

AbaBreak

Light breaks, strong connections - at UQ Central Library

Problem Space

Many **university students** at **UQ** spend long hours studying at the Central Library, often in *isolation* and with *minimal social interaction*. Extended study without meaningful breaks can lead to reduced focus, increased fatigue, and lower sense of belonging. More **frequent social activities** could however *reduce loneliness* and *promote wellbeing* in students.

Design Opportunity

We identified an opportunity to **support** students by facilitating **meaningful short breaks**, rather than passive rest, while they study in the library. Breaks that include light **physical activity**, mindful **recharge**, or casual **social interaction** can help students **reset** mentally and physically, and strengthen students' sense of **belonging**.

Audience



UQ student

Extended study sessions at the Central Library

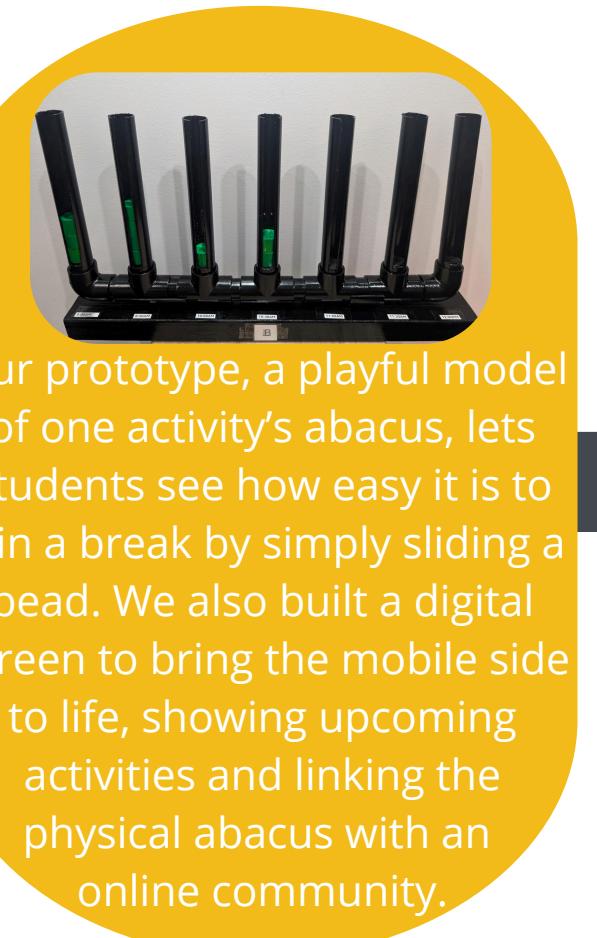


Seeking ways to **maintain focus**, **avoid burnout**, feel **socially connected**, and make their study environment more **dynamic**.

Our Concept

AbaBreak

Installation of **physical abacuses** in the **Central Library** for various **activities**, each with columns for 30-minute blocks. Students move **beads** to confirm attendance. This **visual and physical representation** encourages social visibility, light commitment, peer-presence and a sense of **studying with breaks together**.



Design Process



Began exploring student well-being and observing study habits at UQ Central Library

Identified isolation and lack of meaningful breaks

Through interviews and surveys, we gathered insights on how students prefer to rest and connect



Our findings shaped early prototypes focused on social micro-breaks

From student feedback our early prototypes evolved into **AbaBreak**

Students feedback guided refinements, ensuring the final design resonates with real needs and behaviours

Students wanted to pick their own break times, so we gave each activity its own abacus - easy, fun, and flexible!

Research Justification

Students with a strong sense of belonging show significantly higher well-being and academic outcomes

Low belonging and high loneliness are linked to greater psychological distress among university students.

Meaningful group activities that build friendships are more beneficial than individual support.

Impacts and Benefits

Improve mental refreshment and focus

Increased social connection



Stronger sense of belonging at UQ

Ethical Considerations

Inclusivity & Accessibility: Usable by all students regardless of physical ability, social comfort, or cultural background

Ethical Considerations

Social Media Transparency: Content shared on Instagram (@uqababreak) should always obtain participants' consent and portray activities respectfully

Socials

For marketing, community and scalability

#JoinTheBreak

