Analysis of UDLA's International Office's web site

Universidad de las Américas, Puebla, MX   http://www.udlap/internacional.mx

I defined several criteria to evaluate a website's usability and strategy according to criterions MIT University defined in its *"Usability Guidelines"* as *"most factors to consider during a usability evaluation of a web site."* Because not all factors apply to every website, I adjusted them to evaluate websites which are directed to international students who are planning to come to study at a foreign university (see Appendix C).

All chosen universities either signed conventions with UDLA or are a direct competitor. I chose universities located on different continents to have variety and not compare UDLA with European universities only. For these reasons I chose the University of Leiden/Netherlands, RMIT University/Australia, Colorado State University/USA and Tec de Monterrey/Mexico.

The website of UDLA's International Office has been evaluated in relation to its usability with a low range. In points of strategy, it got ranged even lower.

MIT University, *"Usability Guidelines"*, Information Services and technology: 2005, available from World Wide Web: http://web.mit.edu/is/usability/usability-guidelines.html

Navigation

The universities logotype leads the user to the universities homepage
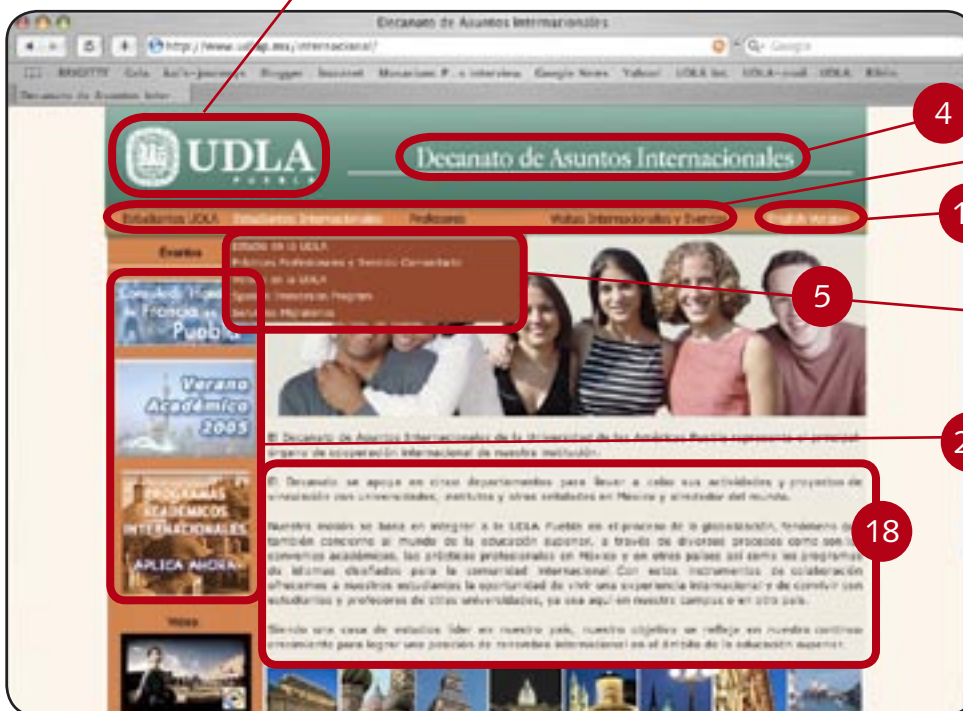
Link to international homepage

Global navigation

Link to „English Version" – not working.

Local navigation just visible as roll-over

Advertisings for UDLA-events – links to other pages

Inicial page.

Usability

The website for international students at UDLA can be evaluated as a site with low usability (See Appendix C for a detailed description of criteria for usability and strategy of websites for International students).

Positive characteristics

1 Most of links and buttons are clearly identifiable. The menu is located in a bar above the logotype; text links are underlined, following web conventions.

2 The site uses only vertical scroll bars, which increase the site's usability, because the whole text width can be seen without having to scroll in a horizontal direction. The site uses adequate amounts of text, therefore scrolling is not necessary on all pages.

What could be better

3 The university's homepage contains a link to information for foreign students. But to make it more obvious it would be better to use 'Estudiantes internacionales' instead of 'Estudiantes extranjeros'. The use of the word 'foreign' seems to identify the students as 'others', not belonging to UDLA's community. The word 'international' sounds much friendlier.

4 The link to return to UDLA's International Homepage is not clear, a button or link saying 'Home' would be more usable.

5 It is difficult to get to know what options are available on this website, because all local navigation is just available as a roll over function. That means the available sections can be seen only when the main category is touched with the mouse (for example 'Estudiantes Internacionales').

6 The available categories are not always clear, because they cannot be seen all at the same time. And related pages are not linked with each other.

7 Contact data and all information can be copied in other documents or a mail-program, just the contact information on the lower end of every page can't be copied!

What should be improved

8 The link 'Estudiantes Extranjeros' on UDLA's Homepage does not lead directly to the International Offices Homepage, instead it opens a page which is filled with links, some lead again to the UDLA Homepage, others to the International Office. This makes it very confusing for the user. He has to choose the link saying 'Decanato de Asuntos Internacionales' to get to its homepage.


Homepage International Office

UDLA Homepage

Universities homepage

9 Titles of page and browser window are not congruent. Active menu link not visible because of the roll over function. The user has no clue of where he is on the site, where he can go and where he has been.

10 The site provides no map of the university's location or additional descriptions of how to reach it.

11 The contact data contains a linked e-mail address, but to contact the university by e-mail, an external e-mail programme is needed. For users who are using a public computer, this makes this a problem. The site should provide an online possibility of contact.

Titeling
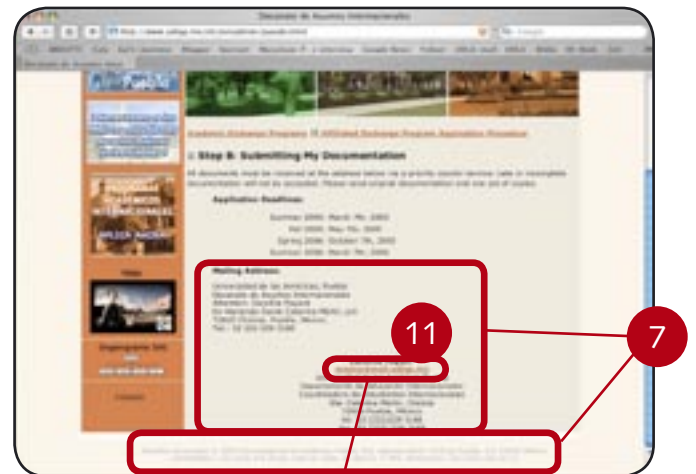
Contact information
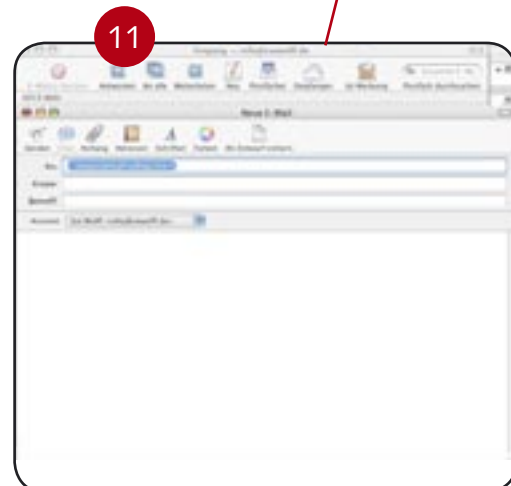
External e-mail programm opens

Strategy

Relates to how the page is directed to its audience and how it fulfils the user's needs and wants.

The website for International students at UDLA can be evaluated as a site with a bad strategy (see Appendix C).

Positive characteristics

12. The site contains an informative academic calendar.
13. The site www.udlap.mx/internacional appears as first hits if you are using 'UDLA International' in an internet search engine such as www.google.com.

What could be better

14. This website provides some information about costs, required documents, due dates and paperwork processes, but not all needed information.
15. The site provides some pictures of UDLA's campus, excursion trips and foreign students at UDLA, but most of them have been manipulated, colours have been changed or photoshop filters applied. It would be better to leave them 'natural' and place more and bigger pictures, perhaps with descriptions, identifying what is shown in the picture.
16. The website contains actualized data, but does not show the last date of actualization.

What should be improved

17. The site's information is only provided in Spanish. The button 'English Version' does not work.
18. The homepage starts with an explanation of what is 'Asuntos Internacionales' and does not contain a welcome message to the International student.
19. The side contains a lot of pictures, which take very long to load and are not related to the page's content
20. The site does not contain information about culture, health and security nor 'What to pack'. This information is very important, as my previous investigations shows, and could help UDLA save money, because students would arrive prepared and probably would not get sick as often. Also they might not face such frustrating situations and misunderstandings because of cultural differences.
21. A courtesy menu including a search option should be available on all pages. This kind of menu provides access to sections the user needs frequently, and for convenience it is provided in an extra menu, so if needed the user does not have to search all over the

Results internet search engine

Step A: My Documentation

Starting page

site. Courtesy navigation normally contains links as Contact/FAQs/Home/Links of interest and Search. A search function could help in case of complex contents and site structure.

22. The site does not contain testimonials of former international students. This could give the site a more personal touch and could motivate international students to decide for UDLA or accept given recommendations.

23. UDLA's International Office website does not provide a section for FAQs, which could prevent a lot of extra time and work on answering similar questions for the International Office's contact person.

24. The site does not provide a list with links of interest, which could provide further information to the student, as for example a link to the page of the Convention of The Hague, where is explained where to get an Apostille in different countries, links to tourist information and Puebla's website or information about Cholula.

25 On the left side on each page are placed a lot of advertisements, which are linked to certain pages which inform about the promoted events. These advertisements use a lot of space, which would be best used for a menu of local navigation. It is not clear that they are promoting UDLA events and are not paid advertisements.

Analysis of competetive web sites

**Leiden University, NL**   http://www.leiden.edu

In the following, I will analyse the website of Leiden University. This website resulted to be the best of all the five analysed sites, in relation to usability and strategy.
As I will show in the following, the student can easily find his way around on the page, the navigation is very clear, as well as categories and available options.

Navigation

4

The universities logotype leads the user to the universities homepage
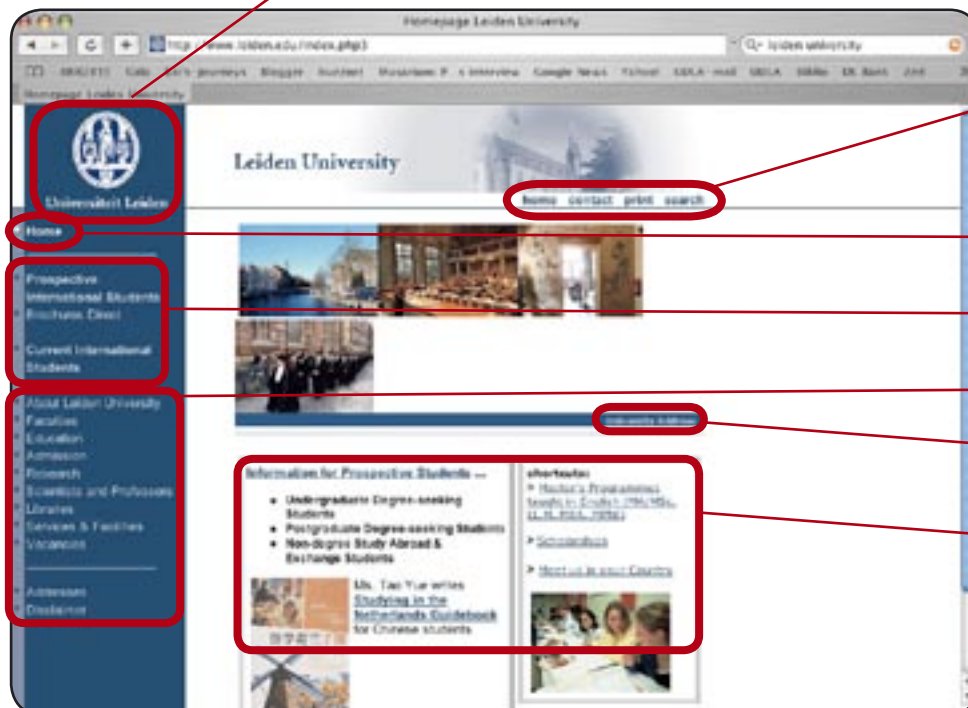
Menu of courtesy

Link to international homepage

Facets for future and current students

Links to general information

Link to Universities address

Spezial information for fast entry

Inicial page.

Usability

The website for international students at Leiden University can be evaluated as a site with good usability (see Appendix C).

Positive characteristics

1 Titles of menu, page and browser window are congruent.

2 The university's homepage contains a clear link to information for international students.

3 Information is grouped and linked with related topics. Example:

Living in the Netherlands

People & Culture: Getting to know the Dutch
Customs & Etiquette/Consensus: The Poldermodel/ Festivities & Events/Dutch Cuisine

Transport System

Travelling in and out of the Netherlands

Shopping

Communication

Politics in a nutshell

Dutch Health Care etc.

4 The website's navigation is clear and easy to use.

5. Contact data and all information can be copied on other documents or a mail-program.

6 The site provides a good map of the university's location and additional descriptions of how to reach it.

What could be better

7. The user's localization on the website is not shown clearly on all pages. Some links lead to other facet pages without making it clear, which can be irritating for the user. And already visited parts are not marked in the menu.
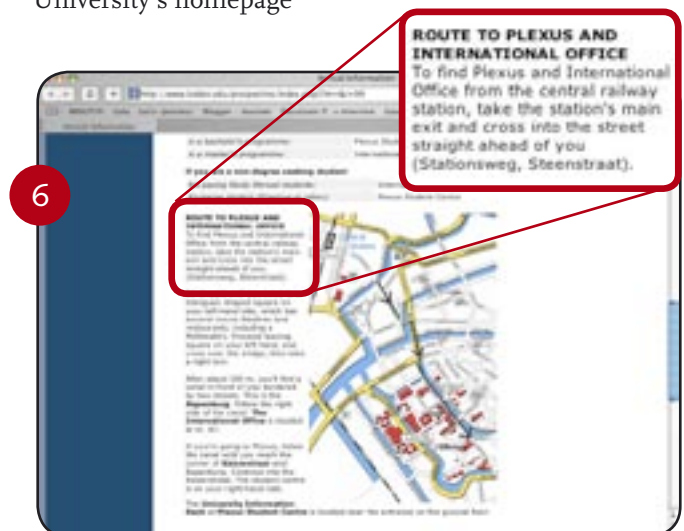
What should be improved

8. To contact the university by e-mail, an external e-mail programme is needed. For users who are using a public computer, this makes this a problem. The site should provide an online possibility of contact.

Page 'Living in the Netherlands'

University's homepage

Page 'Arrival Info rmation'

Strategy

The website for International students at Leiden University can be evaluated as a site with a good strategy (See Appendix C).

Positive characteristics

9 The international student is welcomed by a brief message by the university's rector, which gives the site personality.
And the contact data, contact persons are named, what makes it more personal.

10. The sites provides good information about costs the student will have to take into account—study fees, living expenses etc., about required documents the student has to send or bring with him to Leiden and about the paperwork processes which will await him after his arrival, how to get a residence permit etc. Just the due dates for application, registrations etc. are somehow difficult to find. Here it would be better to include them in the academic information.

11 The site contains an informative academic calendar.

12 The site informs the future student well about Dutch culture, cultural differences and about what to bring to the Netherlands. Only the section about health and security could be improved.

13. The site provides quite a variance of links of interest for the student.

14 The site www.leiden.edu appears as first result if you are using 'Leiden University International Students' in an internet search engine as google.com.

What could be better

15. All information for international students is only provided in English, it would be better if a Dutch version would be available as well.

16 Testimonials of former international students are placed occasionally on some pages. Here it could be better to place them systematically on all section pages, to give the interested student some 'personal experiences' of other students.

17. More and bigger pictures of Leiden's campus and students could give the site a more personal appearance. Many future students are interested to see where they will study and who will study with them.

Welcome message to students

Academic Calendar

Contact person and data

Results internet search engine

18. To provide a clear available section of FAQs is a good possibility to avoid a lot of similar questions by e-mail.

19. A date of the last actualisation could assure the user of the data's actuality he is consulting.

20. A courtesy menu, including a search option should be available on all pages.
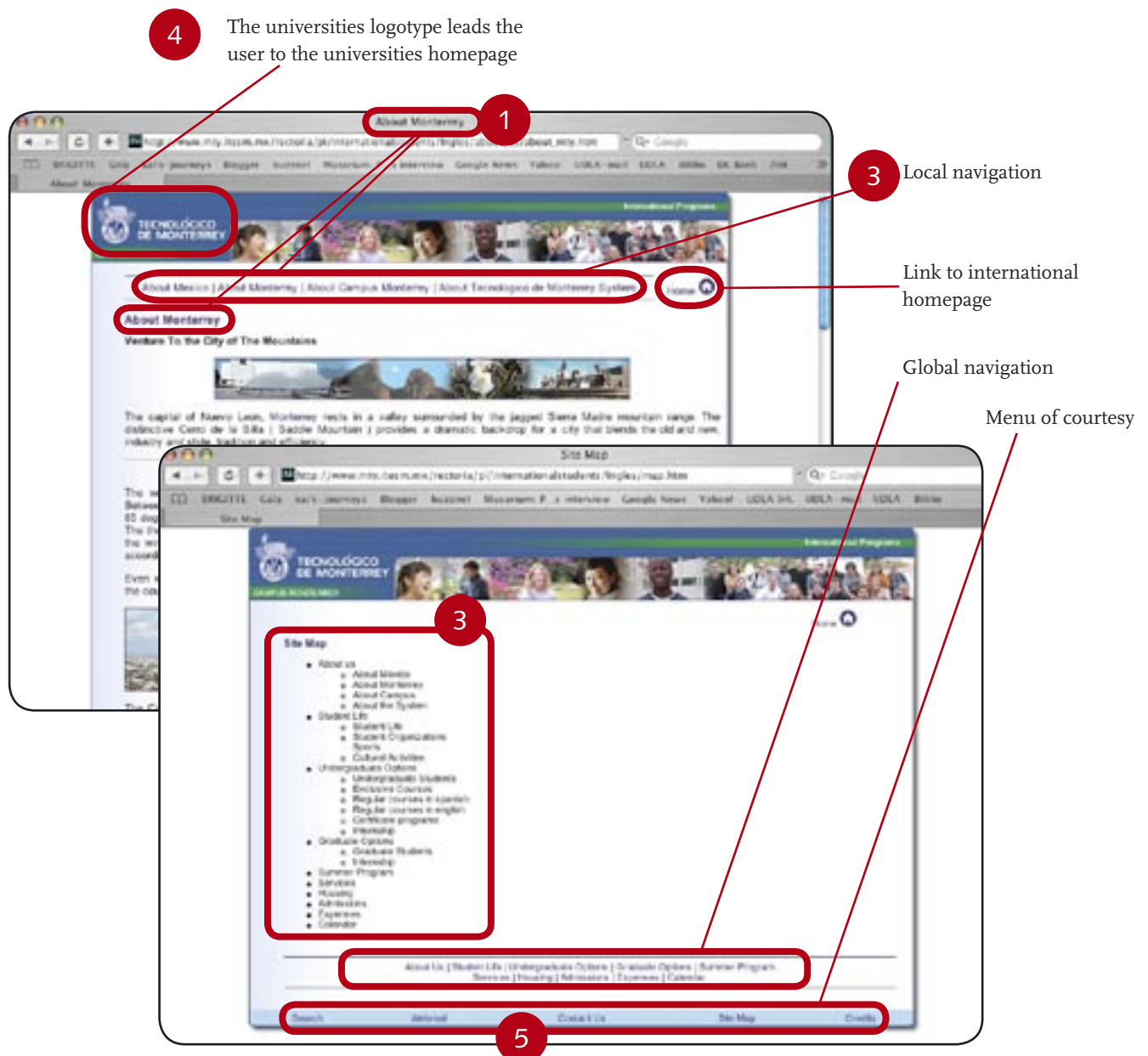

Testimonial of former student

Tecnólogico de Monterrey, Campus Monterrey/MX http://www.mty.itesm.mx

In the following, I will analyse the website of the Tecnó-
logico de Monterrey/Campus Monterrey which is one of
UDLA's competitors here in Mexico.
This website resulted to be good in relation to usability
and strategy.
The site is very clear and easy to use, but it does not pro-
vide as much information as Leiden University's site and
therefore is ranked in second place.

Navigation

4 The universities logotype leads the
user to the universities homepage

3 Local navigation

Link to international
homepage

Global navigation

Menu of courtesy

Usability
Tec Monterrey's website for international students can be evaluated as a site with good usability (see Appendix C).

Positive characteristics
1 Titles of menu, page and browser window are congruent.
2 The university's homepage contains a clear link to information for international students.
3 Information is grouped and linked with related topics. Example:
   About us
     About Mexico
     About Monterrey
     About Campus Monterrey
     About Tecnologico de Monterrey System
4 The site contains three menus on all pages, one for global navigation in between all main categories on the lower end of each page, a local navigation on top to navigate to section in the chosen category, and a courtesy menu containing: Search/Webmail/Contact US/Sitemap/Credits.
   This way the user always knows where he is and where else he can go, and can change in between categories and sections as he wants.
5 The university's contact data is available on all pages in the courtesy menu on the page's lower end. The contact data is personalized and easy to copy to other programs.

What could be better
6 The site provides some maps showing the location of Monterrey in Mexico and of its universities. But it is linked to other external pages and does not give a description of how to get to the place. Neither does it indicate how to reach the university from the airport, information which would be very helpful to foreign students coming to Mexico for the first time.

What should be improved
7 The university can't be contacted without an external e-mail programme. This should be changed.

Universities homepage
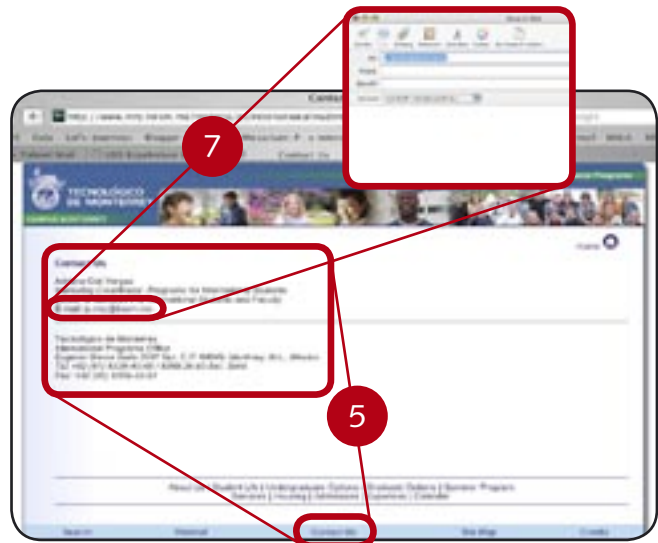
"Contact us"

Universities location

Strategy

Tec's website for international students has been evaluated as a site with just regular strategy, because information which could be helpful for foreign students is not provided (see Appendix C).

Positive characteristics

⑨ All information is provided in Spanish and English. But to change the language during the visit, the user has to return to the international homepage.

⑩ The university's homepage contains a short welcome message to international students when the link 'Alumnos Extranjeros' is touched with the mouse.

⑪ On a lot pages, testimonials of former exchange students are positioned, which helps the future student to get an impression about how it is to study at the Tec and in Mexico and gives the site a personal touch.

What could be better

12. Although the website informs the student well about costs – study fees and living expenses, its information about required documents, due dates and all paperwork process should be improved.

⑬ Pictures of Monterrey's campus, students and surroundings are shown, but most of the time they are formatted very small.

14. Some links to external pages as tourist information or maps are provided, but more could be included.

⑮ The availability of the Tec's international website by internet search engines has to be improved. In the first search results, it appears just as a link from other websites, but not directly.

16. The website provides a clear sitemap, but it is not active, that means all listed pages are not programmed as links to the respective webpage. This would be much more helpful.

What should be improved

17. Information about culture, health and security and what to pack are completely missing, but should be provided to help the future international student to prepare for his sojourn.

18. FAQs are not provided. This should be improved, to avoid a lot of similar requests by e-mail.

19. Because a lot of students use public computers and therefore can't use an e-mail program, an online contact possibility should be provided to facilitate the communication in between student and university.

20. No search option is available, but could be in some cases helpful.

Inicial Page

Testimonial of former student

Results internet search engine

RMIT University, AU   http://www.rmit.edu

On first view, RMIT's website appears very clear, complete and well structured. But while using it and trying to perform certain tasks, or finding certain information it turned out to lack usability and structure. I think if I would have been a prospective student to RMIT, I would have written an e-mail to get answers to my questions instead of trying to find my way through this site. It has been quite frustrating!

It is astonishing that all the brochure material that can be downloaded from this website is clearly structured and gives all needed information in an understandable way. It seems as if different people were in charge of the two different media. This again causes a lack of visual identity and therefore makes it difficult to understand that both are provided by the same institution.

Navigation

Leads to universities homepage
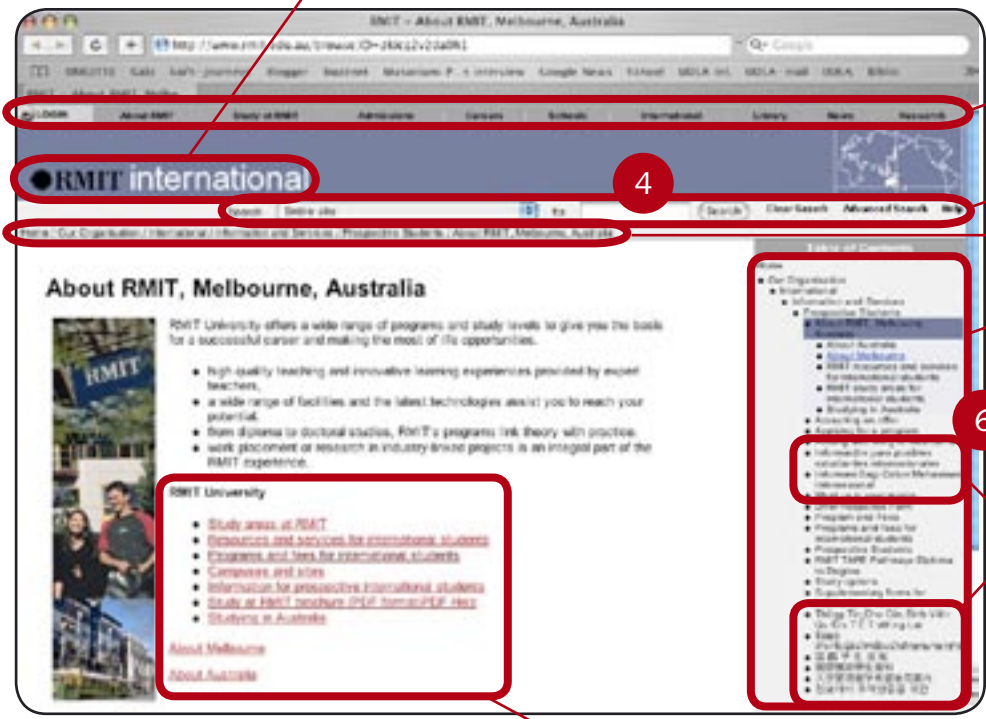
Global navigation

Search and Help

Wayfinding menu

Local and supporting navigation – the menu changes depending on chosen category, what makes it very confusing!

"About RMIT, Melbourne, Australia"

Text links

Usability

RMIT's website for international students can be evaluated as a site with just regular usability, because of confusing navigation and categories which are not very clear (see Appendix C).

Positive characteristics

1 Titles of menu, page and browser window are congruent.

2 Information for international students is clearly available from the university's homepage.

What could be better

3 though the site provides a wayfinding menu, which shows how the current page has been reached, the whole site's structure remains confusing.
One problem is the very complex menu, with too many categories and too many sections for each category. This leads to an ever changing menu – every time a new category is chosen, the menu changes to open related sections. The user loses his orientation.

4 Although it provides a kind of "courtesy menu" with "search" and "help" the most important links such as Contact/FAQs/Sitemap/Downloads and location are missing. It would be very important to include these sections in the courtesy menu, because they are especially difficult to find on this website.

5 RMIT provides a map of the institutions location, but it is not very clear and lacks wayfinding description.

What should be improved

6 Despite of all categories and sections, it is not clear where to find what. Therefore topics should be grouped together to lessen the amount of categories and sections, in order to improve orientation.

7. As on all other analysed website, an online contact possibility should be provided.
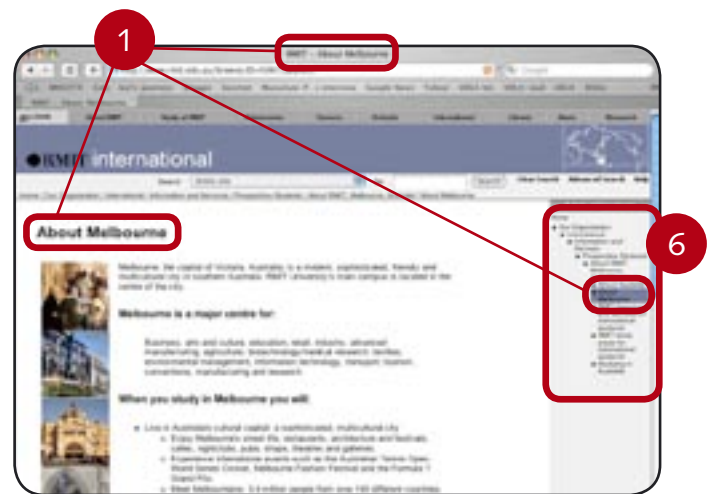
Page "About Melbourne"
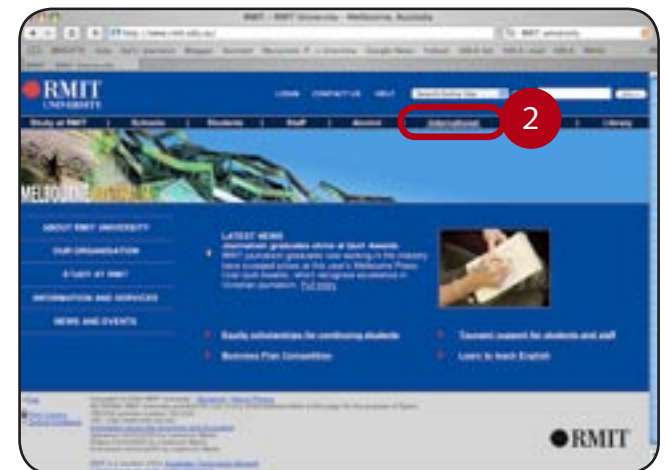
Universities homepage


Map showing university's ubication

Strategy

RMIT's international website has been evaluated in relation to its strategy just as regular, because of insufficient or lacking information, a foreign student would need before his arrival.

Positive characteristics

8 In addition to English, the information is provided in: Chinese simplified/Chinese traditional/Indonesian/Japanese/Korean/Portugese/Russian/Spanish/Thai and Vietnamese

9. The website provides clear information about 'What to pack or not' when coming to Australia. It contains links directly to pages of interest related to information, for example a link to the Dept. of Immigration or Customs regulations.

10 The site provides several downloadable documents such as brochures or necessary forms, which provide the student with information he can keep and consult while offline.

11 The site www.rmit.edu.au/international appears as a first hit if you are looking for "RMIT International Students" on an internet search engine such as google.com.

What could be better

12 RMIT's website does not contain clear information about the university's location and how to get there from airport, by car or train. It just informs the student about a pick up service, but at the same time it says that it is only available on a certain arrival day. Students who will come earlier or later will not know how to reach RMIT.
The shown map is not very useful, because it is formatted very small and does not contain much information.

13. Information about costs only contains information about living expenses, but not about study fees.

14. The academic calendar has to be downloaded in PDF form and only contains information for foreign students, which makes it kind of confusing.
It would be better to provide this information online.

15 The provided search engine could be helpful on this complex site, but gives too many results, and is therefore dysfunctional.
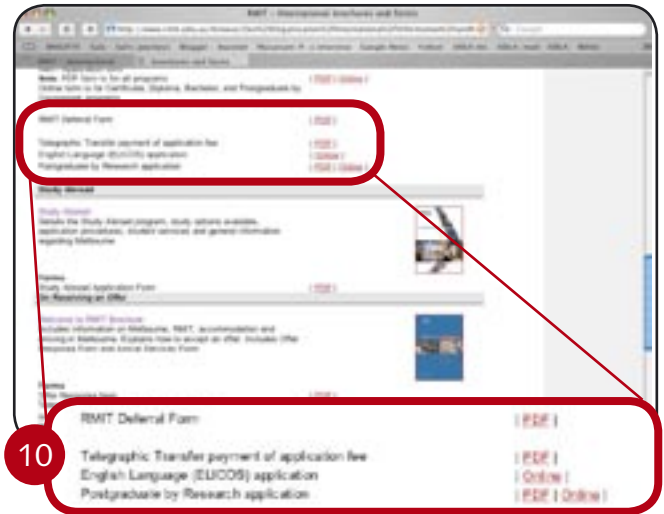
Downloadable information material and necessary forms

Results internet search engine

What should be improved

16. The site does not contain important information about required documents, due dates, culture or paperwork processes.
17. It does not provide testimonials of former international RMIT students.
18. The contact data is very hard to find, no direct link is available. The user has to visit the category "About" and than the section "RMIT International Pty. Ltd." to find contact data. It is personalized and able to be copied, but despite these facts it is still dysfunctional, because it is nearly impossible to find!
19. The site does not provide an online contact possibility. To write an e-mail to this institution, an independent e-mail programme is needed.

Search results on site search

Contact data

Colorado State University, USA   http://www.colostate.edu

In the following, I analysed the website for international
students of Colorado State University/USA, another of
the UDLA's partner universities.
This website was the worst of all, in terms of usability
and strategy.
It is lacking the most important information, has grave
errors such as not having copiable e-mail and internet
addresses and very confusing navigation.

Navigation

4   The universities logotype leads the
user to the universities homepage

Link to international
homepage

Global navigation

Local navigation

Inicial page.
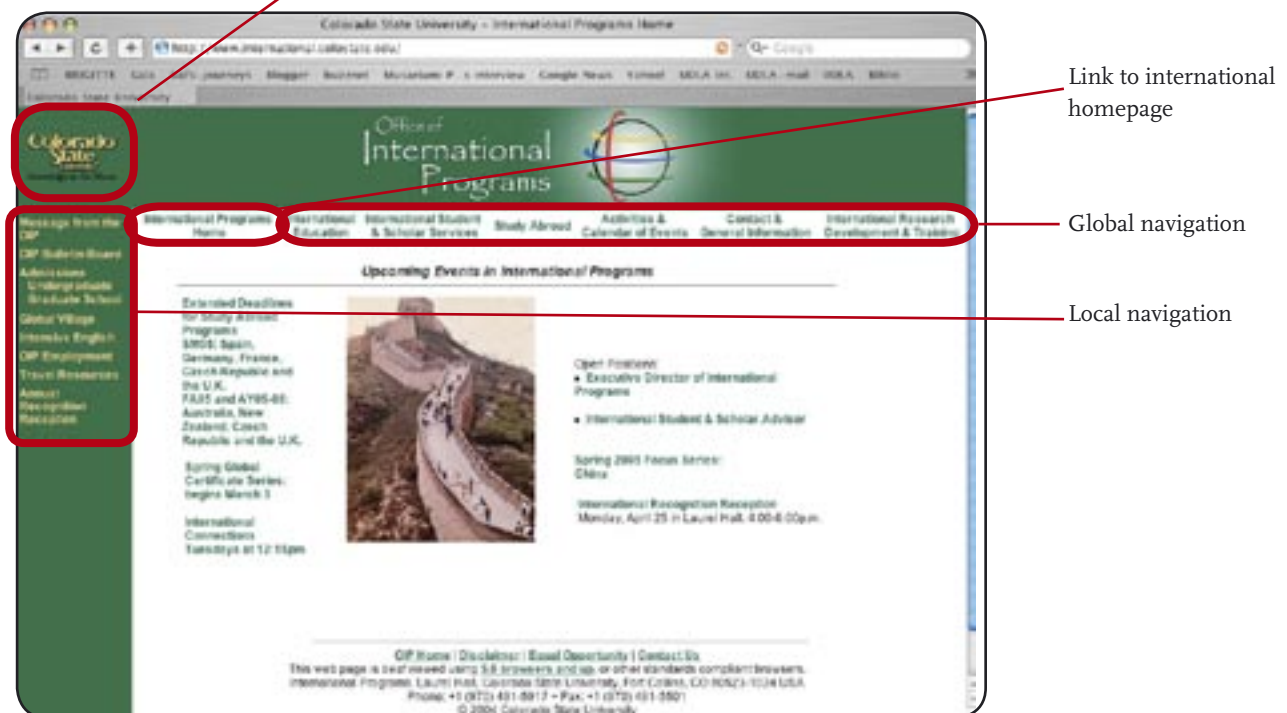
Usability

The website for international students at Colorado State University can be evaluated as a site with very bad usability (see Appendix C).
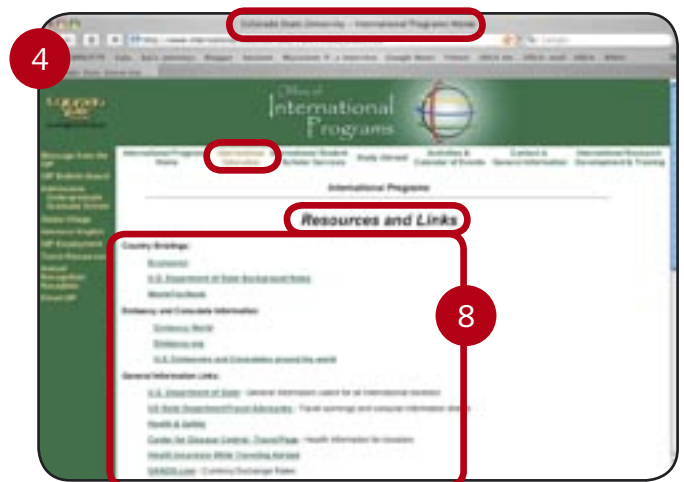
Positive characteristics

1. Links and buttons are clear and functional.
2. The site contains adequate amounts of text and uses just vertical scroll barrs.

What should be improved

3 To contact the university by e-mail, an external e-mail programme is needed. For users who are using a public computer, this is a problem.
E-mail and internet addresses cannot be copied, because they don't contain the real address, e.g. 'International Education' instead of 'inteducation@colostate.edu'.

4 Title of menu, page and browser window are not congruent, which leads to confusion. The site's categories are not specific and lead to confusion. The link 'International Education' leads, for example, to the page 'Resources and Links', which does not make sense.

5. The university's homepage does not contain a clear link to its international page. The student has to choose the link 'future student' and on the opening page a link to the international page is available. This makes it difficult to find, and makes it seem as if the university does not provide information about its international education.

6. Although the map contains clear and detailed information about the university's location and how to reach it, the linked maps (Map Quest) do not work.

Contact Information

Links to related sources

Strategy

The website's strategy is as bad as its usability and again ranked in lowest place of all five analysed websites.

Positive characteristics

7. On its website, Colorado State University provides clear descriptions of its location and how to reach it from different locations, such as from airport and from cities nearby.
8. On the website are provided a wide variety of links to other websites, which could be of interest to international students, but the page is difficult to find, because it is linked from the page "International education".
9. The site www.international.colostate.edu appears as first hits if you are searching "Colorado University International Students" on an internet search engine such as google.com.

What could be better

10. All information for international students is provided only in English.
11. The site provides information about health insurance for international students, but there is no information about needed vaccinations, proposed precautions the student should take when arriving or the medical service at Colorado State University.
    This kind of information could help prevent students of becoming ill and save the university money, and therefore should be provided.

What should be improved

12. Testimonials and pictures of campus and surroundings are not provided, but could be helpful to inform the student about where he is going.
13. No FAQs are available, which will lead to many similar questions via e-mail to the coordinator of Colorado State's International Programs.

Results internet search engine

Mission and Vision Talk

This talk happens between client and designer to determine the needs and wants of the designed website. In this case, I carried out the talk with Caroline Payant, who is responsible for all information given to foreign students by UDLA. Principal areas which have been discussed are:

Objectives and Goals: to get to know the expectations the client has towards his website, and what he wants to reach.

Audience: to understand and determine the user's needs and wants in relation to this website.

Arguments: Define possible structures and elements which allow communicating the principal message and planning the sites design.

UDLA's International Affairs Office
Mission
The mission is to offer academic programs, professional practices and to facilitate the going abroad process of Mexican and foreign exchange students.

Vision
The vision is to manage to sign new agreements with other universities to be able to offer more possibilities of going abroad, and to send more UDLA students abroad. By receiving more exchange students at UDLA, as part of these agreements, the number of Mexican students sent abroad and received foreigners has to be balanced.

Strategy to make UDLA known
The UDLA is represented in international fairs, congresses and international university meetings. The dean of UDLA's International Affairs Office travels a lot for this purpose. To get groups of students to come over to Mexico to study summer courses at UDLA, personal visits of UDLA's representatives are very important.
Additionally, the UDLA hands out printed promotional material and is represented on the internet by its website, which is an important factor.

How do most exchange students come to UDLA?
Most of the UDLA's exchange students come by agreements. Just in the last few years, the number of foreigners who come on their own account has increased. Some of the students have been visited Mexico before and therefore decided to study at UDLA, or had friends who were there for an exchange term before.

Structure of UDLA's International Affairs Office
See Appendix D

Profile	Needs
1. Foreign student who is interested in studying at UDLA either for an exchange term or full-time	*Information about UDLA, needed documents, paperwork processes, Mexican culture, where to find UDLA, possibilities of accomodation, health & security*
2. Program coordinators of universities who signed agreements with UDLA or want to sign agreements	*Information about UDLA, agreements UDLA has signed in, its academic staff, offer and standard, its international recognitions,*
3. Parents of students who are interested in studying at UDLA	*Information about UDLA, possibilities of accomodation, health & security, possibility to contact university*

What is the main reason for its website?
By this website access to information relevant to the foreign student should be facilitated.

Economic strategy
The main reason for the UDLA's participation in exchange programs is to offer its students the possibility of an international experience. Students who come by convention do not pay study fees at UDLA; therefore there is just an indirect gain of money, through their consumption of snacks, meals, copies, prints and souvenirs. Students who come on their own account pay study fee, which is a direct gain of money for UDLA, and additionally the indirect one through the student's consumption on campus.
Foreign full-time students would mean a direct and indirect gain for a longer period. Because most of the foreign students do not have cars, they spend more time and money on the campus.

Offered services and facilities
· Migration Service
· Medical Service
· Student housing
· Pharmacy, Hairdresser
· Public Transport
· Radio-, Television and Multimedia-Laboratories
· Computer rooms
· Copycentre
· Kiosks, Canteen
· Library
· Game room
· Weekly cinema
· Swimming pool, Gymnasium, Tennis, Basketball and Baseball courts
· Sports workshops

What is the visual identity of UDLA's International Office?
There does not exist just one style. Two ancient Aztecan drawings have been used frequently. These animal drawings have been found in Cholula's great pyramid. The legend says that these animals have brought fire to Cholula. Furthermore, all printed publications look different (see p. 38). The design of its website is according to UDLA's homepage.

Objectives on short and long-time view?
Short-term: To have the future student well informed and prepared for his sojourn. **Long-term:** UDLA would like the students to send all needed papers by internet, but this would be impossible because the SEP only accepts original documents.

Is the given information regulated by the government, UDLA or the signed agreements?
There does not exist any regulation of given information. UDLA's International Office provides what they think necessary or helpful.

What are the technical restrictions?
Every employee of the International Office can write texts and decide on pictures and upload them on the website, each area is responsible for the pages related to their work. The UDLA webmaster is responsible for the technical part, but is not personally known by the International Offices employees. Structure and design are regulated by UDLA.
Mails are normally answered by Caroline Payant, if the mail is not related to her area; she sends it to the adequate person in the department.

Does UDLA have competitors?
Not really, because most of the students come because of agreements. Other universities receive foreign exchange students, but not related in numbers to UDLA. Here every semester about 300 students arrive, at the BUAP about 60, at the Ibero about 15. The Tec Puebla is still not receiving a lot of foreigners, because it was founded just two years ago and therefore is offering just classes for the first 4 semesters of studies. Exchange students come most of the time in higher semesters.
Competitive websites are not checked for given information, structure or design. Only costs are compared to equal student's expenses for student houses or home stay.

Audience
To whom should the website be directed?
Mostly to students who are interested in studying at UDLA, or students who already decided to come and need to know certain information.

What do you suspect to be the users needs and wants?
· Information about offered courses, to check which ones could be recognized at one's home university
· Study fees and living expenses

· Possibilities of accommodation
· Location of ULDA and how to get to there
· Due dates

According to Caroline Payant, exchange student do not ask for information about Mexican culture. But as a result of my questioning of foreign UDLA students, they are very interested in Mexican culture, that together with learning Spanish are the main reasons why most of the exchange students decided to study at the UDLA. And they stated that they would like information about it and more contact with Mexicans.
Other possible users could be exchange program coordinators of foreign universities, who have signed agreements with UDLA or are interested in doing it and the students parents, who would like to get informed about where their kid is going to.

Creation of stereotypes

Michael Barnier
· 23 years old, Canadian, student of international relations
· wants to spend an exchange term at UDLA, his university has signed agreements with UDLA
· he has never been to Mexico before and it is the first time he will stay abroad for a longer time
· he consults the website to get information about:
  · study fees and living expenses
  · academic program
  · admission requirements and due dates
  · paperwork processes
  · possibilities of accomodation
  · UDLA's location, surroundings and how to get there
  · health and security
  · Mexican culture, cultural sights nearby
  · Information about public transport and traveling in Mexico

Simone Ludwig
· 21 years old, German, student of cultural science
· interested in studying at UDLA, because she has friends in Puebla, although her university has not signed agreements with UDLA
· she has visited Puebla before
· she consults the website to get information about:
  · study fees and living expenses
  · academic program
  · admission requirements and due dates
  · paperwork processes
  · possibilities of accommodation

Jessica Dill
· 18 years old, Bermudan
· wants to study her bachelor at UDLA
· she has never been to Mexico before, and it is the first time she will stay abroad for a long time
· she needs complete information from UDLA and cannot come before to check, because she can't leave her country without an invitation.
· she consults the website to get information about:
  · study fees and living expenses
  · academic program
  · academic standard and international recognitions
  · admission and visa requirements, due dates
  · paperwork processes, including visa registration and
  · possibilities of accommodation
  · UDLA's location, surroundings and how to get there
  · health and security
  · Mexican culture, cultural sights nearby
  · Information about public transport and traveling in Mexico

Eric Cantell
· 43 years old, Swedish, Co-ordinator of the exchange programs at Uppsala University
· interested in signing convention for student exchange with UDLA
· he has never been to Mexico before
· he consults the website to get information about:
  · academic program
  · academic staff
  · academic standard and international recognitions
  · admission and visa requirements, due dates
  · paperwork processes
  · possibilities of accommodation
  · UDLA's location, surroundings and how to get there
  · health and security
  · Mexican culture, cultural sights nearby

Anne and Reinhard Ludwig
· 48 and 50 years old, Germany, parents of Simone, who plans to study at UDLA for one semester
· because they will have to pay for their daughter's sojourn and want to know her secure,they consult the website to get information about:
  · study fees and living expenses
  · possibilities of accommodation
  · UDLA's location, surroundings and how to get there
  · health and security
  · Mexican culture, cultural sights nearby
  · Information about public transport and travelling in Mexico

Conclusion

The analysis of these five websites made clear the importance of good usability, site structure and strategy. The best evaluated websites use clear navigation, titled each section understandably and provide all the necessary information the student needs when going abroad.

Some websites make it hard to get the needed information and during this benchmark I often wanted just to leave a site, because navigation and finding my way were so confusing. In real life, people would just leave the site and decide perhaps to go to another university or try to get the information another way.

Resulting from this benchmark, I will take in account the following points, for my proposal of a redesign of UDLA's international website:

Clear navigation and wayfinding information which means to make it easy for the user to find what he wants, to understand how to reach the needed information, inform him about his current location and about what has been visited already.

Therefore I would propose:

- a facet page to start the website with, where the student has to define to which group of students he belongs: Mexican students who want to go abroad, international students who want to partake in an exchange with UDLA and international students who want to study full-time at UDLA
  - on the website a global navigation naming all categories
  - for each category a local navigation which shows what sections are available within this category
  - to facilitate the use of frequently needed links a courtesy menu (Home/FAQs/Campus-Map/Site Map/Search/Contact)
  - active links should be marked in different colour, already visited links should change colour from blue to red
  - all pages should be titled clearly and this title has to coincide with the section title in the menu and the browser window title.
  - related pages should be linked with each other

The site should provide **all necessary information** with **adequate amounts of text** to prevent a lot of scrolling. Also, all text should be able to be copied, to make it possible to copy interesting content or contact data on the computer.

In relation to the website's **strategy**, which is focused on international students, it should respect the following points:

- the site should be bilingual and offer the possibility to change the language throughout the whole visit and not just on the entry page.
- a clear map of the university's location and description of how to reach it from different locations nearby.
- it should provide information about: Costs, Required Documents, Academic Calendar, Due Dates, Paperwork Processes, Mexican Culture, Health & Security, What to pack, Contact Persons

- To give the website a personal touch, it should provide testimonials of former international students, pictures of the campus and its own student and personalized contact data
- The site should provide a date of last actualisation, to assure the user that the information he is consulting is actualised and valid.
- A site map can help the user to find his way on the website, a search function could help to find what one is looking for.
- To give the website a **personal** touch, it should provide testimonials of former international students, pictures of the campus and its students and personalized contact data
- The site should provide a date of las actualization, to assure the user that the information he is consulting is actualized and valid.
- A site map can help the user to find his way on the website, a search function could help to find what one is looking for.

To summarize a successful international website, it should pay attention to the next points:

Usability

- clear navigation, which gives information about the user's current location on the website and other available options. I would propose therefore the use of global and local navigation and a courtesy menu.
- short and to the point written texts, to avoid tiring reading on the screen and a lot of scrolling.

Strategy

- all information should be provided bilingual, the best thing would be to provide the option of changing the language throughout the whole visit.
- providing of a clear map, showing the university's location and an explanation of how to get there.
- provide date of actualization