

ePlanner

Current Usability and Future Improvements

We are developing a student-centred planner app called ePlanner. Its purpose is to provide an environment through which students can easily access their timetable, group meetings, tasks and deadlines. In this report we will discuss the current functionality of the app, the improvements that we will make over the coming semester and a schedule for implementing these improvements.

The current app has 4 tabs that display the student's calendar, deadlines, group meetings and tasks. The calendar displays all the events a student might have including lectures, group meetings and deadlines, while the other tabs display what solely their name suggests. In the following paragraphs we will discuss the current functionalities of these tabs and suggest further improvements.

In terms of usability, the current timetable layout we have implemented hasn't fulfilled our main objective, which was to display all meetings, deadlines, and classes in one central location for the student. Currently, the calendar displays the students' events on a weekly basis using a limited range of hours in the day. Students also don't have the ability to look ahead and see their events in the future, making the calendar ineffective. Given these issues in the design, we have chosen to change the current layout of the timetable and implement a new library: JTAAppleCalendar. This library will be used to display a full monthly calendar and students can see what events they have on a particular day by selecting one of the days of the month. On implementation of both this and a database for the student's classes, the app should be an effective planner.

JTAAppleCalendar Library link: <https://patchthecode.github.io>

The current deadline tab allows students to add, view and delete deadlines. Deadlines are stored long-term on a local database, so if the student exits the app, their deadlines will be retained. By the end of the semester we will add extra functionality to this tab so that students can edit their deadlines without having to delete and add a new one. We will also implement a notifications system, so that students can pick a time to be notified prior to their deadline. Furthermore, given we have enough time; we will have a countdown bar associated to each deadline displaying how long the student has until the due date.

The current meeting tab allows students to add, view and delete meetings. It's useful for students who have meetings to attend. The records will also be stored inside local database so there is no worry students may lose the data. We plan to add notification feature to this tab so it will add the usability of this tab. Not only can students set time of the meetings, but also they can store the information of meeting members so that they can gain more information from it afterwards. We believe this will be a convenient tool for students.

At the moment, the meetings tab allows students to store the meetings they have with their different course groups. The student's different meetings are stored in a database so that these records are kept even if the app is closed. To improve the functionality of this tab, we will add an option to edit the group meetings, so that students can change the details of their meetings and we will add an option for notifications, so students can be notified that a meeting is about to occur.

The primary motivation for this app was to create a seamless and visually pleasing environment that students can use to schedule their university life. Therefore, after covering the main usability issues, we need to focus on the overall aesthetics of the app. We will continue to follow the design shown in the prototypes created for assignment 1 and aim to make the app visibly pleasing for students to use. This will include basic changes to the app in terms of colors, borders and layout (potentially for all IOS devices).

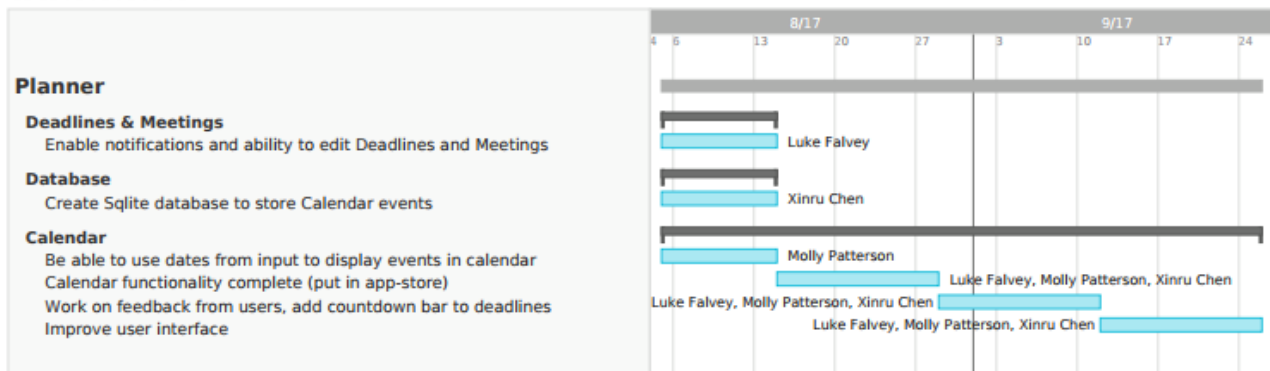


Figure 1. A time schedule for improvements made to ePlanner.

Our immediate tasks are to add a system for notifying students of upcoming events, give students the ability to edit their deadlines and meetings and create a database table to store information needed to display a calendar (Figure 1). These tasks are delegated to Luke Falvey and Xinru Chen. The next major task is to implement the JTCalendar library to create an easy-to-use calendar. As this is a newly created library, the team will inevitably spend a lot of time learning how the library works and figuring out how to implement it in such a way to build the app we want. After having the calendar fully functional, we will upload ePlanner into the app store. Following this, we will work on user feedback, add a countdown bar to the deadlines tab, fix bugs and improve the user interface.