The Student Online Experience: Getting to the crUX of it

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About this presentation

• USQ and our Students
• Student Expectations of Online Environments
• User Experience and Cognitive Load
• User Experience at USQ
• Making a Case for Change
• Priority Projects for Investment
• What next?
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University of Southern Queensland – Who are we?

• 1967 – Established as the Darling Downs campus of Queensland Institute of Technology

• 1992 – Became the University of Southern Queensland

• 2017 – 50th Anniversary as an education institution; 25th Anniversary as a University.

• Three campuses in Queensland, Australia – Toowoomba, Springfield and Ipswich

• Study Centre in Stanthorpe at the Queensland College of Wine Tourism

• A number of Education Partners internationally

• Approximately 27,000 students
University of Southern Queensland – Who are our Students?

Source: USQ Data Warehouse – Retrieved on 7 April 2017

Student Statistics
Approximately 27,000 students
800 international students study on campus in Australia

- 84.8% Students in Australia
- 15.2% Students internationally
- 71% Students study part-time
- 29% Students study full-time
- 57% Students are 20-49 years old
- 36% Students are 16-25 years old
- 69% Students studying online
- 31% Students studying on campus
Student Expectations of Online Education

- The majority of our students study part time, online and are 26 – 49 years old
- The User Experience (UX) of higher education online environments is a point of differentiation for students.
- Their expectations of online learning are influenced by other online experiences:
  - Internet banking, social media, online shopping, other service providers, apps,
  - other education providers
- They expect their online learning experience to be:
  - Fast, engaging and intuitive (familiar)
  - Seamless
  - Convenient / Flexible
  - Mobile
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User Experience and Cognitive Load
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How did we shape up?
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Seriously though...

What does this mean?

Login again?!

Is this the right information?

How do I search for my course readings?

When is my assignment due?

Where can I get help with this?

Where do I find information on referencing?
How did we know we had a problem?

Our students were telling us but we needed to understand the complexity of the problem first.

Understanding and explaining our Student Online Experience?

Making sense of the multitude of online touch points – taking a ‘helicopter approach’

Following the online student journey, and finding ways to explain it to multiple stakeholders.
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The Case for Change – A Key Persona

Julie

- 36 years old
- Mother of Tom (14) and Josh (11)
- Office Manager at ABC Financial Services
- MBA Student
- Studying part time, online

Experience with Technology
Fairly confident with technology. Daily use of MS Office, CRM and Financial software, online calculators and websites/portals of various financial institutions at work on a desktop computer (Broadband ADSL).
She uses internet banking, online shopping and social media regularly at home (Broadband ADSL) on her laptop or smartphone.

Experience of tertiary study
Completed a Bachelor degree on campus (1998-2000)
Completed a Cert IV in Financial Services online (2011)
Attended Orientation workshops and completed two subjects in 2013
She did not study in 2014 and is currently enrolled in Project Management for Semester 1, 2015

Needs
May require help/support after hours

Challenges
Time poor and tired due to working full time, home duties and being “mum”
The ”StudyDesk” Learning Management System was upgraded in 2014 and has changed significantly in appearance and functionality
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The Case for Change – A User Story

[Diagram showing user journey through accessing course readings]
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How was the User’s Experience?

System’s involved: 5
Number of authentication requests: 4
Number of search facilities: 3
Number of unsuccessful attempts: 4
Inconsistent look and feel of system interfaces

Time taken to access the course readings: 45 minutes

Extraneous Cognitive Load Alert!!!
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Closing the Gap: Priority Projects

The goal: *minimise cognitive load* by making it easier for students to complete their online tasks.

- Student Portal
- Mobile App
- Single Sign On
- Online Help Tools and AskUSQ
- Search
Embedding a USQ UX Culture

Developing a USQ User Experience Framework

1. User First Design Approach
2. Browser and Mobile Responsiveness
3. Search and Information Management
4. Accessibility, Usability and Inclusive Design
5. Digital Visual Identity
6. Authentication, Single Sign On (SSO) and Personalisation
7. Privacy

Other ideas that are helping:
1. Incorporate UX in project start-up processes
2. Improved communication across system custodians
3. Checklists and tools to help
How do we avoid repeating the mistakes of the past?
• UX Policy and procedures
• Senior executive sponsorship
• Continue to build UX awareness and UX culture through collaboration, education and shared vision of user-first approach.
• More opportunities to work alongside students to improve online environments

User Experience will become even more important with our future technology-first learners!
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The Future Online Experience?
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Recap

• You now know a little about USQ and our students
• The importance of User Experience and it’s impact on cognitive load
• How we’ve approached the challenges
• What we’ve achieved
• Future Challenges
Questions
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