

DESIGN GOALS AND FOCUS GROUP

Team #17

FOCUS GROUPS OVERVIEW

Goal: The primary goal of our focus group sessions was to gather insights and feedback from potential users about the design, functionality, and usability of "Academia," a comprehensive platform for academic collaboration and learning. We aimed to understand the needs, preferences, and challenges faced by students and educators in academic settings.

For our "Academia" platform focus group, we specifically looked at features like chat, sharing notes, subject details, and study groups. We chose these because they help make learning more interactive and community-oriented. These features are about making it easier for students to work together, help each other, and get more out of their study time.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

We recruited our friends for the focus groups. We targeted a diverse group of students from various majors to ensure a wide range of perspectives. The group included students from different majors like Project Management, Sustainable Building Systems, Computer Science, etc. We also made it clear that all feedback, positive or negative, was valuable and encouraged honest opinions during the discussions. When different views came up, we facilitated the conversation by asking participants to elaborate on their perspectives, which often led to deeper insights.

Sessions, Moderators, and Participants: We conducted two focus group sessions, each lasting approximately 30 minutes. In total, 7 participants were involved, with 4 in one session and 3 in the other. In the first session, Mansi was the facilitator and Sabita was the note-taker, while Manasa and Anish were observers. The second session was facilitated by Manasa while Anish was taking notes. Sabita and Mansi were observers. Both sessions were composed of graduate students. The facilitator was tasked with asking the questions and prompting

participants to answer and clarify. The note-taker was tasked with quickly jotting down important points each participant had. The observers were tasked with monitoring group dynamics and observing other inferences.

CONDUCTING THE SESSION

The focus group sessions were conducted both in-person and via Zoom, depending on participants' preferences and availability. Each session began with an introductory script explaining the purpose of the project and what we hoped to achieve with their input. We emphasized the importance of honest and constructive feedback. The main questions revolved around their current academic workflows, communication tools, study habits, and their experiences with existing learning platforms.

Questions:

1. How do you communicate with your classmates?
 - a. How do you share documents with each other?
2. How do you prefer to take notes on Devices?
 - a. If your notes were to be generated by AI, what information do you want it to highlight?
3. Which apps do you think are good for Studying?
 - a. How do you schedule your study time throughout the week?
4. How often do you take quizzes?
5. Do you think quizzes are an effective way to test your knowledge?
6. How often do you participate in study groups?
 - a. How would you like the study group to be conducted?
7. How do you currently organize your study schedule and academic responsibilities?
8. How often do you find yourself needing to study or work on assignments without having a clear plan or schedule in place?
9. When preparing for a new semester or academic period, what is your typical planning order (organizing notes, scheduling study times, prioritizing assignments, etc.)?
10. How much would you trust a study plan or academic organization recommendations generated by AI?
11. Is there anything specific you wish you could have easily accessible in an app for organizing your studies?

RESULTS

Following are the combined brief answers for each question asked:

1. They communicate with each other via Whatsapp, Voice call, i-message
 - a. They share documents via mail(Gmail,outlook), Teams, Whatsapp
2. Take notes on pen and paper, iPad, Google Docs
 - a. Notes generated by AI should cover the important topics and provide vast information in brief.
3. They believe apps like Quizlet, Youtube Channels, Online Course platforms like Khan academy and Coursera are good platforms for studying
 - a. Schedule time depending on the workload that day. Or use google calendar
4. They usually take quizzes which are conducted as a part of our course, or before revising for exams
5. Yes, quizzes are an effective way to test your knowledge
6. There is a group of people who prefer to study on their own. The students who engage in Study groups meet up when they have to work on exams or prepare for their exams
 - a. They would like them to be conducted once a week or at least once a month.
7. Use digital calendars, or don't have a clear schedule and study based on availability of time
8. Quite often
9. Organize notes and prioritize the assignments and exam preparation
10. Don't trust AI notes. Unsure if it will be able to capture the important information
11. A proper set of notes would be helpful. Other people's thoughts are what they feel is important. Easy access to study groups

DESIGN GOALS

Based on the questions asked from the focus group, the design goals for the "Academia" platform can be structured around enhancing communication, collaboration, and personalized learning experiences. Here's a breakdown:

- **Seamless Communication and Document Sharing:-** we can develop a feature that allows easy communication among classmates and facilitates document sharing within the platform.
- **Advanced Note-Taking with AI Integration:-** we will implement AI-driven note-taking that can highlight key information, concepts, and summaries based on user preferences.
- **Comprehensive Study App Integration:-** we can create a platform that serves as a central hub for studying, incorporating features from top educational apps, and allowing users to schedule their study time effectively.
- **Interactive Quiz Module:-** We will introduce regular quizzes as a tool for self-assessment, making them an integral part of the learning process.
- **Enhanced Study Group Functionality:-** We can offer a feature to organize and participate in study groups with options for different conduct modes, tailored to user preferences for collaborative study.
- **Personalized Academic Organization:-** We can develop tools for users to organize their study schedules, academic responsibilities, and assignments efficiently, with AI recommendations for optimization.
- **Adaptive Study Plan Creation:-** We can enable the creation of flexible study plans and academic organization strategies, incorporating AI to adapt plans based on user progress and feedback.
- **On-Demand Study Resources:-** We can provide easily accessible, on-demand resources and tools within the app to support users' study needs and academic organization.

DISCUSSION

1. How do the design goals appeal to the intended users? What do your focus group participants like or not like about the concept?

Our design goals are closely aligned with what our focus group participants highlighted they need and value in their academic lives. They were especially fond of features that allow them to connect and collaborate with peers, like chat functions and study groups, seeing these as vital for a more interactive and supportive learning environment. There was also a strong

interest in tools that help manage and organize study schedules and academic tasks, reflecting a widespread desire for better study efficiency. However, some participants expressed concerns about potential difficulties in navigating a platform with many features, emphasizing the importance of a simple and intuitive design. This feedback underscores the importance of balancing rich functionality with ease of use to meet user expectations effectively.

2. Do the design goals connect with something users do already (either with or without technology)? Is this a reasonably small step from what they do or know already?

Our design goals indeed resonate with the existing habits and practices of our users, both in technological and non-technological contexts. Many participants already engage in group study sessions, use various apps for note-taking and scheduling, and rely on digital platforms for document sharing and communication with peers. Introducing features that digitize and enhance these existing behaviors seems like a natural progression rather than a radical shift. This approach ensures that the platform feels familiar and intuitive to users, making adoption and integration into their daily routines smoother and more effective.

3. Did the focus groups shed light on anything you would not have thought of otherwise? Did the participants say anything surprising?

During the focus group sessions, the feedback on personalized learning paths and AI-generated study plans revealed a significant interest in customization and adaptive learning technologies, highlighting a gap in current educational tools that our platform could fill.

4. Did you need to revise or deviate from the focus group plan you wrote? How and why?

Yes, we had to adjust our focus group plan based on the feedback and interactions during the sessions. Initially, we planned to follow a strict structure of questions and activities, but we found that allowing for more open-ended discussion led to richer insights. Participants brought up topics and concerns we hadn't considered, prompting us to explore areas outside our original agenda. This flexibility helped us uncover deeper understandings of user needs and preferences, guiding us to refine our approach and design goals more effectively.

5. Did you refine or revise the design goals to better match the focus group participants? How did you revise them, and why?

Based on the feedback from our focus group participants, we refined and revised our design goals to better align with their needs and preferences. For instance, the strong interest in subject-specific forums and personalized learning paths highlighted a demand for more tailored and community-driven features. Consequently, we adjusted our goals to emphasize the development of customizable learning environments and interactive discussion platforms. This revision was driven by the realization that users sought a more engaging and individualized approach to their educational tools, prompting us to prioritize flexibility and personalization in our design strategy.

6. Were there any design goals that did not need to be revised or refined? How do you know? Provide specific evidence from the focus groups to justify why the design goals are valid.

Some design goals remained unchanged because the feedback from focus groups strongly supported their initial inclusion. For example, the emphasis on ease of use and intuitive design was universally appreciated, with many participants highlighting how straightforward navigation could significantly enhance their learning experience. This consensus validated our goal to maintain a simple and user-friendly interface, proving its importance regardless of any additional features we plan to introduce. The positive response to these aspects in our discussions served as clear evidence that these foundational design goals were already aligned with user expectations and needs.