

InCurriculum module handbook audit: DMU June 2008 **Richard Chipps and Alan Crummey**

Design Products DESP 1050 visual communication

Handbook

Visual style

The handbook makes extensive use of creative material icons, images, graphs and other approaches to making the material more engaging. However there are a number of different visual approaches to the same material i.e. assessment matrices. A number of the pages are dense white on black, which for some students with a SpLD would make them hard to read. The use of cream paper would be an advantage for some students.

Typography

The type face used conforms to good practice in as much as it is a sans-serif font; however the font is a small point size and densely packed on the white page.

Content

The content is comprehensive and detailed; it covers all the projects and work required within the module from start to finish. The volume of material may be overwhelming.

Bibliography

Usefully restricted, but comments and details on the material presented would be beneficial.

Summary

A good handbook which at times may be a little too detailed and confusing. The mix of visual styles maybe hard for some students to engage with; feedback from students and their direct opinion would be worth assessing. This could also be considered good practice.

Blackboard site

A comprehensive set of information links that render the handbook a supportive document for the web rather than the opposite.

Extensive use of resources and visual material make this portal a dynamic and challenging resource.

The use of video, animation, visual material and sound files make this accessible to all students whether they have a SpLD or otherwise. Blackboard tabs (buttons) are:

Announcements: The use of visual material here makes this section of the site easy to engage with and positive for students with a visual learning style to approach.

Learning materials: A comprehensive visual section that uses colour and image to augment the text files that it contains. The use of PDF files makes this section of the site easy to engage with.

Module schedule: A useful section of the site that provides the students with a comprehensive body of material that is easy to engage with and a 'time management' resource for those who get confused with the dates and times.

Projects: The use of coloured PDFs provides a resource for the students that is really easy for them to engage with. It also supports the module handbook with additional material and resources.

Lectures/demos: A comprehensive selection of video, audio and other material including PowerPoint and textual material that makes this an exemplary site for students to engage with. The manner in which the material is available in a wide selection of formats and styles makes this a great resource for all students, including those with SpLD.

Graphic workshop assignments: A useful supportive resource for the lecture and workshop series that is both an aid-memoire and a learning resource. This section may be text-heavy at times and the point size is a little small, but it is easy to engage with.

Illustration workshop assignments: A more limited site that is predominantly text but is augmented by visual material.

Staff information: The use of cartoon images gives the site a use- friendly feel and makes the material approachable for the students. Type size could be an issue if students were unable to alter their screen size or use a reader.

Assessments: A comprehensive site that provides all the material that is required for the students to engage with and understand the assessments and their requirements. Predominantly text-based, these would benefit from sound files or similar, to allow for a wide variety of learning approaches.

Resources Books: The visual nature of the way in which this material is presented provides the students with the material missing from the handbooks. Short summaries, library codes and images of the books themselves all provide a rich resource for the visual learner who finds 'books difficult'.

Resources DVDs: Likewise the DVD resource is a valuable visual source of information for the learner that breaks away from the traditional text-based approach and adopts a visual strategy that makes the information rich and accessible.

Resources web links: A great visually-based resource for the projects, where students are given some idea of what information the web link provides. The material here is easy to engage with and provides the visual learner with impact.

Pod Casts: The visual theme is maintained, with the audio files making a multi-sensory approach to the material available to the students.

Handbook: The module handbook is located as a PDF text file on the Blackboard shell. A sound file of key sections of this material might be useful for students to navigate the handbook and as a useful additional resource.

Worth Knowing: A very useful and visually presented section of the shell that provides, in easy access format, key issues that the students need to know and would find interesting. Once again the visual nature of the presentation is a plus point.

Help and support: A good practice element that allows students to find key information on where help is available and who to talk to in a 'one-stop-shop'.

Discussion board, email, module feedback: These tabs are standard Blackboard resources and at present unused.

In summary the combination of a visual approach to the hand book and the multi-sensory approach to the Blackboard shell provides an appropriately developed resource that is accessible to a wide cross-section of the students on the course. The visual learners will find the material approachable

and there are sufficient 'multi media' resources to accommodate other learning styles. This should be regarded as good practice.

Business Communication and Creativity

Handbook

Visual style

Generally a dense text-based approach to the handbook that uses visual material only when directly related to the information presented i.e. matrices, diagrams etc. The black text on white background is for some students with SpLD hard to read. The use of left-justified text or quotes makes reading for some students difficult.

Typography

The type face used conforms to good practice in as much as it is a sans-serif font; however the font is a small point size and densely packed on the white page. At times different fonts and styles are used e.g. italic etc. which makes reading challenging.

Content

The content is comprehensive and detailed; it covers all the projects and work required within the module from start to finish. The volume of material may be overwhelming, although it is broken up into sections and weeks.

Bibliography

Rather full with comprehensive detail and volume. The addition of comments and details on the material presented would be beneficial for the student to engage with their choice of resources.

Summary

A very comprehensive and rather dry document. It would be useful to explore the students' perception of the material supplied and whether alternative approaches could be adopted to make the material more engaging and less resource-hungry.

Blackboard site

Announcements: The site uses text-based announcements that are accessible by most learners, but not inclusive.

Staff information: A useful text-based approach to providing the students with information on their teaching team.

Module documents: A useful set of documents that provide the students with resources to support their learning, and includes an MP3 file amongst text documents.

Lecture slides: A comprehensive set of resource material that provides the students with a portal to revisit and revise the taught content of the module at a later date.

Student support: This shell is empty. It would be useful to have some contact details here for students to access support and guidance from the university.

Web links: A single link to study guide information for students to access when required. A useful but limited resource which could benefit from being augmented.

Turn it in: A requirement for level 1 student essays and written material from Sept 2008.

Email: Standard email access portal.

Part time students: The shell provides specific resources to support and manage the part time students on the course and includes specific and non-specific information tailored to meet these students' needs.

Upcpd: Once again useful and comprehensive materials for the UCPD element of the course, for students on this pathway to access specific and relevant information through a one-stop portal.

GMM Luton: A limited resource targeted once again at a cohort of students specific to this shell, providing the resources required for the students to access the teaching material.

In summary: The handbook provides a comprehensive resource for the students on the programme and its pathways. The material is rather text-based, with some limited use of video and audio materials.

Recommendation: To investigate ways in which the material can be made more inclusive using video, visual and audio files.

Design Management and innovation DMCM 1504

Handbook

Visual style

A relatively succinct document that sets out in simple terms what is required of the student. The text-based and rather uninspiring document does little to endeavour to be inclusive except for the use of comic sans as a type face.

Typography

The use of comic sans as a type face is an effort to make the material more user-friendly. However, it does possibly make the document look rather amateurish. The substrate being white does not facilitate ease of reading for some students.

Content

The handbook is relatively short and to the point, providing the basic material that the student requires to engage with the module. However, it may lack detail and requires augmenting with briefs and additional elements as the module progresses.

Bibliography

A focused bibliography that acknowledges the students' realistic level of engagement with the written word. The short explanation of the books and reading materials provides the students with an insight into the books they are expected to engage with.

Summary

The document is rather thin; this may be a good or bad approach. The students' opinion would be helpful. The material would benefit from the inclusion of visual and image-based material.

Blackboard

Announcements

Standard announcements portal with a number of edits, some of which have been up for some months. The maintenance of old postings could confuse students who visit the site for information.

Staff information

Folder empty. This could either be removed to avoid confusion, or material provided to give students an insight into the staff's interests and research areas.

Module information

A comprehensive set of resource materials that include both textual and video files. The material would benefit from a structure that was more engaging and visually stimulating.

Assessment information

No information is contained here; the material can be found in the handbook.

Email

Standard email portal.

CAV

This site provides material for the CAV section of the module. The material contains a variety of media and approaches that make the resource engaging for students.

Visualisation

No information is contained here.

Summary

The material is rather thin and unimaginative, although there is some use of visual and audio material. This could be embedded in greater quantity. The students should be asked whether they feel the material is sufficient.