

In search of best practices – a usability analysis of Internet Recruitment of Candidates services

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Abstract

Purpose/Thesis: The aim of the study is to identify good practices in the usability of the Internet Recruitment of Candidates (IRK) services used at Polish universities and, on that basis, to develop recommendations aimed at increasing user satisfaction for study candidates.

Approach/Methods: The analysis covered key components of IRK services: the homepage and pages dedicated to individual recruitment processes. Each of these pages was compared across selected university IRKs to identify examples of good practices. The study applied best-practice benchmarking and expert evaluation.

Results and conclusions: The analysis identified several best practices across the linguistic, visual, and structural layers of IRK services. These primarily relate to message clarity, navigation consistency, and the reduction of distracting elements, which together enhance the transparency of the recruitment process and strengthen institution identification. Some findings still require verification in user-based studies.

Originality/Cognitive value: The study highlights the potential of applying best practice benchmarking to improve web services built on a shared software platform. The formulated recommendations may be adopted both by MUCI (the University Centre for Informatization) to develop the central system and by individual academic institutions to refine their own implementations.

Keywords

Best practices benchmarking. Internet Recruitment of Candidates Systems. Usability.

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1. Introduction

Internet Recruitment of Candidates (IRK) is a service for study candidates, created and supported by the University Centre for Informatization (MUCI, www.muci.edu.pl). MUCI is a consortium of Polish higher education institutions (HEIs),

established by the Conference of Rectors of Universities in Poland on the 10th of November 2001 to foster the development of information systems supporting school management (*About USOS, n.d.*). The consortium's main project is the USOS – the University Study-Oriented System. IRK is part of that project. HEIs which pay contributions to the USOS project can use the software without additional fees. At present, 82 academic institutions use this module (*USOS in numbers, n.d.*), most of which – 89% (73) are public entities. Compared to all Polish public academic institutions, the number of which was 135 in the 2024/2025 academic year (*Wszystko Co Najważniejsze, 2024*), this constitutes more than half, 54%.

The Internet Recruitment of Candidates service enables the presentation of an online catalogue of degree courses and programmes offered. In addition, it allows for the remote organisation of formal requirements at an early stage of the admission process, which is especially helpful for candidates living far from the institution's main location. The system interfaces with the Central Registry of Maturity Examinations, from which it retrieves information on the maturity examination results of study candidates. The data for individuals accepted into degree programmes are then transferred directly from the IRK to the USOS system (*About USOS, n.d.*).

The recruitment platforms of individual higher education institutions that use MUCI-provided software are similar in appearance and functionality, particularly in their menu structures and course search engines. This is undeniably helpful for study candidates, as they can browse the various HEI services they visit in a similar manner. The websites of individual schools still differ in implementation details and in how they cover additional information about recruitment. These differences affect the usability of the websites visited by candidates, and hence their browsing satisfaction.

The objective of this article is a comparative analysis of the Internet Recruitment of Candidates services of selected HEIs from the perspective of study candidates, with the aim of identifying best practices that can later be used to improve the usability of both the basic software provided by MUCI and the implementations realised by individual schools. Usability is understood as a measure of efficiency, effectiveness, and user satisfaction in achieving the intended objectives when using the system (ISO, 2018).

Scientific literature relatively rarely analyses the usability of academic institutions' admissions services; most studies focus on academic websites in general. The rare exceptions include research on recruitment webpages and application forms, which indicate problems with navigation and communication (Huang & Bilal, 2019; Stark, 2017), as well as a comparative study of usability evaluation methods, emphasising the benefits of a combined approach (Liu & Jiang, 2025).

2. Purpose and research method

The aim of the research was to prepare project recommendations to increase user satisfaction among the study candidates using IRK services. To achieve the assigned goal, a comparative method was chosen, which is well-suited to this type of analysis. It makes it possible to identify areas requiring improvement and indicate best practices used by various entities. As part of the comparative method, best practice benchmarking was used, which entailed an analysis of various solutions adopted by the surveyed institutions and isolating practices that could serve as general recommendations.

In management literature, best practice benchmarking is defined as a process of identifying, analysing, and adapting solutions considered particularly effective in a specific area (Jetmarová, 2011, p. 78). Unlike performance benchmarking, which aims to identify leaders achieving top economic results, best practice benchmarking focuses on the qualitative aspects of the analysed processes and project solutions, thereby enabling the transfer of effective patterns between organisations (Alderman & Murray, 2025, p. 26; APQC, 2025).

Benchmarking in the traditional sense aims to improve a single organisation by comparing its activities with leaders' and adapting proven solutions to increase the efficiency of the institution. Best practice benchmarking can be used both at this scope and across an entire sector, where analysis of multiple institutions allows patterns to emerge, enabling the development of universal recommendations. In this approach, benchmarking is not limited to supporting a single organization; instead, it serves a methodological function, making it possible to formulate recommendations which can be applied by all interested organisations (e.g., Buzdygan & Pietrukowicz, 2022; Pulikowski, 2018, pp. 184–196; Sapa, 2005).

Because the research was directed at seeking best practices with a potential for wider application rather than identifying leaders, there was no pre-determined, closed list of elements to be evaluated. The analysis thus remained open to solutions that emerged during the research. The best practice identification process was accompanied by expert evaluation, the purpose of which was especially to formulate optimization recommendations absent from the surveyed services. Expert evaluation was conducted in reference to accepted guidelines for interface design, inspired by Nielsen's classic usability heuristics (1995).

3. Research procedure

In benchmarking research, the analysis of all available objects is not always possible or practical, as increasing the number of institutions makes comparisons more complex and time-consuming. For IRK services, apart from the number of objects

(82), the strong similarity between the systems being compared, due to their use of the same basic software provided by MUCl, was also significant for this research. That is why, in addition to typical representatives, the services selected for research were the ones distinguished by original, functional solutions. They were mostly the platforms of large schools, with a vast and varied course offer. In the end, the recruitment systems of the following 15 institutions were selected for comparisons:

- The Academy of Physical Education in Katowice (AWF),
- The Koszalin University of Technology (PK),
- The Silesian University of Technology (PŚl),
- The Warsaw University of Technology (PW),
- The Wrocław University of Science and Technology (PW_r),
- The University of Economics in Katowice (UEKat),
- The Cracow University of Economics (UEKr),
- The Poznań University of Economics and Business (UEP),
- The Jagiellonian University (UJ),
- The Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (UKSW),
- The University of Lodz (UŁ),
- The Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (UMCS),
- The Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (UMK),
- The University of Silesia in Katowice (UŚ),
- The University of Warsaw (UW).

The research was conducted in the first half of September 2025. It covered publicly accessible (no login required) IRK webpages in their desktop versions. Due to the high responsiveness of the interface developed by MUCl, it was not necessary to analyse mobile solutions separately, though several points in the article present mobile screens to indicate specific issues that may arise when using them, as well as purely for illustration. The research covered the following elements: the homepage and pages dedicated to specific recruitment processes. Each page was compared across the IRK services of selected academic institutions to identify best practices. The usability analysis of the examined webpages was complemented by expert evaluation.

4. HEIs IRK services usability analysis

4.1. Page title in the browser tab

The page title displayed in the web browser tab helps users quickly identify the websites they are visiting and facilitates switching between multiple open webpages.

The default IRK homepage title is “Internet Recruitment of Candidates” (“*Internetowa Rekrutacja Kandydatów*”). Its content does not fit into the tab length.

The title is preceded by a default “R” icon. This generic tab appearance is prevalent (10 out of 15 examined services). Figure 1 shows several selected methods of displaying information in the browser tab. The first two tabs are indistinguishable to the user; the next two stand out thanks to the school logo, while the last one includes an abbreviation of the university’s name along with the logo.



Figure 1. Recruitment page tab examples in the Firefox web browser

Source: own elaboration

As we can see, the default icon can be replaced with an institution logo, as was done in the IRK webpages of the Wrocław University of Science and Technology, the University of Warsaw and UMCS. Replacing the current homepage title with the phrase “Recruitment” and an abbreviation of the HEI name, as in the solution adopted by UMCS, is also worth considering. Such a title fits into the tab, it is simpler and contains words potentially entered by candidates into the Google search engine. One must keep in mind that the page title, stored in the <title> metatag in the HTML code, impacts how it is indexed in search engines, and thus the recruitment platform’s visibility on the Internet.

4.2. Homepage

The IRK homepage comprises three elements: a page header, a list of available recruitments, and a footer. Figure 2 displays the desktop version of the University of Warsaw’s recruitment service homepage and a mobile screen for comparison. Specific elements will be analysed in later sections.

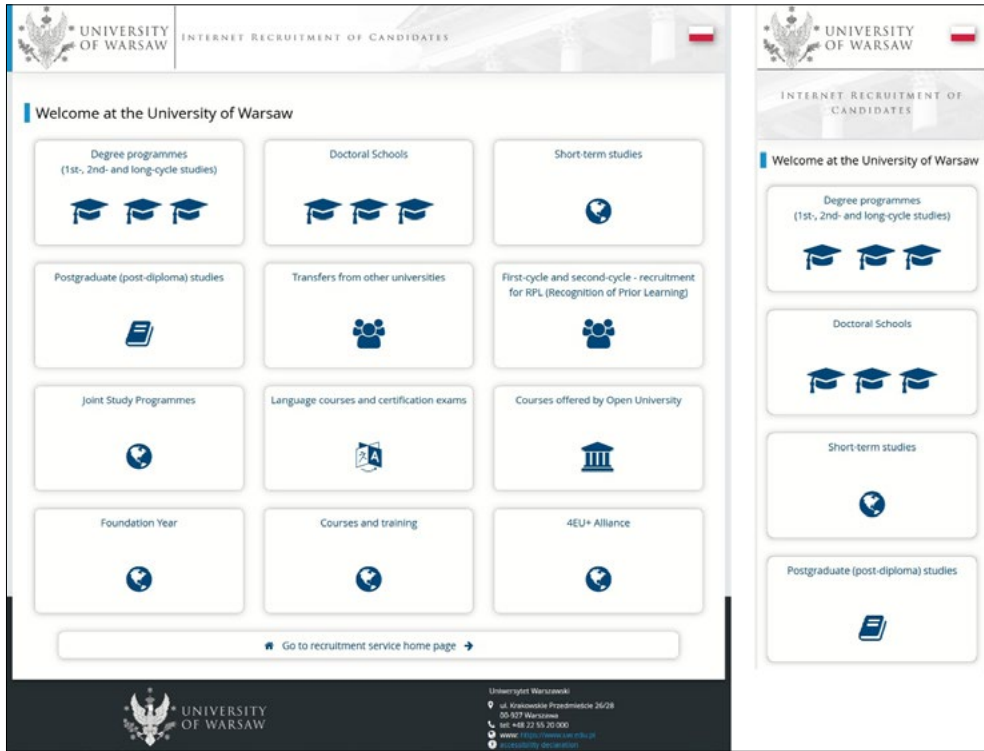


Figure 2. The IRK homepage of the University of Warsaw

Source: own elaboration based on: <https://irk.uw.edu.pl>

4.2.1. Homepage header

The homepage header of a recruitment platform typically contains the academic institution's logo, the name of the service, background graphics, and a British flag icon, symbolizing the option to switch the language of the page to English. Although the headers of individual HEIs are similar, they differ in detail. Modifications pertain primarily to two elements: the service name and background graphics. The names come in several variations:

- INTERNET CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT (UEKat, UEKr, UW, UKSW),
- INTERNET CANDIDATE REGISTRATION (UŚ),
- INTERNET CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT SYSTEM (PW_r, UJ),
- RECRUITMENT (PŚI, UEP, UŁ, UMK),
- RECRUITMENT and year: 2025/2026 (PK),
- RECRUITMENT and school name/abbreviation (PW, UMCS).

The default typeface used for the name, present in the majority of services, is Trajan Pro Regular in 15 px with 4 px character spacing. This typeface is elegant, yet has relatively low contrast, which is why some institutions have decided to

modify the default settings. In the IRK of the Cracow University of Economics, the font size has been increased by 5 px – from 15 px to 20 px, while the webpages of the University of Lodz and the Warsaw University of Technology utilise a different typeface – Open Sans in the bold variant. Trajan Pro only supports capital letters, which is why all service names are written in capital letters. Additionally, the font has inbuilt small capitals support, which allows the name written in the page code as “Recruitment” to be displayed as “RECRUITMENT,” with the first letter always in its appropriate size and the remaining letters slightly smaller. Such a service title will be visually smaller than one written in the page code in all capital letters, though they will both be set to the same size, such as 15 px. This difference is clearly visible in Figure 3 (the top and middle page header – UW and UEKat).



Figure 3. Homepage headers for the IRKs of UW and UEKat

Source: own elaboration based on: <https://irk.uw.edu.pl> and <https://irk2.ue.katowice.pl>

The first two header examples from Figure 3 show that, regardless of the chosen font size, the title is fairly indistinct. This issue applies to the majority of recruitment services. The core reason is the font colour, which is grey rather than black, reducing contrast.

The administrators of HEI webpages can easily modify the style settings of the elements displayed. The third header, located at the bottom of Figure 3, illustrates an example of such changes. The subtle effect of small capitals has been preserved, the font size was increased to 18 px, character spacing was decreased to 3 px, the colour was changed to black and a semi-transparent (0.2), slightly blurred (1 px) shadow was added. This last modification, described in the stylesheet as `text-shadow: 0px 0px 1px rgba(0, 0, 0, 0.2)`, is a necessary alternative to a bold variant, which would disrupt typeface proportions for a font optimized for low text weight (Trajan Pro Regular).

Service name legibility in the page header depends not only on the text’s attributes but also on its background. There is a reason many HEIs use semi-transparent, tonally reduced graphics in the header background (UW, UEKat, UEKr, PWr; see figure 3), while some refrained from filling the background at all (AWF, PW, UJ, UŁ,

UMCS). On mobile devices, for pages with a distinct background, text may overlay the graphics, leading to a significant drop in contrast. This case is illustrated in Figure 4 (first image on the left). The name has become nearly illegible. Applying the contrast-increasing methods described above improves legibility (middle image), but using only semi-transparency for the background image achieves a satisfactory result (image on the right). This problem pertains not only to the UŚ IRK, but also PK, PŚL, UEP, UMK, UKSW and many other HEIs not covered by this research.



Figure 4. Impact of background graphics on webpage header text contrast

Source: own elaboration based on: <https://irk.us.edu.pl>

A minority of HEIs use an expanded header form, utilised in website subpages by default (see 4.1), on their homepage. An example of this approach – on the UKSW recruitment page – can be seen in figure 5.

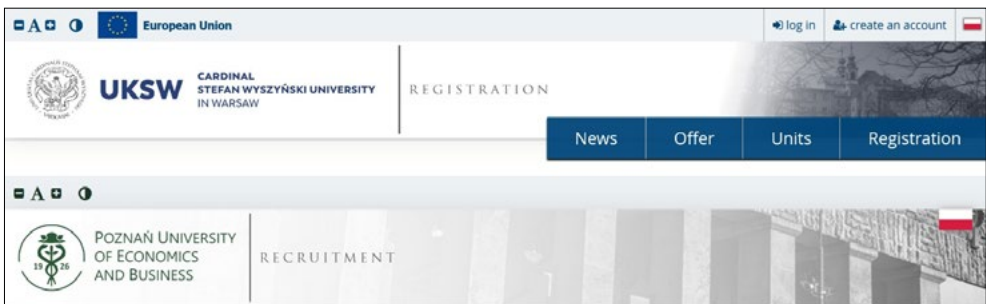


Figure 5. Homepage headers for the IRKs of UKSW and UEP

Source: own elaboration based on: <https://irk.uksw.edu.pl> and <https://e-rekrutacja.ue.poznan.pl>

This solution has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include accessibility aid icons (font and contrast changes) as well as the option to log in for users with accounts already in the system. The disadvantage is that it distracts candidates entering the page for the first time, as they may feel overwhelmed by superfluous information, particularly the presence of a menu. The basic function of a homepage is to select a recruitment process; thus, informational minimalism is safer in this case. Most schools present such an approach in their recruitment services. However, a halfway solution is also possible and was used by the Poznań

University of Economics and Business (Figure 5). The only additional function still present is accessibility aids, enabling persons with impaired sight to comfortably use the homepage as well.

4.2.2. Recruitment selection

The key part of the IRK homepage is the recruitment process list. It is often preceded by a greeting directed to study candidates (see Figure 2). The greeting on the UW webpage is addressed to the entire institution. This kind of greeting can also be found on other IRK webpages (e. g., UŚ, UEKr, AWF), but other solutions also exist:

- A greeting into the recruitment system, e. g.:
 - Welcome to the recruitment system of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
 - The University of Lodz welcomes you to the Internet Recruitment of Candidates!
 - Welcome to the recruitment page of the Poznań University of Economics and Business,
 - Welcome to the Internet Recruitment of Candidates System (PW),
- No greeting of any kind, different kinds of recruitment processes are displayed for selection straight away (e. g., UMCS, PWr, UJ, PK),
- IRK UKSW – contains the instruction: “Select recruitment process” instead of a greeting.

The greeting into the recruitment system serves as an interaction opener, which, in linguistic pragmatics, is tied to strategies of politeness fostering distance reduction (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 101–129). It evokes positive emotions and makes it easier for the candidate to come in contact with the system. The lack of a greeting, let alone replacing it with a dry command to select a recruitment process, decreases user comfort, as the system utilises prescriptive language rather than the greeting language natural to the user. This solution violates Nielsen’s classic heuristic that the system should match the user’s actual language (Nielsen, 1995).

Below the greeting, the homepage displays tiles representing different kinds of recruitment processes. This is the standard mode of presentation used in all IRK services. The tiles are arranged in a way enabling their dynamic adaptation to the available space – the number of elements per row changes depending on the browser window width. Each tile contains the name of the recruitment process and an accompanying graphic element.

The naming conventions for the main types of recruitment processes across different HEIs’ services are similar due to a uniform nomenclature. This consistency significantly facilitates the candidates’ use of multiple platforms. The only significant difference in naming conventions is the splitting of certain IRK recruitment processes into first- and second-cycle studies (UEKat, UEKr, PWr,

PŚl, UMK). Both solutions have advantages and disadvantages, but neither is significantly preferable to the other.

The graphic elements accompanying recruitment process names can be divided into two main types. The first is a set of standard icons representing the type of education provided by a given recruitment process – a graduate cap, a book, a globe. Given that a large part of the services (AWF, UEKat, UŁ, UMK, UŚ, UW) use the same icons, we may assume this is the default solution, integrated into the basic IRK system template developed by MUCI. The second type consists of graphic illustrations, which many HEIs (PW, PŚl, PW, PK, UEKr, UEP, UMCS) have introduced instead of template icons. Using these illustrations significantly changes the webpage’s visual impact, giving it a more unique character. Figure 6 juxtaposes both types of graphic elements.

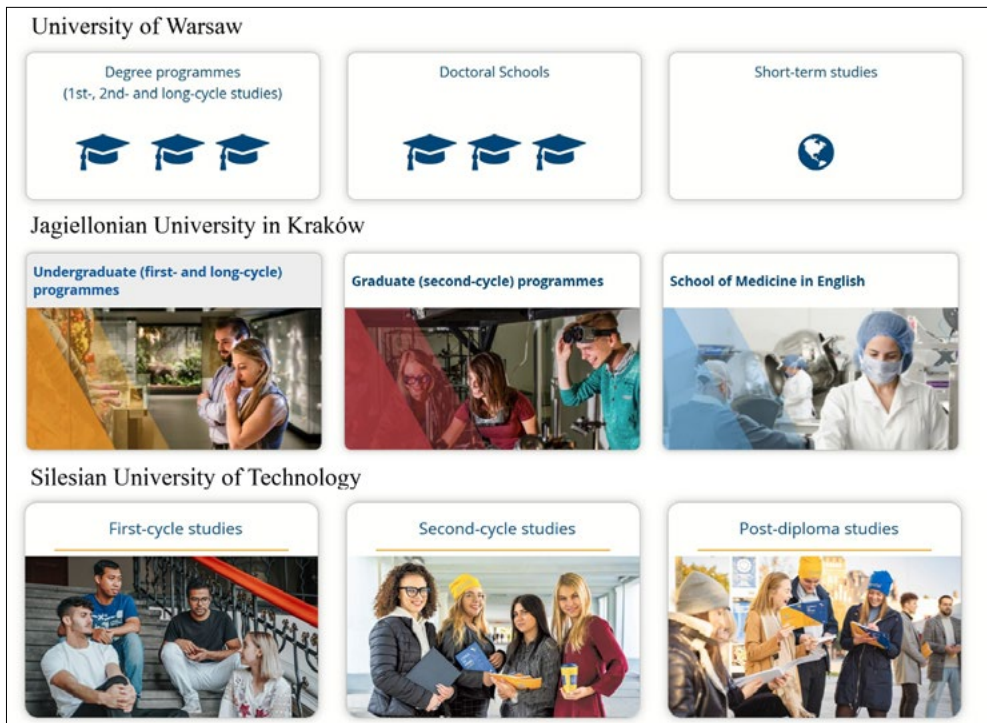


Figure 6. A comparison of icons and graphic illustrations

Source: own elaboration based on: <https://irk.uw.edu.pl>, <https://irk.uj.edu.pl>, <https://irk.polsl.pl>

4.2.3. Footer

Footers in IRK services have a unified structure imposed by the template and a very similar content scope. They include basic contact information (postal address, telephone number, homepage address) and technical links such as a sitemap, accessibility statement, or a contact form. This kind of data is of an informational-formal nature and serves a supplementary function to the main contents of the service. Due to their schematic character, the footers will not be subjected to further analysis. Figure 7. shows an example of the appearance of a footer.

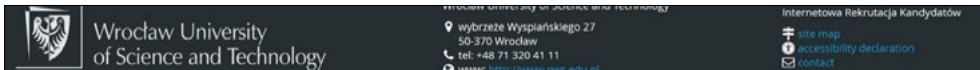


Figure 7. Wrocław University of Science and Technology IRK Footer

Source: <https://irk.usos.pwr.edu.pl>

4.3. The webpages of selected recruitment processes

Upon selecting a recruitment process, a separate module dedicated solely to that process opens. It consists of four pages included in the menu – News, Offer, Units, and Recruitment- and, optionally, an additional homepage that loads first. Figure 8 displays the appearance of the homepage loading after selecting the recruitment process of first-cycle, second-cycle and uniform master's studies in the AWF IRK. Some HEIs (PK, UMK) choose not to create separate homepages and, after the recruitment process selection, direct candidates straight to the contents of the Offer menu. This solution may stem from wanting to avoid repeating content included in guides provided separately. Still, this approach is an exception. Most HEIs examined take this opportunity to provide support to candidates.

The header on the subpages of a selected recruitment process varies somewhat from the header present on the homepage. It has a menu at the bottom, while the top has a narrow additional toolbar with accessibility settings (font size, contrast), information about the project being financed through European Funds, login options, and a British flag, which on the homepage header was displayed below the header. The expanded form of the header is present on the IRK services of all HEIs.

Below the expanded header, many homepages place an image, often serving as a promotional banner. For the AWF website in figure 8. that is a swimming pool, but it can also be a beautiful, historic building of the HEI (UEKr, UKSW) or simply a visually attractive graphic element or photograph (PŚI, PK, PWr, UJ, UW). Despite having a homepage for individual recruitment processes, some institutions (UŁ, PW) have decided not to display this additional image there. This solution can also be considered beneficial, especially when there is no appropriate concept to manage this space. Notably, this banner does not appear on pages opened from the menu level.

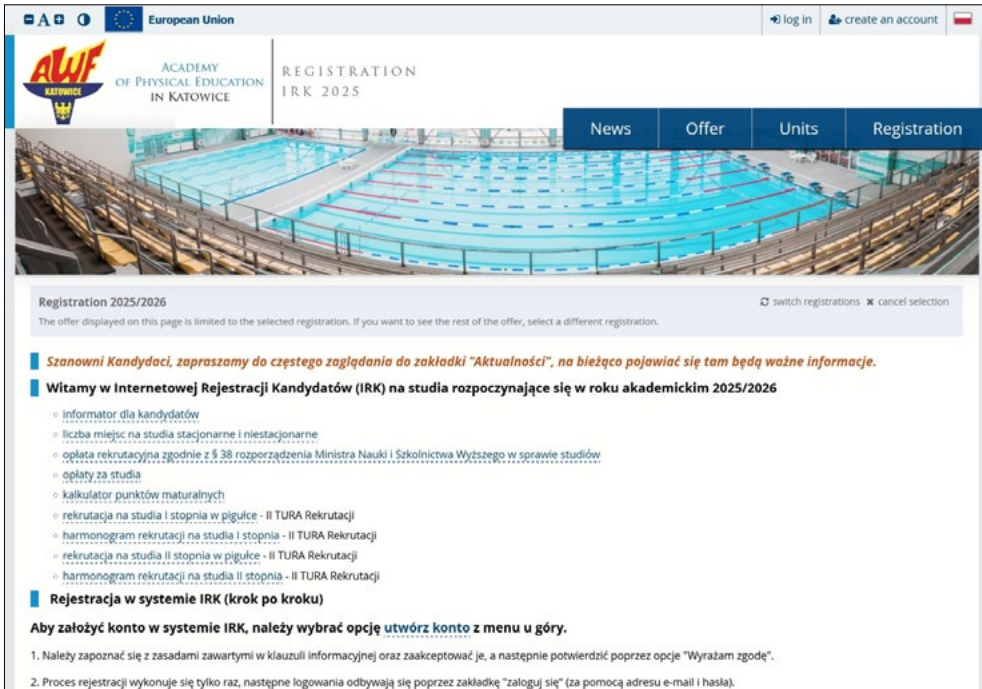


Figure 8. Homepage for first-cycle, second-cycle, and uniform master's studies in AWF

Source: <https://www.rekrutacja.awf.katowice.pl/pl/home/REKRUTACJA-2025>

The context bar, situated below the header, and the graphic banner contain the name of the currently viewed recruitment process and allow the user to change it via navigation buttons placed on the right side of the bar. The function of the “change recruitment process” button is unambiguous, whereas the function of the “cancel selection” button is problematic. Using it results in an empty page with a link to the recruitment process selection, which simply duplicates the first button’s function and adds an additional step. From a usability perspective, it would be beneficial to remove the “cancel selection” button.

The most important element of the context bar is the name of the currently viewed recruitment process. Due to its potential length, placing it in the page title could be problematic. It is, however, relevant information, so decreasing contrast by using a font in shades of grey is difficult to justify. Changing the font to black clearly improves legibility and expressiveness, as illustrated in Figure 9.

The context bar for the chosen recruitment process is displayed not only on the homepage but also on all pages selected from the menu. It has the same form in all the analysed services.

The content published on the homepages of recruitment processes varies significantly between academic institutions. The varied information posted there is often

taken from other services directed to candidates, and it also includes procedures and pointers for creating an account in the IRK system and multimedia content, including instruction videos.



Figure 9. Comparing the contrast of the context bar contents

Source: own elaboration based on: <https://irk.uw.edu.pl/pl/home/PELNE2025>

4.4. Menu items

The key content for individual recruitment processes is available at the menu level, where we find the same elements across all IRKs: News, Offer, Units, and Recruitment.

News takes the form of links to various types of messages related to the recruitment process being viewed. For most HEIs (PK, PŚl, PWr, UEKat, UEKr, UEP, UŁ, UMCS, UW), over the several months of running recruitment processes, such a list gathers no more than ten or twenty positions. It may sporadically reach tens of positions (AWF, UJ and UMK), and sometimes the list is simply empty (UŚ, UKSW). A typical example is displayed in Figure 10.



Figure 10. Example of a news list from the UEKat IRK

Source: https://irk2.ue.katowice.pl/pl/news/25_26_KS/

The Offer menu, alongside Recruitment, is the key element. Upon selection, the website presents an alphabetical list of courses of study offered by the HEI. The list is clear and easy to read. The only problem with the Offer page is that the area occupied by filters is too large. They are expanded by default, which is justified because otherwise they might become invisible to many users. Yet it might be advisable to consider collapsing the filters by default, as they currently visually dominate the content and push the course list out of the main field of vision. This is particularly problematic in the mobile version, where the filter blocks occupy the entire working area of the screen, and the actual course list appears only after scrolling through a large part of the page. Figure 11 is a good illustration of how much the expanded filters cover up content significant for candidates.

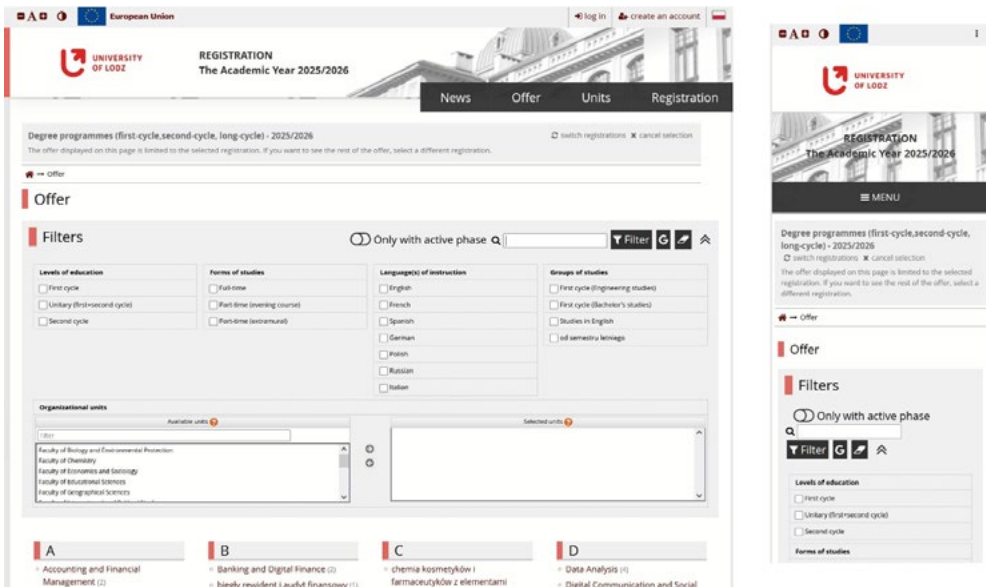


Figure 11. The issue of offer filters dominating the contents, as illustrated by the UŁ IRK

Source: own elaboration based on: <https://rekrutacja.uni.lodz.pl/pl/offer/WYZSZE2025>

The filter issue can be fixed by collapsing them by default or partly reducing their number, which would limit the space they occupy. However, choosing the optimal variant would require running separate research with users.

The third menu item is Units. Given the presence of organisational units in the offer filters, one could question whether it is reasonable to identify them again in a separate module. More so because the number of units, even in big HEIs, is not large, and a study candidate usually views an IRK page to acquaint his- or herself with the current course offer. Since there is an option to filter by units while browsing the offer, one can hardly point to a reason for the user to additionally use

a separate menu serving the same function. This solution is made even less explainable by the fact that the Units module uses the same expanded filters, in which the organisational unit criterion appears once again. The user can thus narrow his results to a chosen faculty, obtaining a list comprised of a single item. Such functional duplication seems unreasonable from the perspective of system usability.



Figure 12. The Units menu on the US IRK webpage.

Source: <https://irk.us.edu.pl/pl/offer/SW-2025-Z/units/>

Considering that all the elements of the menu refer to the selected type or recruitment process, the choice for the name of the last item – Recruitment – is incomprehensible. The candidate may only get an idea of its contents upon clicking. A more adequate name for this menu would be: Recruitment phases or – better yet – Recruitment schedule. A longer name would not be a problem if the Units menu were removed. Interestingly, recruitment phases do appear as the subtitle of this page (see Figure 13).

Analogously to the Offers and Organisational units menus, upon loading the Recruitment page, even on a large monitor, the space is dominated by filters almost to the very bottom of the screen. Figure 13. shows the page content layout when the filters are collapsed. Even more space could be gained if the unnecessary description was removed and Recruitment and Phases of Recruitment were replaced with a single name. If the filters were to remain collapsed by default, it would be advisable to add a more accessible mechanism of expanding them than an icon situated at the edge of the user's field of vision, at the end of the row of filters. The

simplest solution would be to make the Filters label a clickable element, serving as a switch.

First-cycle, second-cycle and long-cycle studies - Recruitment for studies starting in the winter semester 2025/2026 switch registrations cancel selection
 The offer displayed on this page is limited to the selected registration. If you want to see the rest of the offer, select a different registration.

Registration

Description
 Recruitment for studies starting in the winter semester 2025/2026

Registration phases

Filters Only with active phase Filter G 🔍

No.	Offer	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
1	Administration, full-time, first-cycle studies	from: 02.06.2025 12:00 to: 11.07.2025 23:59	from: 28.07.2025 07:00 to: 11.09.2025 23:59			
2	Administration, full-time, second-cycle studies	from: 02.06.2025 12:00 to: 19.07.2025 23:59	from: 30.07.2025 07:00 to: 18.09.2025 23:59	from: 30.09.2025 07:00 to: 07.10.2025 23:59		
3	Administration, part-time, first-cycle studies	from: 02.06.2025 12:00 to: 11.07.2025 23:59	from: 20.07.2025 00:00 to: 11.09.2025 23:59	from: 18.09.2025 07:00 to: 22.09.2025 23:59		
4	Administration, part-time, second-cycle studies	from: 02.06.2025 12:00 to: 18.09.2025 23:59	from: 30.09.2025 07:00 to: 07.10.2025 23:59			
5	Applied Computer Science, full-time, first-cycle studies	from: 02.06.2025 12:00 to: 11.07.2025 23:59	from: 21.07.2025 12:00 to: 27.07.2025 23:59	from: 29.07.2025 07:00 to: 11.09.2025 23:59		
6	Applied Geology, full-time, first-cycle studies	from: 02.06.2025 12:00 to: 11.07.2025 23:59	from: 24.07.2025 12:00 to: 27.07.2025 23:59	from: 31.07.2025 07:00 to: 11.09.2025 23:59	from: 18.09.2025 07:00 to: 22.09.2025 23:59	
7	Applied Linguistics, full-time, first-cycle studies	from: 02.06.2025 12:00 to: 11.07.2025 23:59				
8	Aquamatics - Interdisciplinary Management of Water Environments, full-time, second-cycle studies	from: 02.06.2025 12:00 to: 18.09.2025 23:59	from: 22.09.2025 07:00 to: 07.10.2025 23:59			

Figure 13. Recruitment menu on the UŚ IRK webpage.

Source: <https://irk.us.edu.pl/pl/offer/SW-2025-Z/registration/>

5. Summary

Conducting a comparative analysis of Internet Recruitment of Candidates (IRK) systems has enabled the identification of several best practices across the linguistic, visual, and structural layers of IRK services. The most notable ones include customizing browser tabs (favicon, title), information minimalism in the header and using a greeting in a neutral, friendly tone. It is also beneficial to shift away from template icons in favour of simple, individualized graphic solutions, which support user orientation and boost HEI identification.

With regard to recruitment pages, several improvements are recommended: eliminating elaborate banners, simplifying the context bar, and providing a clearer indication of the current status of the recruitment process. Introducing mechanisms to organise the News section, making the filters in the Offer module less dominant, and avoiding repetition of functionalities in the Units module are also

recommended. In the Recruitment module, it would be beneficial to maintain a clear structure and consistent naming across other parts of the service.

These results partly confirm observations familiar from previous studies on recruitment webpages and application forms – regarding both linguistic issues and excessive structure complexity (Huang & Bilal, 2019; Stark, 2017). Unlike those papers, this analysis focuses on the IRK module, embedded in the USOS ecosystem, which enables the formulation of recommendations tailored to the specific needs of Polish academic institutions. An analysis of best practices in this particular context provides a better understanding of the design and organizational conditions.

The recommendations formulated here are practical implications and can be used both by MUCI in the further development of IRK software and by individual HEIs to improve their own implementations. User-based research should be the next step, which would make it possible to verify the postulated solutions empirically and indicate the optimal directions for further development.

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