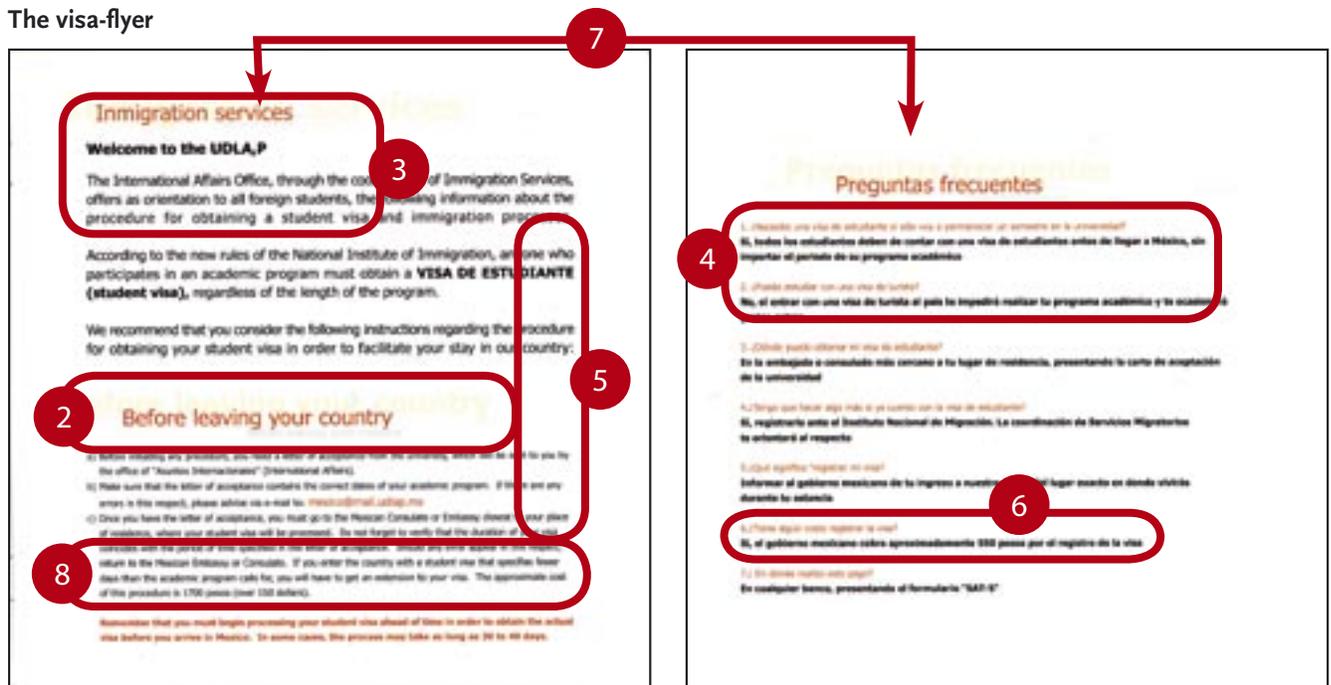
Robert Bringhurst, 40.

- 7 All text is set ragged right, which means that the text is aligned at the left but ends openly at the right side. This is the correct way for setting text in small columns. If small text lines will be set justified, white spaces in between the words would appear in order to justify the textline on a certain width and disturb the reading process.

- 8 Only few keywords are highlighted throughout the whole document. On this page there are none. But emphasized keywords help the reader to find what he is looking for just by scanning the whole text and not having to read everything.

- 9 Image borders are not clearly defined, but blurred. If a picture shows diffuse or vague borders, these characteristics could be transferred to the element it is showing. The use of diffuse pictures of the university could cause the reader to relate the pictorial characteristics of ‘diffuse’ and ‘not clear’ to the university. Additional images showing the university, its students and surroundings are rarely used. Because most of the international students come to UDLA for the reason of learning the Mexican culture, more pictures could give the student an impression of where he is going and could be used to support textual content. For example, if a paragraph about an archaeological sight is accompanied by pictures showing a pyramid, the student could recognize without reading what the text is about.

The visa-flyer

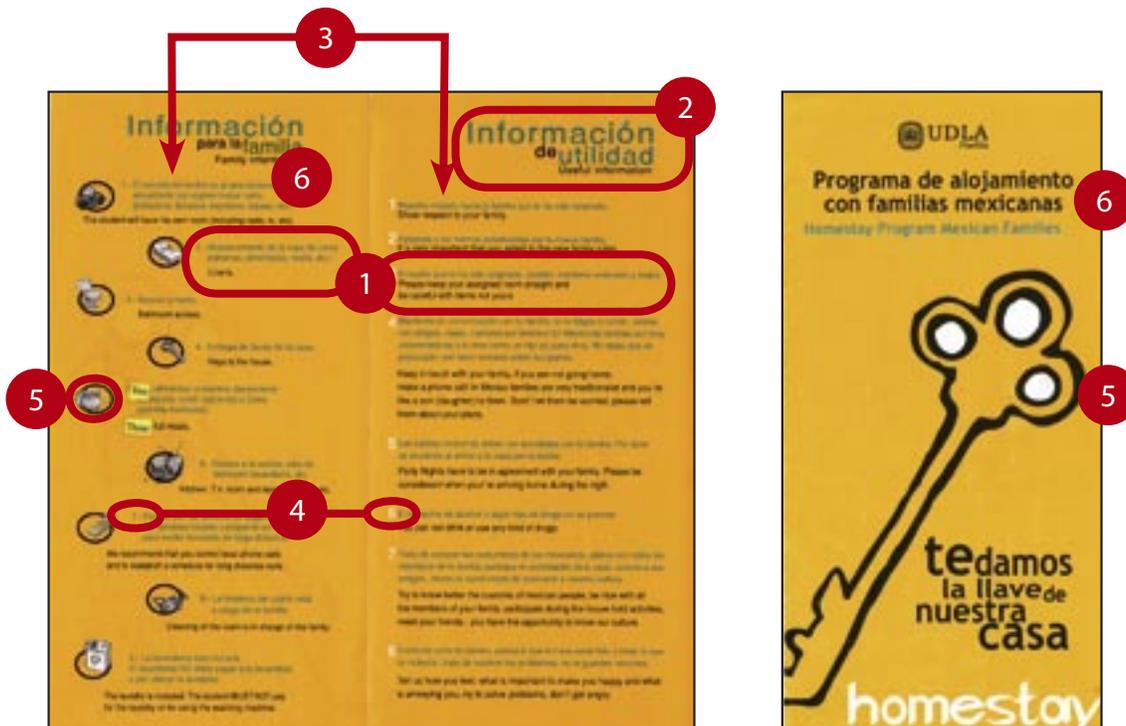


- 1 Spanish and English Version are located in different parts of the guide. The guide has to be turned and read from the other side to read English or Spanish text. Therefore it is not clear to the student that this publication contains bilingual information.
- 2 The section title is repeated three times, in red, shadowed in yellow and shadowed in green. This kind of repetition does not make sense, and the shades are so light, that they nearly can't be recognized, and appear as error or dirt.
- 3 The contrasts between title, subtitle and text are not clear. Some contrasts are too big, as mentioned in the section on the student-guide, others not obvious. The text 'Immigration services' is much bigger and attention catching than 'Welcome to the UDLA-P' which should be the first message on this page.
- 4 The FAQ-section is set in 8 pt typesize, which makes it more difficult to read. In this case it is not necessary to reduce the typesize, there is a lot of white space on the page, therefore the text could be set in normal type size.
- 5 Some text parts, such as the one about 'Immigration services' is set justified, the following text 'Before leaving the country' is set ragged right. This gives a chaotic impression and means no coincidence of appearance.
- 6 Textparts are emphasized by using two differences: typeweight and colour. One would be enough, as I showed it in the section 'Student Guide'.
- 7 The layout is not based on a grid, textblock starts on each page on different heights.
- 8 The text lines are too long for continuous reading. Bringhurst recommends in his books line lengths of 66 characters as ideal. Here the text lines contain 81 – 114 characters, depending on the typesize.



One half of this information is written in Spanish, the other in English, but set upside down. That means, the brochure has to be turned upside down and from left to right, to start reading from the other side.

The Homestayflyer



- 1 Spanish text and its English translation are placed together, both use the same typeweight, but in different colour – Spanish text in UDLA’s green, English text in black. Different typesizes are used for Spanish and English text, but without being congruent. On the left, English text is set in smaller typesize, on the right it is set in a slightly bigger typesize than the Spanish one. If differences are made they have to be made clearly, here they seem to have happened by chance and not by reason.
- 2 The section titles are set in different typesizes and ‘free’ arrangement, which attract the reader’s attention and distract him from the further text.
- 3 The layout is not based on a grid, both textblocks start on different heights, one is set ‘free’, the other flush left.
- 4 On the left page, paragraph numbers are set in the same typesize, weight and colour as the Spanish text, on the right page the numbers are much bigger and set in white colour, for no recognizable reason.
- 5 The style of illustrations used on the inner page is completely different to the one of the cover illustration. This does not help to create a congruent image.
- 6 For title and inner pages are used different typfaces. It seems as if both parts have been designed by different persons.

The Visa-flyer 2



The table is a grid with 12 columns and 20 rows. The columns are labeled: 'Trámite', 'Medios', and 'Estado'. The rows are labeled 'Documentos Requeridos'. The table contains various alphanumeric codes and symbols, such as '01 02', '01 02 03', '01 02 04', '01 02 05', '01 02 06', '01 02 07', '01 02 08', '01 02 09', '01 02 10', '01 02 11', '01 02 12', '01 02 13', '01 02 14', '01 02 15', '01 02 16', '01 02 17', '01 02 18', '01 02 19', '01 02 20', '01 02 21', '01 02 22', '01 02 23', '01 02 24', '01 02 25', '01 02 26', '01 02 27', '01 02 28', '01 02 29', '01 02 30', '01 02 31', '01 02 32', '01 02 33', '01 02 34', '01 02 35', '01 02 36', '01 02 37', '01 02 38', '01 02 39', '01 02 40', '01 02 41', '01 02 42', '01 02 43', '01 02 44', '01 02 45', '01 02 46', '01 02 47', '01 02 48', '01 02 49', '01 02 50', '01 02 51', '01 02 52', '01 02 53', '01 02 54', '01 02 55', '01 02 56', '01 02 57', '01 02 58', '01 02 59', '01 02 60', '01 02 61', '01 02 62', '01 02 63', '01 02 64', '01 02 65', '01 02 66', '01 02 67', '01 02 68', '01 02 69', '01 02 70', '01 02 71', '01 02 72', '01 02 73', '01 02 74', '01 02 75', '01 02 76', '01 02 77', '01 02 78', '01 02 79', '01 02 80', '01 02 81', '01 02 82', '01 02 83', '01 02 84', '01 02 85', '01 02 86', '01 02 87', '01 02 88', '01 02 89', '01 02 90', '01 02 91', '01 02 92', '01 02 93', '01 02 94', '01 02 95', '01 02 96', '01 02 97', '01 02 98', '01 02 99', '01 02 100'. A red callout '4' points to the top-left corner of the table.

- 1 The actualisation date is set in serif type caps, which stands in complete contrast to the sans serif type of the other text. And all textual elements, head line, actualisation date and text are set in different typesizes, which causes visual 'noise'.
- 2 This page contains a lot of text, which is not well structured. The paragraphs are separated by white lines, some words are emphasised by using italic type, but this does not make them obvious as keywords. Italic accentuations are only recognised when the reader gets to this textpage, that means they emphasise indirectly. Only direct accentuations, for example the use of bold type or colour help to make a text able to be scanned. Other words in this document are emphasised by using capital letters, which in this case disturbs the reading process instead of helping it. Here it would be helpful to change the long text into a listed form, and to highlight keywords by using bold typeface. This way the reader could identify easily what he has to do without having to read a lot of text.
- 3 The picture uses a photomontage of a passport's title and a couple, but it is manipulated by using photoshop filters. This makes it appear diffuse and unclear, two characteristics which should not be related to information about important paperwork someone has to do.

- 4 The table on the inner pages of this flyer just leads to confusion for the user. Because of its big size, the user can easily take the wrong line and miss out papers he has to bring and instead take ones needed for another administrative process. A text structure in form of a list, separated for the different user groups would be much more practical than having to search for the needed papers in a table of this size.

Summary of publications characteristics

I listed the main characteristics of the publications layout in this table to help compare one publication with the other by visualizing differences and similarities.

UDLA Publication	Language	Type	Colour	Format (whole publication)	Paper	Image/Elements	Layout
Visaflyer Title 4-colour print (CMYK) (published by International Affairs Office)	Spanish English	sans serif, regular, bold 3 typesizes: 41, 45, 59 pt	yellow, dark yellow, orange, green, black white	17,2 x 17,2 cm 12 pages (including title pages)	semi-glossy paper, ca. 180 g/m2 white	UDLA-logotype coloured version 2 animal drawings (on each title one)	image, textblock and logotype are centered to the vertical middle-axis, image and type as well centered to horizontal middle-axis
Homestay-Flyer Title 3-colour print (golden yellow, green, black) (published by IA Office)	Spanish English	sans serif regular 8 typesizes 14, 17, 18, 21, 25, 29, 35, 43 pt handdrawnlike typesize: 42 pt	golden yellow UDLA-green, black white	closed: 10 x 19,8 cm, open: 19,8 x 31,8 cm folded twice	glossy-paper, ca. 120 g/m2 white	UDLA-logotype black-and-white version handdrawn key	logotype and one textblock are centered to the vertical middle-axis, all other elements are positioned in different ways
International Student Guide Title 4-colour print (golden yellow, UDLA-green, UDLA-orange, black) (published by IA Office)	Spanish English	sans serif regular 2 typesizes 23, 28 pt handdrawn-like typesize: < 100 pt	golden yellow UDLA-green UDLA-orange black white	21,5 x 28 cm 44 pages + 4 title pages	glossy-paper, title ca. 250–300 g/m2 white inner pages ca. 100 g/m2 white (black-and-white print)	UDLA-logotype black-and-white version 2 animal drawings (the same as on the visaflyer)	all elements centered to vertical middle-axis, logotype and headlines in upper third, images in middle third, handdrawn-like type "mexico" in lower third of page
Visa-information Title 1-colour print (green-black) (published by UDLA's migration office)	Spanish	sans serif 2 typesizes: 9, 27 serif caps typesize: 10 pt	green-black	closed: 12,2 x 25,2 cm open: 25,2 x 47,3 cm folded twice	semi-glossy paper, ca. 150 g/m2 vanilla- coloured	photography passport and couple, manipulated with photoshop filter	Title and publication date centered, text aligned left title and photograph upper third, text lower two-thirds

Conclusion of the previous analysis of design

Primarily, all information UDLA gives to international students has to be collated, and representatives from each department have to agree on what information to give and what to exclude. This way the overlapping or contrasting of information would be eliminated.

One complete guide should be printed and all information it contains should be published on UDLA's international webpage as well, so that students would have different possibilities to obtain the needed information.

Additionally, all needed information should be divided in parts and sent to the students by e-mail at critical stages as marked in the diagram on page 31. This way UDLA could increase the number of students who read the information, because if it is sent by mail to remind the student of due dates or needed papers, or in the case that the student has not read the information before—this would keep them from missing important facts. This kind of e-mails could be sent out automatically by the system on certain dates to all international students who have been accepted to the program, so no extra work has to be done by the programs coordinator.

Additional information the student frequently needs after his arrival to Mexico, like a map of UDLA's campus, bus-routes to Cholula and Puebla, restaurants, supermarkets and nightlife, American football rules or tourists sites could be published in form of little booklets. If they had a small format they would be portable, so the student could take them with him in his daily life, to sport events or on sightseeing trips.

The analysis showed that a publication's structure is important for its accessibility: bad design can make information inaccessible and therefore dysfunctional. To make it easy accessible and functional, all publications should respect several principles to increase the information's performance and to lessen problems in relation to communication and paper work processing of UDLA students and employees. It should be ...

identifiable as an UDLA-publication

Therefore all publications should respect and use the UDLA's corporate design (its logotype, colours and typography). The design should be based on a grid and defined in a manual, so that all publications for international students will look similar and are easily recognisable. Any publication should give clear information about the sender of the information and contact data.

clear and well structured

Information should be clearly structured to make it easier for the foreign student to read and understand. Therefore keywords should be highlighted in the text to enable a quick scan of text scan.

Typographical contrasts should be used to emphasise and to make differences but should not compete with the publication's content for the reader's attention. This way the student can find easily what he is looking for and gets certainty about the information's content. Textlines should have adequate width, to increase the text's readability. Information which gives information about administrative process or needed 'to do's' should rather be given in form of a list than as long text.

Language

Language in relation to how the reader is addressed is another important factor. One thing that caught my attention is the fact that UDLA names their international students ‘estudiantes extranjeros’ which means ‘foreign students.’ The meaning of the word foreigner, according to Princeton University is:

1: a person who comes from a foreign country; someone who does not owe allegiance to your country 2: someone who is excluded from or is not a member of a group.

The use of the word ‘foreign’ excludes the group of international students from the main UDLA population. Foreign in this manner sounds as an expression for the ‘other’ and not part of ‘us’. The use of ‘international students’ in its place would sound much friendlier and would include these students in the university’s community. Foreign exchange students are needed at UDLA to be able to send its own students abroad, which is part of the UDLA’s politics. In this way UDLA wants to **“create generations with an extraordinary professional level, universal ethical values, international experience, social compromise, who will be future leaders.”**

WordNet 2.0, “Dictionary”, Princeton University: 2003, available from World Wide Web: <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=foreign>

www.udlap.mx

Through all publications that the UDLA’s International Office produces, the used language is directed to the student, by using ‘you’. And these publications contain a welcome message, which is a nice start when the student starts reading. Only the visa flyer, produced by the Migration Service, is written in third person and does not contain a welcome message.

In some publications recommendations or advice are given in form of lecturing. For example in the student-guide: “...if you come to us with an open mind, patience, and a sincere desire to understand the situations that you will come across, your experience will be even more enriching.” This could be offensive for a foreign student, because it presumes the student to be insensitive if not advised. My investigation showed that students often do not act adequately and advice or tips about cultural behaviour could be helpful. But the form of how to give this advice is important, and I would recommend providing it in form of ‘testimonials’ former international students could give. It is much easier to accept advice from somebody who lived the experience himself.

Content

I will evaluate content of UDLA’s publications for international students with help of a table and according to what named the students as necessary information. + means the topic is contained completely in the information, / means the topic is contained, but not completely, – means the topic is not contained.

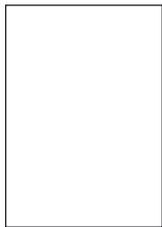
UDLA	Mexico and Puebla	Contact Addresses	Required Documents	Visa	Due Dates	Paperwork Processes	Enrollment at UDLA	Housing Possibilities	Medical Exam	Arrival and Transportation	How to reach UDLA	Campus-Map	Emergency Numbers	Health	Security	Daily Life	Public Transport	Mexican Culture	Sightseeing	Traveling
+	-	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	/	-	-	-		

Information material handed out by Leiden University

Here all publications are coincident in appearance, typography and images. On first view it can be seen that these brochures are sent out by the same institution. All layouts are based on a grid and are structured in a similar way, which makes it easy to find what one is looking for.

Variety of formats:

All publications formats are based on the Din-System and use either Din A4 or Din A5. This format can be stored easily in all countries that use the Din-format, but is problematic in countries that use US letter format. General information, which will be consulted while in a waiting room is formatted in A4, information which will be taken away, such as handbook or flyers, are published in the handier format A5.



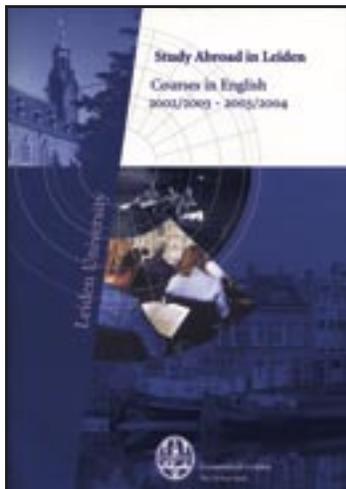
Din A4
21 x 29,7 cm



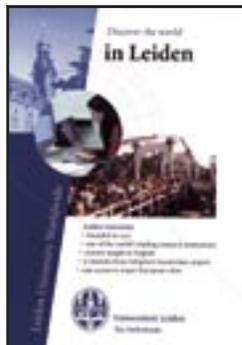
Din A5
14,85 x 21 cm

Variety of appearance:

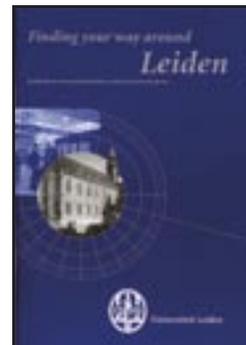
All publications follow the same layout schema and are therefore easy recognizable as belonging to the same institution. Colour, chosen typography, graphic elements and style of images are congruent.



Study Abroad in Leiden
Brochure



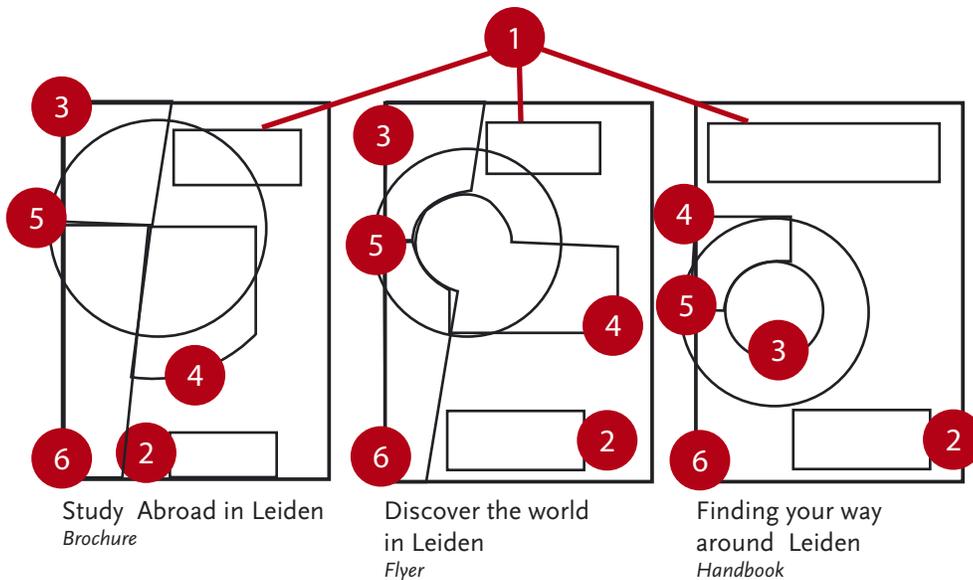
Discover the world
in Leiden
Flyer



Finding your way
around Leiden
Handbook

Layout

All publications follow the same layout schema and are therefore easy recognizable as belonging to the same institution. Colour, chosen typography, graphic elements and style of images are congruent.

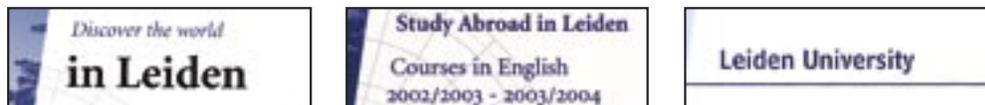


1. The title is always in position in the upper part of each publication.
2. The universities logotype is on all publications positioned on its lower end.
3. Each publication contains a picture of Leidens Hoogkerk.
4. All publications contain pictures of Leiden's students in different situations.
5. All title pages contain the same graphic element.
6. Blue colour, which forms part of Leiden University's visual identity is used for all publications. Additional colours are black for text and the paper's white.



Typography

Leiden University uses the same typographic family for all publications:



Serif regular, italic, bold and Sans Serif regular, bold.

Logotype

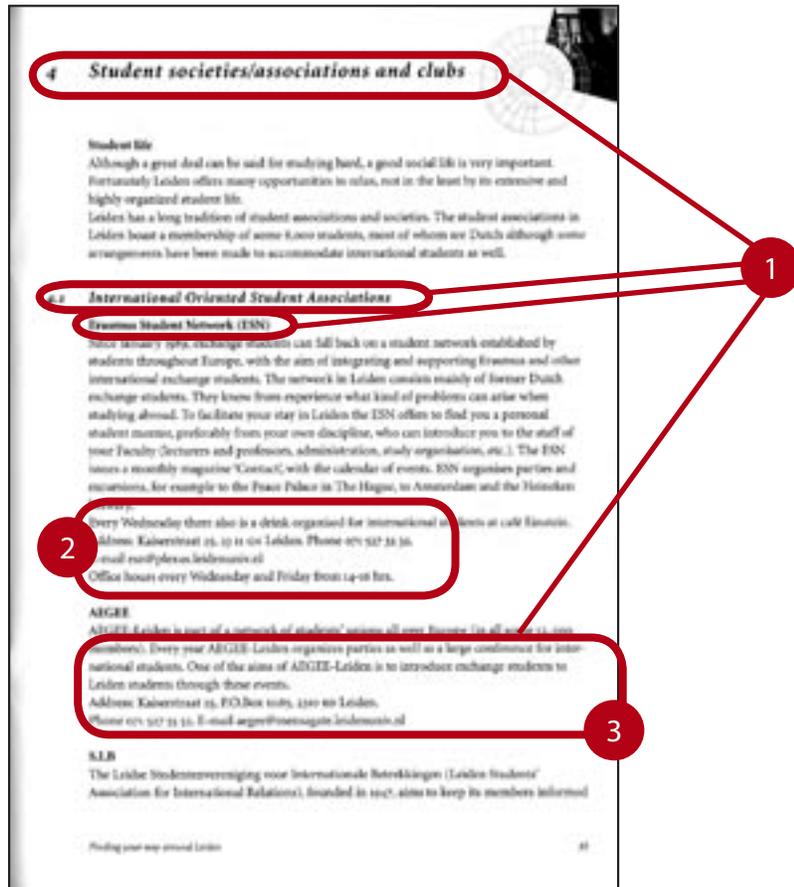
The university's logotype is placed on all publications title pages.



Text structure

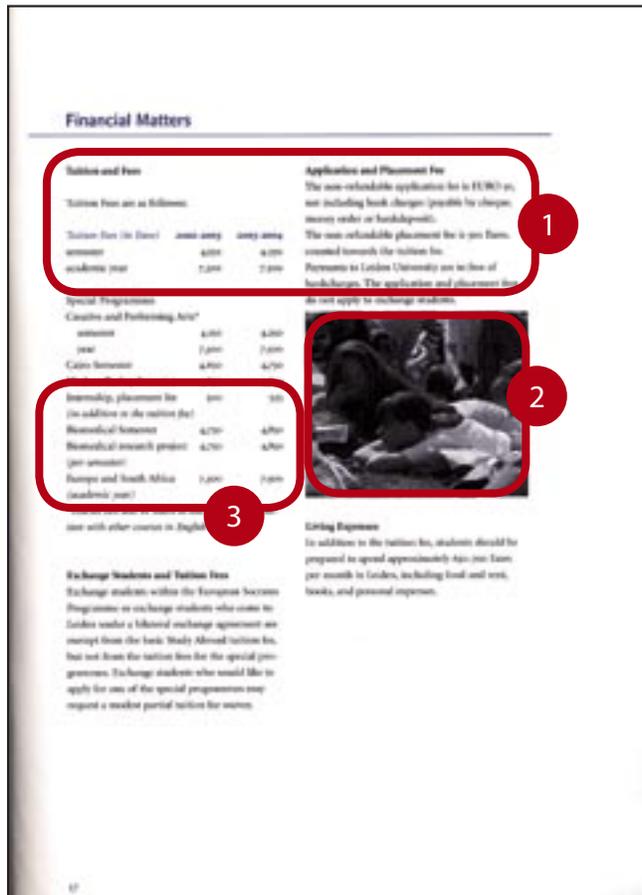
All text is clearly structured, every chapter is titled, each section within the chapter has a title and paragraph subtitles, which make it easy to find what one is looking for.

The Handbook



- 1 The used typography gives the text a clear hierarchical structure, the more important information is set in bigger typesize and weight than elements belonging to the next category etc.: chapter title is set in bold italic type, the section title in the same typestyle, but smaller typesize and the subtitles of each paragraph are set in bold type, in the same size as the normal text.
- 2 Important information such as addresses, office hours or contact persons are not highlighted, which would make it easier to find them.
- 3 The text uses adequate positive leading, which let the side appear in a regular grey shade. This helps the reader to concentrate on the text. If a text is set with excessive leading, the space in between the text lines will appear as 'white lines' and disturb the reading process. Just the textlines in this publication is a bit too long. The reader has to slightly move his head to read from the beginning of one line to its end, which is more tiresome than reading shorter lines which just afford the movement of the eyes.

Study Abroad in Leiden/Brochure



- 1 Here the brochure is laid out based on a two-column grid, which shortens the text lines and makes it easier and less tiresome to read.
- 2 Pictures of students are placed throughout the publication – all of them with clear images and limitations.
- 3 In this part, italic typeface is used to mark additional information. This makes it easy to distinguish main and additional text parts.

Language

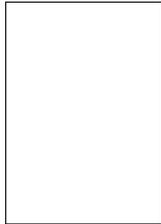
Throughout all publications the definition 'international students' is used. But the student is not directly addressed; all publications are written in third person, which makes it a bit impersonal.

Information material for international students at RMIT University/AU

All title pages of RMIT's publications are different and can only be identified by the logotype, on the inside more coincidence can be detected. But its design is a bit chaotic, with a lot of different elements, which could make it difficult for the user to find what he is looking for.

Formats

All publications are laid out as Din A4 brochures.



Din A4

21 x 29,7 cm

Variety of appearance

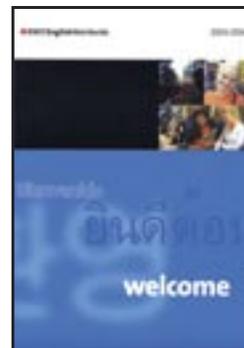
All brochure titles are very different and do not lead to the conclusion that they are sent out by the same department. The inner pages of at least two brochures are based on the same layout scheme, and therefore show coincidence of style.



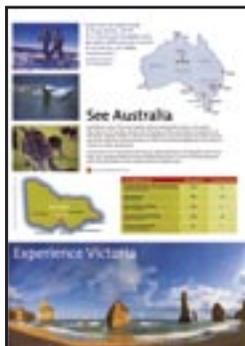
Study Abroad
Brochure Title



Information for Prospective International Students
Brochure Title



RMIT English Worldwide
Brochure Title



Study Abroad
Brochure Inner Page



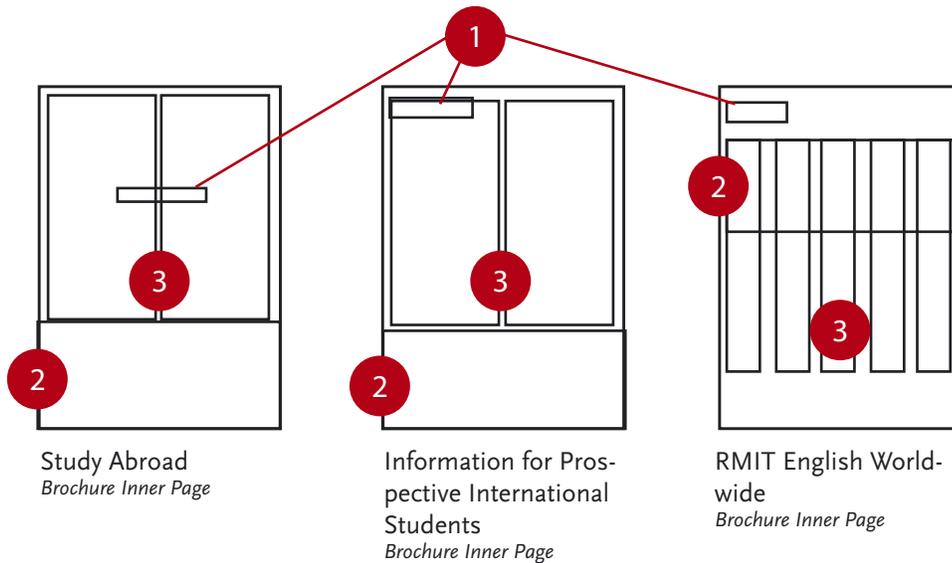
Information for Prospective International Students
Brochure Inner Page



RMIT English Worldwide
Brochure Inner Page

Layout

The inner pages of RMIT's publications seem to follow similar layouts. Typical are square parts, filled by colour or pictures.



- ① All pages have a title, which is located in the upper half of the page
- ② All pages contain a section for big photos showing RMIT's students, or the university in different situations.
- ③ Some kind of columns are detectable, but not all elements are aligned to this kind of grid, which lets the whole layout appear kind of chaotic and confusing.
- ④ All brochures use similar colours: red, light green, blue, black and paper-white

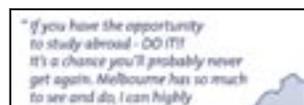


Typography

A modern typefamily is used for all publications, for two brochures is the serif version is used, for another the sans serif.



Serif Bold & Regular



Serif Italic



Sans Serif Bold

Serif regular, italic, bold and Sans Serif regular, italic, bold. Different text parts are set in certain typestyles. Testimonials are always, for example, set in regular italic type, titles in bold and normal text in regular. This makes it easy to recognize certain text elements, because the reader is gets familiar with this system.

Language

All publications use the definition 'international students'. Additionally, the student is addressed personally by using 'you'. Testimonials of former international students at RMIT give personal information about studying in Australia.

Page structure

The page contains a lot of different graphic elements, which seem to be placed based on a very free grid and therefore cause the impression of visual noise. The same happens with the text elements. All are set in different typestyle, weight or colour.

Study Abroad Brochure



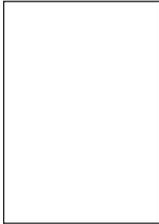
- 1 The different text elements are hierarchically structured: Page title in bigger typesize and bold typeweight, testimonials in italic, running text in regular and links to webpages in colour and bold. But the contrasts between these textual elements are too strong. Two characteristics are always changing, typestyle and colour, typeweight and size, or typeweight and colour. This is making the whole page kind of noisy.
- 2 Some maps are placed on the page, these help to get an idea about where Melbourne is located, also included is a table naming distances from Melbourne to places of interest. But because all elements are different, one map with shadow, one without, coloured pictures, table and all different textual elements, the page looks crowded and noisy.
- 3 A lot of pictures are placed throughout the whole brochure. They help to get an image of RMIT University, Melbourne and life in Australia, but nearly no white space is left on the page to let the eye rest.

Publications of the University of Copenhagen

All publications coincide in relation to appearance, layout, use of colours, typography and images.

Formats

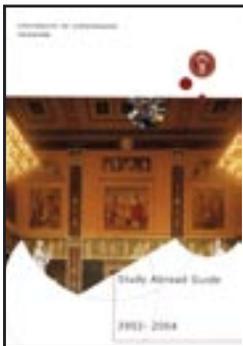
All publications are laid out as Din A4 Brochures.



Din A4
21 x 29,7 cm

Coincidence of appearance

All brochures layout follow the same design, therefore they are easy identifiable to belong together, texts are structured in similar ways, so that the reader knows where to find what. Because of the amount of white on the pages, the elements have space to 'breath'; the eye has space to relax. All seems guided, ordered and clear. It mirrors the Scandinavian way of life, in all houses a majority of natural and white colours are used.



Study Abroad Guide
Brochure Title



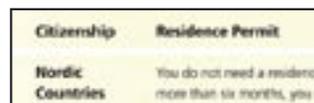
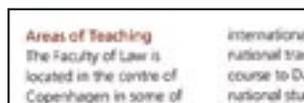
Study Abroad Guide
Inner Pages



Study Abroad Guide
Inner Pages

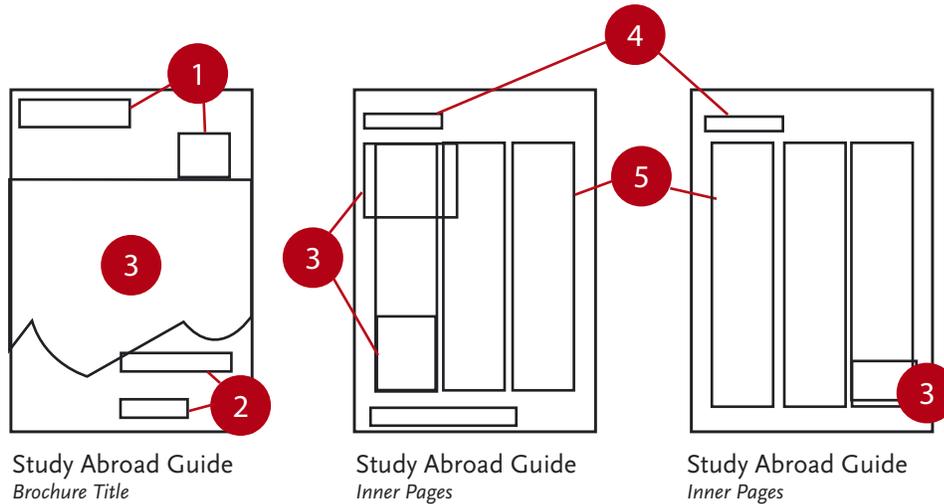
Typography

For all publications is used a modern sans serif typeface. Bold typeweight is used sparsely, which gives the whole text a quiet appearance, colour is used to make differences. The reader can concentrate on the text's content, because the different text elements are not competing for his attention.



Layout

The layout of the inner pages of Copenhagen's publications is based on a three column grid.



- ① The logotype is a combination of two elements, a graphic one and a typographical one, which are placed free on the page.
- ② A clear title with date of validity gives information about the brochure's content and actuality.
- ③ Each title page contains picture showing either the university or students, placed in a graphically shape form. On all innerpages other photos are placed which show the university, students and life in Denmark.
- ④ All pages contain a section title on the top.
- ⑤ All pages are laid out based on a three columnned grid.
- ⑥ The following colours are used, dark red and black are part of the universities visual identity (they are the colours of its logotype), and creme is used as additional colour.

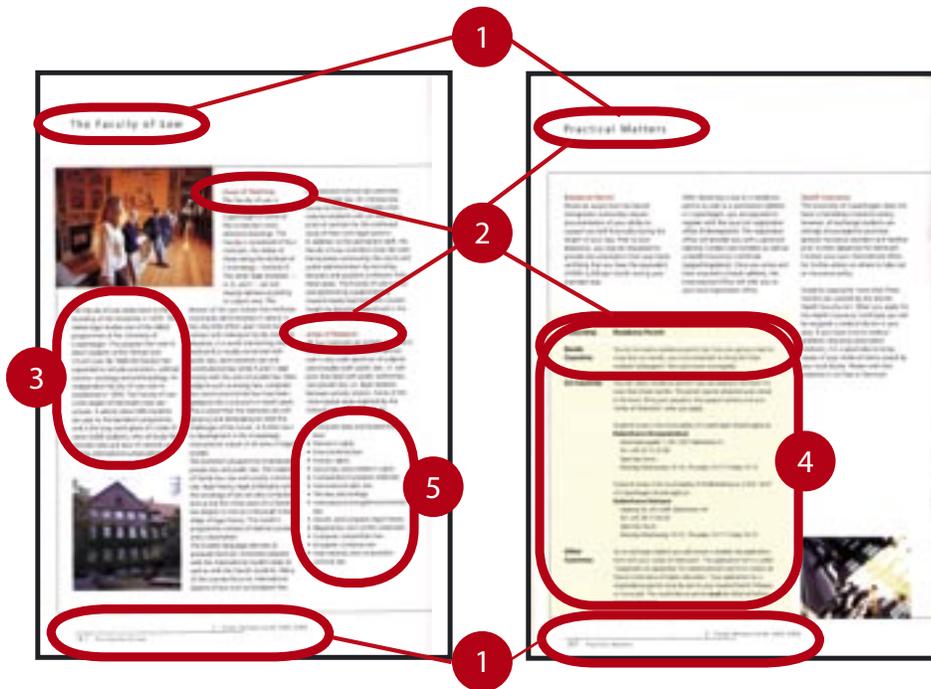


Language

The brochure addresses exchange students as 'international students' and in direct speech with 'you'. No testimonials of former exchange students are provided.

Text structure

All texts are structured very well, in three columns. This short textlines make it easy to read, the reader just has to move his eyes to follow the text from beginning to end and not the whole head, which would be tiresome.



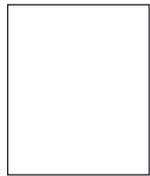
- 1 On top of all pages is located the section title, as well on the lower end of each page, where it accompanies page number and brochure title.
- 2 Titles of text sections are just emphasized by using red colour. In this publication what Robert Bringhurst says about good typographic contrast and emphasizes has been respected. Always just one parameter is changed is changed to make a difference. This is always colour, size or weight.
- 3 All text is set flush left, ragged right, which is appropriate for short text lines. If this text would be justified, white holes would appear in between words and would disturb the reading process.
- 4 Important contents, like requirements for the needed residence permit are put in a table on cream coloured background. The different form and colour ask the reader's attention and the form of a table helps the user to decide immediately what information is relevant for him (eg. citizenship: Nordic Countries, EU Countries or Other Countries), and does not have to bother searching or reading information irrelevant for him.
- 5 Other contents are put in form of a list to make them clear and easy to perceive. Here the areas of research in the Faculty of Law are listed up.

Publications of Colorado State University

Nearly all publications have a different appearance, different formats are used for all, and some are just copies on coloured paper, which make it appear un-professional. Typography and colours change as well, so only the university's logotype gives the information that all these publications come from the same institution.

Formats

All publications use different formats and forms.



19 x 22,8 cm



9,5 x 21,6 cm



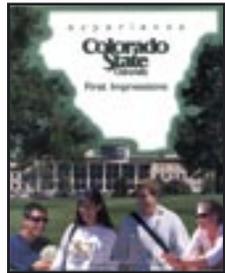
10 x 22,9 cm



21,5 x 27,9 cm

Variety of appearance

All brochures have a different appearance; it is difficult to know that all are sent out by the same university.



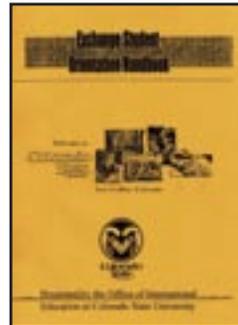
First Impressions
Brochure



Admissions
Information
Guide
Brochure



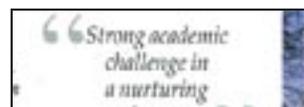
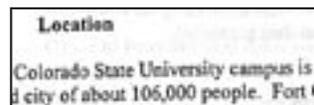
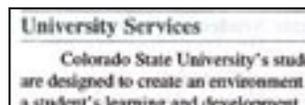
The World
awaits YOU...
Flyer



Exchange Student
Orientation Handbook
Folder

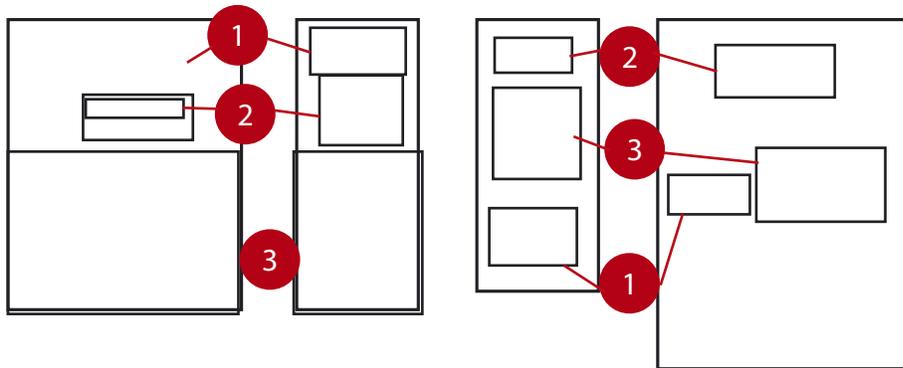
Typography

For all publications different typefaces are used, all can be found from Script type to Sans serif, in all weights, styles and colours. Some are set on background images, which make them difficult to read. The permanently changing typography let the publications appear chaotic and made by chance and therefore not at all professional.



Layout

Most of Colorado State University's publications are laid out differently. It seems that a stated visual identity does not exist.



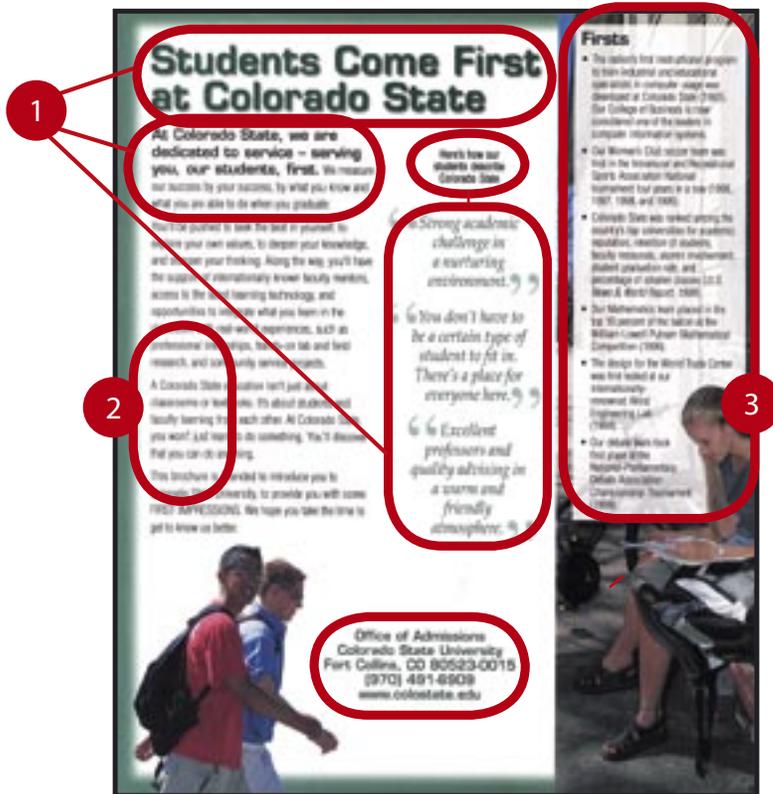
- 1 The logotype is placed differently on all publications. It is easier for the user to identify a series of publications if some elements like the logotype – what somebody looks for if he searches information from a certain institution – are located on all material the same way.
- 2 All publications contain titles, but some don't give clear information about the publication's content. For example, 'First impression' or 'The World awaits YOU...' A clear title helps the user to know in what publication to find what.
- 3 Pictures are placed on all title pages, three show pictures of the university and its students, one uses an illustration, which could be used for any publication, no matter what it is for. Pictures should be used to emphasize the title's meaning and publication's content.
- 4 A variety of colours is used for these publications, which does not support a congruent appearance.

--	--	--	--	--	--	--
- 5 Within the same brochure, pages are laid out completely different, which leads to confusion for the reader. One page uses an irregular 3-column grid, another a 4-columns and the last a 5. Typography changes as well as colours and text structure. It seems as if every spread has been designed by a different person and appears quite unprofessional.



Text structure

All texts are structured very well, in three columns. The short textlines make it easy to read, the reader just has to move his eyes to follow the text from beginning to end and not the whole head, which would be tiresome.



- ① As in previous analysis of other university's publications, the typographic contrasts are much too big, likewise for the used variety of typeface, weight, colour and size. This causes a very noisy impression of this page. All double emphasized type-elements compete for the reader's attention and lead to the fact that he cannot concentrate on its content.
- ② Text paragraphs are separated by a small interline, which is good in this case, for it separates the different paragraphs without letting it miss the connection.
- ③ This block list facts, where Colorado State University is "first". A list is good to give a quick overview on the content, but emphasis of keywords in the text could increase quick perception.
- ⑤ Texts on this page are aligned in different ways, flush left or centred, which adds visual noise to this page.

Language

Exchange students are addressed in all publications as 'international students', but only one brochure is written in direct speech, addresses the student directly by using 'you' and provides testimonials of former exchange students.

Summary and comparison of facts of publications from five international universities:

University	Language	Type	Colour	Format (whole publication)	Paper	Image/ Elements	Layout
Colorado State USA	English	Sans serif, regular, bold, condensed Serif, regular, bold, italic Script all different typesizes	Green, purple, blue, grey, black	19 x 22,8 cm, 9,5 x 21,6 cm, 10 x 22,9 cm, 21,5 x 27,9 cm	Matt paper, 120 g/m2, 60 g/m2, 180 g/m2 yellow+white paper, 80 g/m2	photographs, drawings, logotype 4-colour print photocopy	all different, some title pages centered, others not, no obvious grid system detectable
Leiden University NL	English	serif type, regular, italic, bold	dark blue, black for text	Din A4 Din A5	matt paper, 150 g/m2, 250 g/m2, 300 g/m2, 80 g/m2, 100 g/m2	Logotype, photographs 2- and 4-colour print	all titles layouted the same way, logotype always place on lower end, centered, most publications with two column grid.
Copenhagen University DK	English	sans serif regular, medium, bold	black, dark red, cream	Din A4	semi matt paper, white 180 g/m2, 115 g/m2	logotype, photographs 4-colour print	all title pages follow the same layout, inner pages three column grid.
RMIT University AU	English	one type family, sans serif & serif regular, italic, bold	black, red, cyan, light green, orange	Din A4	coated, white 200 g/m2, 100 g/m2, 115 g/m2	logotype, photographs	Title pages are all different, inner part of two brochures follows the same layout principles: no grid detectable
UDLA MX	Spanish/English	each publication uses different sans serif typeface, regular, bold student guide uses serif type for text.	yellow, dark yellow, orange, green, black white	17,2 x 17,2 cm 10 x 19,8 cm, 21,5 x 28 cm, 12,2 x 25,2 cm	semi-glossy 180 g/m2, 150 g/m2 (vanilla coloured) glossy 120 g/m2, 250-300 g/m2 matt 100 g/m2	Logotype, ancient aztecan drawings, drawings, photograph, manipulated by filter	all different, see following table

Evaluation of publications from five international universities

To compare design and content of the informative material the five universities provide, I evaluated different facts according to rules of usability and strategy MIT University/USA recommends for the analysis of webpages, and I adjusted to printed media. This table gives clear information about the performance of each university's publications.

MIT University, available from the World Wide Web: <http://web.mit.edu/is/usability/usability-guidelines.html>

Evaluation criterions: + good = 2, / regular = 1, - bad = 0

	Coincidence of appearance	Coincidence of typography	Coincidence of images	Coincidence of colours	Universities logotype	Text structure	Contact data	Bilingual content	Clear due dates	What to bring	Explanation of paperwork process	Information about costs	How to get to university	Extra tips	Academic calendar	Testimonials	FAQs	Calification
Leiden University/NL	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	- 0	/ I	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	- 0	29
University of Copenhagen/DK	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	- 0	/ I	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	- 0	- 0		27
Tec de Monterrey/MX	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	/ I	/ I	+ 2	+ 2	- 0	/ I	/ I	+ 2	- 0		26
RMIT University/AU	/ I	+ 2	+ 2	/ I	+ 2	+ 2	+ 2	- 0	/ I	- 0	- 0	/ I	/ I	/ I	- 0	+ 2	- 0	18
UDLA/MX	/ I	- 0	/ I	/ I	/ I	- 0	/ I	/ I	- 0	- 0	- 0	+ 2	/ I	+ 2	/ I	- 0	/ I	14
Colorado State University/USA	- 0	- 0	/ I	/ I	+ 2	- 0	/ I	- 0	/ I	/ I	- 0	- 0	+ 2	+ 2	- 0	- 0	- 0	11

Good

Bad

Conclusion

This investigation made it clear that the form of the publications the UDLA hands out is responsible for the problems international students encounter when coming to Mexico. First of all it is necessary that all departments agree **on the production of only one publication** with all the information an international student needs when coming to Mexico. To make it recognizable as an UDLA publication, a visual identity for all the university's publications has to be determined. This can be seen in the example of Leiden University, who uses a grid-based layout, determined colours, logotype, typography, paper and pictures to represent their university internationally.

Because it will be used internationally, the publication's **format** should agree with paper formats used in the countries where it is sent to. This helps to store the information material and have it at hand when used.

Most of UDLA's international students come to Mexico to get to know its culture; therefore more **photographs** should be used to give an impression of UDLA and its surroundings. Images can be used as well to support the content and make could make it easier to find a certain section of information in an extensive publication.

The research showed that bad design can make information dysfunctional, because it makes it difficult to access it and to understand it. All information has to be well **structured typographically** to increase its legibility and accessibility. If a person cannot identify who is sending the information, if it looks unclear and confusing, or difficult to access, the probability that the student will read the information is very low. All layouts should be based on a determined grid and design rules which follow the UDLA's visual identity, to make them look similar, and also insure a coincidence of appearance when designed by external designers and not by the UDLA's publication department. Text elements should be structured hierarchically; keywords highlighted and important facts emphasized in form of tables or boxes to help the reader to find what he is looking for and prevent him to miss important details.

These changes would increase the number of students who read and understand the information, and help that they will come to Mexico well prepared. This would prevent stress and frustration for the student and the university's employees who have to deal with him.

Because UDLA and other universities do not only provide printed information, but information on their website as well, I will analyse these websites, their usability and strategy in order to understand how they can be improved and used additionally or instead of to printed information. I will compare the UDLA's international website with the ones of Leiden University/NL, Tec de Monterrey/MX, RMIT University/AU and Colorado State University/USA, which are either direct Mexican or indirect international competitors of the UDLA. I count universities who have signed academic agreements with UDLA as well to the group of competitors, because a potential exchange student can make his decision of where to go amongst all universities his home university has signed an agreement with. Therefore the information a university provides could be the decisive media. The evaluation of these sites will help me to propose an improvement for the UDLA's international website.