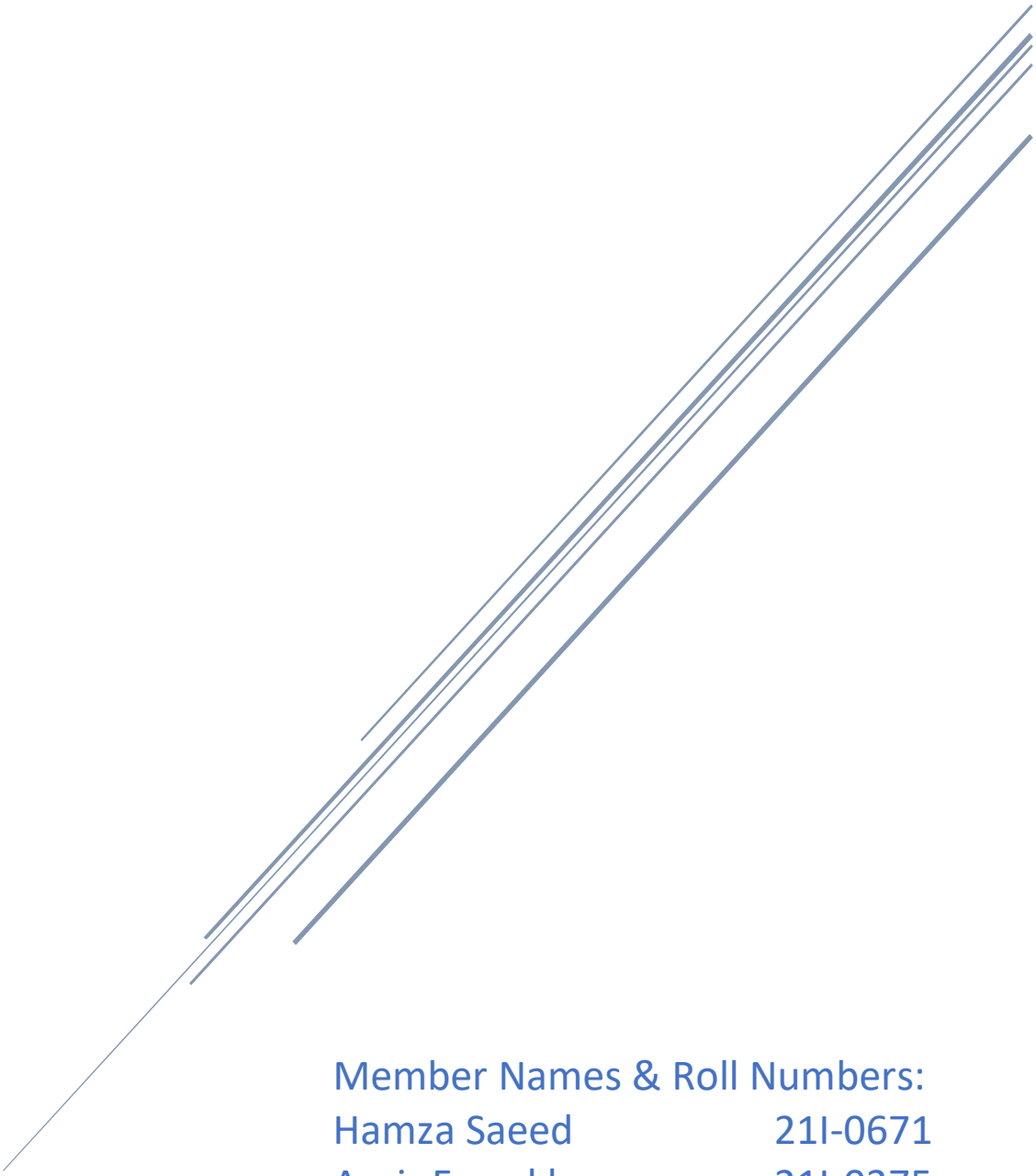
UXE SPRING 2025 - MILESTONE 4

Team No: BO2

Team Name: TFC



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ZenQuest (Interactive Stress-Reduction Game)

Section 1: User Stories and User Journey Map

Our team deliberated extensively on how to translate our research findings into meaningful user stories. After reviewing our interviews and personas from previous milestones, we identified patterns in user needs that formed the foundation for these stories.

User Stories

Based on our personas from Milestone 3, we've developed the following user stories that capture the core needs we identified:

Persona 1: CS Student:

"As a stressed computer science student, I want quick mental refresh activities during coding sessions so that I can clear my head when facing frustrating debugging problems."

"As a student who finds traditional mindfulness boring, I want gamified stress-reduction techniques so that I can maintain consistent practice without feeling like it's another assignment."

"As a tech-savvy individual, I want to track my stress management progress with measurable metrics so that I can see the effectiveness of my practice over time."

Persona 2: CS Student/TA:

"As a teaching assistant with a packed schedule, I want bite-sized stress-relief activities that fit between classes and office hours so that I can maintain my mental well-being despite time constraints."

"As someone who enjoys strategy games, I want mindfulness exercises that engage my analytical mind so that relaxation feels stimulating rather than passive."

"As a helper by nature, I want reminders to prioritize my own mental health so that I can establish better boundaries while supporting others."

Persona 3: Business Student:

"As a student who gives frequent presentations, I want quick confidence-boosting exercises so that I can reduce anxiety in the minutes before speaking publicly."

"As a performance-oriented individual, I want to see clear progress metrics for my stress management practice so that I can approach mindfulness like other measurable goals."

"As a business student with professional ambitions, I want discreet stress management techniques so that I can practice in various settings without drawing attention."

User Journey Maps

We found the journey mapping process particularly insightful for understanding the critical moments where our solution could have the most impact. The team spent considerable time debating which scenarios would be most representative of our users' experiences.

User Journey Map 1: CS Student - Debugging Stress Relief

Goal: Find immediate relief during a frustrating debugging session

Stage	Actions	Thoughts	Feelings	Pain Points	Opportunities
Trigger	Code keeps failing after multiple attempts	"I'm going to miss this deadline"	Frustrated, anxious	Rising stress makes problem-solving harder	Moment of high need for intervention
Opening App	Opens ZenQuest	"I only have a few minutes to spare"	Impatient, desperate	Needs something that works fast	Quick-access emergency relief feature
Selecting Activity	Chooses "Code Block Breaker" mini-game	"Maybe this will help me reset"	Curious, slightly skeptical	Concerned about wasting time	Activity explicitly designed for coding stress
Engaging	Plays 2-minute focus game with breathing element	"This is actually helping me calm down"	Gradually relaxing	Distracted by pending work	Visual feedback showing stress reduction
Completion	Finishes activity, sees progress tracked	"That was actually worthwhile"	Refreshed, clearer mindset	Needs to get back to work quickly	Quick summary of benefits gained
Return to Work	Resumes debugging with fresh perspective	"I can approach this differently now"	More confident, less frustrated	Wondering how long effect will last	Subtle tips for maintaining calm while coding

In creating this journey map, we were particularly interested in the transition moments—how a student moves from frustration to engagement with our app, and then back to work. We wanted to capture the challenge of convincing a stressed user that taking even two minutes for stress management is worthwhile.

User Journey Map 2: Business Student - Pre-Presentation Confidence

Goal: Reduce anxiety before an important class presentation

Stage	Actions	Thoughts	Feelings	Pain Points	Opportunities
Trigger	Professor announces presentations starting in 5 minutes	"I need to calm my nerves fast"	Anxious, heart racing	Limited time, public setting	Moment of acute stress requiring intervention
Opening App	Discretely opens ZenQuest	"I need something that won't look obvious"	Self-conscious, nervous	Can't do obvious relaxation techniques	Discreet mode for public settings
Selecting Activity	Chooses "Confidence Booster" quick exercise	"Will this actually help in time?"	Doubtful, desperate	Needs immediate results	Activity designed specifically for performance anxiety
Engaging	Follows 60-second guided breathing with affirmations	"I can feel my heart rate slowing"	Gradually calming	Difficult to focus while anxious	Simple, impossible-to-fail interface
Completion	Completes activity, sees "presentation ready" badge	"I actually feel more prepared"	More centered, slightly confident	Still some residual anxiety	Achievement unlocked for facing fears
Performance	Delivers presentation with greater composure	"That actually helped my delivery"	Proud, relieved	Wondering if improvement is measurable	Option to log performance satisfaction afterward

After mapping these journeys, our team gained deeper insights into the critical moments where ZenQuest needs to excel. The pre-presentation scenario was especially important for us to understand since the time constraints are particularly severe and the stakes feel high to users.

Section 2: Problem Statement, Hypothesis & Value Proposition

This section took our team considerable effort to refine. We went through multiple drafts trying to distill our research findings into clear, actionable statements that would guide our design decisions.

Problem Statement

College students experience significant stress during academic activities such as debugging code, managing multiple responsibilities, and delivering presentations. While traditional mindfulness and meditation apps exist, approximately 40% of users abandon these solutions within two weeks, citing "monotony" and "lack of engagement" as primary reasons.

The main problem is that existing stress management solutions fail to engage students because they:

1. Feel like additional assignments rather than breaks
2. Lack immediate application to specific academic stressors
3. Don't provide the engaging elements that motivate consistent use
4. Require too much time during high-stress periods
5. Fail to demonstrate measurable progress that appeals to achievement-oriented students

As a result, students resort to ineffective coping mechanisms or simply endure their stress, negatively impacting their academic performance and mental wellbeing.

Hypothesis Statement

After analyzing our research findings, we developed this hypothesis:

We believe that an interactive stress-reduction game with quick, customizable activities, progress tracking, and immediate application for specific academic stressors will lead to higher engagement and consistent usage among college students compared to traditional mindfulness apps.

By providing an engaging, game-based approach to stress management that offers quick relief (1-3 minutes), context-specific solutions, and measurable progress, we expect to see:

- At least 60% retention after two weeks (compared to industry standard 40%)
- Users reporting at least 30% improvement in ability to manage academic stressors
- Increased frequency of stress management practice during high-pressure periods

We debated these metrics extensively, trying to establish ambitious yet achievable targets based on our competitive analysis and user research.

Value Proposition

ZenQuest transforms stress management from a chore to an engaging experience for busy college students.

Features:

- Ultra-short (1-3 minute) stress-relief mini-games tailored to specific academic contexts
- Engaging game mechanics that make mindfulness practice feel rewarding

- Comprehensive progress tracking with immediate feedback and long-term trends
- Context-aware design with discreet modes for classroom settings
- Customizable quick-access tools for different stress triggers (coding frustration, presentation anxiety, etc.)

Benefits:

- Immediate stress relief during high-pressure academic moments
- Increased focus and problem-solving ability through strategic mental breaks
- Consistent practice through engaging gameplay rather than passive exercises
- Measurable progress that appeals to achievement-oriented students
- Improved academic performance through better stress management

User Value Connection: ZenQuest directly addresses the core needs identified in our research: it provides the quick relief students need during critical stress moments, eliminates the "additional assignment" feeling of traditional mindfulness apps, delivers clear progress tracking to maintain motivation, and offers flexible options that integrate seamlessly into varied academic schedules and environments.

Section 3: Competitive Analysis/Competitive Audit Report

For our competitive analysis, we prioritized apps that our interview participants mentioned using, plus those that appeared frequently in app store searches for "stress management" and "mindfulness games." We spent about a week exploring these apps firsthand, with each team member focusing on different competitors.

Competitive Analysis Matrix

Feature/ Aspect	ZenQuest	Calm	Headspace	Journey (Game)	Moodfit	Sanvello	Lumosity	Habitica
Primary Focus	Gamified stress management for students	General meditation and sleep	Guided meditation	Meditative gameplay experience	Mental health tracking	Anxiety and depression tools	Brain training games	Habit-building RPG
Target Users	College students	General audience	General audience	Casual gamers	Mental health conscious	People with anxiety/depression	Cognitive improvement seekers	Productivity focused
Session Length	1-3 min options	5-20 min typically	3-20 min typically	Unstructured gameplay	Variable	5-15 min typically	5 min games	Varies by task
Game Elements	Core feature	Minimal	Minimal	Core feature	None	Minimal	Core feature	Core feature
Progress Tracking	Comprehensive	Basic	Basic	Minimal	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
Context-Specific Tools	Yes (academic)	Limited	Limited	No	No	Yes (general)	No	No
Stress Emergency Tools	Yes	Limited	Limited	No	No	Yes	No	No
Cost Model	Freemium	Subscription	Subscription	One-time purchase	Freemium	Freemium	Subscription	Free with IAP
Platform	Mobile	Mobile/Web	Mobile/Web	Console/Mobile	Mobile	Mobile	Mobile/Web	Mobile/Web

We found Calm and Headspace particularly interesting to analyze since they're the current market leaders, but their lengthy session formats and limited gamification felt misaligned with our target users' needs. Journey and Flower offered beautiful immersive experiences but lacked explicit stress management techniques. Sanvello came closest to addressing acute stress but its clinical approach felt too serious for our users.

Competitive Analysis Insights

What Competitors Do Well

Calm & Headspace:

- High-quality, professionally guided meditation content
- Polished, aesthetically pleasing interfaces
- Broad range of mindfulness topics and techniques
- Established brand recognition and credibility

Journey & Flower (Games):

- Create genuinely immersive, relaxing experiences
- Beautiful visual and audio design
- Successfully blend gameplay with meditative states
- Avoid feeling like "work" or "practice"

Moodfit & Sanvello:

- Comprehensive tracking and analytics
- Evidence-based mental health approaches
- Integration with other health metrics
- Educational content about mental health

Lumosity & Habitica:

- Strong gamification elements that drive engagement
- Clear progress metrics and achievement systems
- Social and competitive elements
- Regular content updates to maintain interest

Where Competitors Fall Short

Meditation Apps (Calm, Headspace):

- Sessions too long for "emergency" stress situations (our users described needing 1-2 minute options)
- Lack academic context-specific solutions (nothing for coding frustration or presentation anxiety)

- Limited gamification feels superficial rather than genuinely engaging
- Subscription costs create barrier for budget-conscious students
- Abandonment due to feeling like "another assignment" (mentioned by all three of our interview participants)

Meditative Games (Journey, Flower):

- Don't explicitly teach stress management techniques
- No measurement of effectiveness or progress toward stress reduction
- Not designed for quick, targeted relief (require sustained play sessions)
- Can't be used discreetly in classroom settings

Mental Health Apps (Moodfit, Sanvello):

- Clinical approach feels too serious and medical rather than enjoyable
- Focus on tracking without providing engaging stress-relief activities
- Limited context-specific tools for academic stressors
- More focused on long-term management than immediate relief

Brain Training/Habit Apps (Lumosity, Habitica):

- Not focused on stress management specifically
- Gamification not tied to mindfulness techniques
- Can become additional sources of performance pressure
- Don't address immediate stress relief needs

We found this analysis particularly enlightening for understanding the opportunity space for ZenQuest. The market clearly has solutions for general mindfulness and for gaming, but the intersection—where stress relief meets genuine engagement—remains largely unexplored.

Market Gaps ZenQuest Addresses

Through our analysis, we identified five key market gaps that present opportunities for ZenQuest:

1. **Ultra-Short Format Gap:** None of the current solutions offers truly effective 1-3 minute interventions designed specifically for high-stress academic moments. This was our most significant finding and represents our primary competitive advantage.
2. **Context-Specificity Gap:** Existing apps lack tailored approaches for academic-specific stressors (debugging frustration, presentation anxiety, study overload). This creates an opportunity for ZenQuest to offer targeted solutions that feel immediately relevant.
3. **Engagement-Effectiveness Balance:** Competitors either focus on engagement (games) OR effectiveness (meditation apps), but not both simultaneously. Our interviews revealed students want both.

4. **Progress Metrics for Achievement-Oriented Users:** Current solutions don't provide the data-driven feedback that motivates students accustomed to performance metrics. This was particularly important to our Business student participant.
5. **Integration Gap:** No solution seamlessly fits into the fractured, irregular schedule of college students with appropriate activities for different time availabilities.

Competitive Positioning Statement

Unlike traditional meditation apps that require lengthy sessions or casual games that don't teach stress management techniques, ZenQuest provides college students with quick, engaging, and effective stress-relief activities specifically designed for academic contexts. By combining proven mindfulness techniques with genuine game mechanics and comprehensive progress tracking, ZenQuest transforms stress management from a chore into an engaging experience that fits seamlessly into busy student schedules.

Section 4: Design Sprint Artifacts

Our design sprint was the most energizing part of this milestone. We scheduled a full Saturday for the sprint, working from our university's design lab. We began with a review of our research findings to ensure our ideation was grounded in user needs.

Sketch Phase

HMW Questions Generated

We spent about 30 minutes generating How Might We questions. The most thought-provoking ones included:

- How might we make stress management activities so quick that students use them even during deadline crunches?
- How might we create mindfulness exercises that appeal to analytical-minded tech students?
- How might we design stress relief activities that can be used discreetly in public spaces like libraries and classrooms?
- How might we demonstrate the effectiveness of mindfulness practice to metrics-driven students?
- How might we create stress management tools specifically for debugging frustration?
- How might we design pre-presentation confidence boosters that work in under 60 seconds?
- How might we gamify breathing exercises without making them feel childish?
- How might we help students develop consistent practice without feeling pressured?
- How might we create a stress management system that feels like a break rather than work?
- How might we design activities that match different available time windows (1, 3, or 5 minutes)?

The team voted on these, and we chose to focus primarily on the questions related to speed, context-specificity, and engagement, as they aligned most closely with our research findings.

Crazy 8's Results

Team member sketches explored various concepts including:

Aasir's Sketches:

1. "Debug Breather" - A puzzle game that incorporates breathing exercises while untangling code-like visual elements
2. "Stress Metrics Dashboard" - Visualization of stress reduction progress with achievement unlocks
3. "Quick Relief Selector" - UI for rapidly accessing context-specific stress relief based on current activity
4. "Focus Flow" - Mini-game where calm breathing controls game character movement through obstacles
5. "Zen Garden Code Editor" - Visual representation of code as plants that grow with breathing exercises
6. "Classroom Stealth Mode" - Discreet interface that resembles note-taking app
7. "Achievement Tree" - Visual growth representing mindfulness progress
8. "Emergency Calm Button" - One-touch activation for immediate guided relief

Hamza's Sketches:

1. "Time Match" - Activity selector based on available time (1-5 minutes)
2. "Breathing Bubble" - Interactive bubble that expands/contracts with breath
3. "Stress Type Selector" - UI for choosing specific academic stressor to address
4. "Progress Galaxy" - Star-based visualization of practice consistency
5. "Mindful Coding Companion" - Sidebar tool that detects frustration and suggests breaks
6. "Quick-Switch Activities" - Swipe interface for rapidly changing techniques
7. "Challenge Calendar" - Daily mindfulness challenges with streak rewards
8. "Context Detector" - System that suggests appropriate exercises based on location/time

Qazi's Sketches:

1. "Presentation Power-Up" - Confidence building mini-game for pre-presentation anxiety
2. "Metrics Dashboard" - Business-style analytics for mindfulness practice
3. "Five Senses Quickcheck" - Grounding exercise disguised as a game
4. "Stress Ball Simulator" - Interactive stress ball with haptic feedback
5. "Breathing Pacer" - Visual pattern matching game tied to breath control
6. "Achievement Unlocked" - Business-themed rewards system
7. "Discrete Mode Toggle" - One-touch switch to classroom-appropriate interface

8. "Quick Session Timer" - Customizable countdown for timeboxed relief

Crazy 8's Sharing & Voting Results

After creating our individual sketches, we shared them with the group and conducted a dot voting session. Each team member received five votes to distribute. The results were interesting and showed some clear patterns in our thinking:

Top voted concepts from each category:

- Quick Relief: "Emergency Calm Button" (6 votes)
- Tracking & Metrics: "Stress Metrics Dashboard" (5 votes)
- Game Mechanics: "Breathing Bubble" (6 votes)
- Context-Aware: "Stress Type Selector" (7 votes)
- Discretion: "Classroom Stealth Mode" (5 votes)

We noticed that solutions offering immediate relief and context-specific help received the most votes, reinforcing our research findings about the importance of speed and relevance to our users.

Solution Sketching

After the Crazy 8's voting, we each took some time to develop more comprehensive solution sketches based on the top-voted concepts. We spent about 45 minutes on this phase, really fleshing out the ideas into more complete concepts.

Solution 1: "ZenQuest Emergency Toolkit" (Aasir)

A comprehensive solution focused on providing immediate relief for specific academic stressors:

1. Home screen with large "Emergency Relief" button prominently displayed
2. Upon pressing, quick selection of stressor type (Coding Frustration, Presentation Anxiety, Study Overload, etc.)
3. Immediate launch of 60-second targeted activity combining breathing exercises with simple interactive elements
4. Discreet mode toggle for classroom settings that resembles note-taking app
5. Post-activity effectiveness rating and brief satisfaction check
6. Tracking dashboard showing frequency of use and effectiveness by stressor type
7. Achievement system rewarding consistent practice during high-stress periods

Aasir's solution emphasized speed and context-specificity, addressing the most urgent needs revealed in our user research.

Solution 2: "MindfulMetrics" (Hamza)

A data-driven approach focusing on engagement through progress visualization:

1. Main interface resembling a strategy game dashboard with stress level indicator
2. Activity recommendations based on current stress level and available time

3. Mini-games incorporating breathing and focus exercises with variable durations (1-5 minutes)
4. Comprehensive tracking system showing improvements in response time, focus duration, and subjective stress levels
5. Achievement tree that visually grows with consistent practice
6. Social comparison options (anonymized) for competitive students
7. Integration with academic schedule to suggest optimal practice times

Hamza's solution put more emphasis on the tracking and metrics aspect, which was particularly important to our Persona 3 (Business Student). We had some debate about whether the social comparison feature would add stress rather than reduce it.

Solution 3: "Context-Aware Calm" (Qazi)

A solution emphasizing adaptability to different academic environments:

1. Location-aware interface that changes based on detected environment (library, classroom, dorm)
2. Quick-access activities optimized for each context (visual for private spaces, audio-only for public)
3. Presentation-specific toolkit with 30-second confidence boosters
4. Coding companion with debugging-break reminders and frustration-relief exercises
5. Study session integration with focus timers and short mindfulness breaks
6. Professional interface design with business metrics appealing to achievement-oriented students
7. Calendar integration for scheduling brief sessions between classes

Qazi's solution stood out for its emphasis on adapting to different environments, which addressed a need we hadn't fully articulated in our initial requirements.

Decide Phase

The decision phase sparked the most debate among our team. We wanted to ensure we stayed true to our research findings while embracing the most promising design directions.

Decision Criteria Established

After presenting our solution sketches, we collaboratively developed criteria for evaluation. This led to some valuable discussion about our priorities. We settled on these criteria:

1. **Speed of Relief** (1-5): How quickly can the solution provide stress relief in emergency situations?
2. **Engagement Factor** (1-5): How likely are students to find the solution engaging and not abandon it?
3. **Context Adaptability** (1-5): How well does the solution adapt to different academic contexts?

4. **Discretion Level** (1-5): How easily can the solution be used in public settings without drawing attention?
5. **Data Satisfaction** (1-5): How well does the solution satisfy students' desire for progress metrics?
6. **Technical Feasibility** (1-5): How realistic is implementation given our constraints?
7. **Uniqueness** (1-5): How differentiated is this from existing solutions?

We debated whether "technical feasibility" should be weighted more heavily, but ultimately decided that all criteria deserved equal weight at this stage. We could address technical challenges during implementation planning.

Decision Matrix Results

Using our established criteria, we evaluated each solution. We filled out our assessments individually, then averaged the scores:

Solution	Speed of Relief	Engagement	Context Adaptability	Discretion	Data Satisfaction	Feasibility	Uniqueness	TOTAL
ZenQuest Emergency Toolkit	5	4	5	3	4	3	5	**29**
Mindful Metrics	3	5	3	4	5	4	3	**27**
Context-Aware Calm	4	3	5	5	3	2	4	**26**

The Emergency Toolkit scored highest overall, particularly in the crucial areas of speed and context adaptability. However, we noted that the Context-Aware Calm solution had superior discretion features, and MindfulMetrics excelled in data satisfaction.

Final Direction Selection

After evaluating the solutions through our decision matrix, we still had a spirited debate about which direction to pursue. While the "ZenQuest Emergency Toolkit" scored highest overall, we recognized valuable elements in all three approaches.

After voting and discussion, we decided to move forward with a hybrid solution that combines the strengths of "ZenQuest Emergency Toolkit" and elements from the other solutions. The core concept will focus on:

1. Emergency relief tools optimized for specific academic stressors (from Solution 1)
2. Strong metrics and progress visualization to maintain engagement (from Solution 2)
3. Discreet modes for different contexts (from Solution 3)

We felt this hybrid approach better addressed the diverse needs we uncovered in our research. Qazi initially advocated strongly for the context-aware solution, but ultimately agreed that the emergency toolkit with added features would better serve our primary user needs.

The hybrid solution addresses all key user needs identified in our research while remaining technically feasible. The team will prioritize development of the emergency toolkit features first, then add the metrics dashboard and context-aware features in subsequent iterations.

Team Division of Labor for the Design Sprint

- **Aasir Farrukh:**
    - Led the HMW question generation
    - Facilitated the Crazy 8's session timing and guidelines
    - Created the "ZenQuest Emergency Toolkit" solution sketch
    - Compiled final decision documentation
- **Hamza Saeed:**
    - Created the decision criteria framework after researching evaluation methods
    - Developed the "MindfulMetrics" solution sketch
    - Prepared the decision matrix template
    - Documented the voting results and feedback
- **Qazi Mohib-Un-Nabi:**
    - Organized the solution sketching session
    - Created the "Context-Aware Calm" solution sketch
    - Led the dot voting process
    - Synthesized the hybrid solution approach

The team worked collaboratively throughout the design sprint process, with each member contributing actively to all phases while taking lead responsibilities as noted above. The final hybrid solution represents a true team effort, incorporating the strongest ideas from all three members.

Next Steps

Based on the results of our design sprint, our next steps will be to:

1. Create low-fidelity prototypes of the key interfaces for the hybrid solution
2. Develop a testing plan to validate our concepts with users
3. Prioritize features for an MVP that focuses on the emergency toolkit
4. Begin development of high-fidelity mockups for core features
5. Plan user testing sessions to refine the concept further

We're particularly excited about testing the emergency toolkit features with real students during high-stress academic periods to validate our approach.

A Note on Team Dynamics

For Milestone 4, the work was divided as follows:

- **Aasir Farrukh:** Led the user stories development, contributed to problem statement and hypothesis development, and managed the design sprint ideation phase (generating HMWs and facilitating Crazy 8's). Aasir also handled final document compilation and formatting.
- **Hamza Saeed:** Created the user journey maps, developed the competitive analysis matrix, and led the decision phase of the design sprint including criteria development and decision matrix creation. Hamza also conducted additional competitive research.
- **Qazi Mohib-Un-Nabi:** Refined the value proposition, researched competitors for the competitive audit, and synthesized the design sprint results into actionable next steps. Qazi also contributed significantly to the problem statement refinement.

The team collaborated through regular online meetings and used collaborative tools to ensure consistent communication and integration of ideas. Each member reviewed all sections to ensure quality and consistency throughout the document.

This milestone really helped solidify our vision for ZenQuest and has us excited about the prototyping phase ahead. The design sprint process in particular helped us move from abstract concepts to concrete solutions that directly address the needs we uncovered in our research.

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