**Note – Final Project Report**

**1. Project Overview**

**Note** is a mobile-first, collaborative workspace application created to solve a widespread issue: students and remote teams are constantly switching between separate tools—note-taking platforms, and task managers—to stay productive. This fragmentation causes confusion, wasted time, and lost context. Note offers a unified, intuitive space where users can take notes, assign tasks, and collaborate—all in one place.

Inspired by the familiarity of physical notebooks, Note adopts a notebook-paper aesthetic. This visual style not only stands out from competitors but supports cognitive ease and emotional comfort. Combined with structured digital features such as **role-based permissions**, **template libraries**, and **actionable checklists**, Note is more than a notes app—it’s a complete collaborative ecosystem.

This report outlines the end-to-end process: from identifying user pain points, to research, ideation, prototyping, usability testing, design rationale, HCI applications, and final iteration.

**2. Team Roles & Responsibilities**

Our research shows that **students and remote teams** often struggle to organize shared work and documents. They want simple tools that combine notes, tasks, and team collaboration in one place.

We used **surveys and interviews** to learn about user needs. Most users prefer a clean design, mobile access, and the ability to assign roles.

**Tara Gharati** – UX Designer & Research Lead

* Led user research and persona development
* Drafted initial sketches and wireframes
* Defined usability goals and oversaw testing

**Justin Timberlake** – Interaction Designer

* Built interactive behaviors (template preview, editor tools)
* Focused on microinteractions and flow dynamics

**John Doe** – UI & Content Designer

* Structured editor UI and visual hierarchy
* Developed layout for the sidebar and page views

**Bruce Wayne, Kanye West, Peter Parker** – Testers & Advisors

* Conducted peer reviews and exploratory testing
* Provided real-time feedback during iterative cycles

All collaboration occurred via **Figma**, using version control, shared team folders, and comment-based feedback cycles.

**3. Problem Statement**

Through initial user interviews and experience mapping, we identified several pain points with current productivity ecosystems:

* Students juggling Google Docs, Slack, and Trello found the multi-app context-switching overwhelming.
* Task ownership was unclear without structured roles.
* Most digital tools lacked emotional warmth or familiarity.

**Goals**

* Centralize collaboration: one tool for notes, agendas, and planning.
* Mimic physical notebooks to boost focus and reduce cognitive load.
* Include task structure and access controls (Admin, Editor, Viewer).

**4. Design Decisions & Innovations**

**Notebook-Style Editor**

We applied the *aesthetic-usability effect*—a principle in HCI where users perceive visually pleasing designs as easier to use. The notebook-paper theme softens the digital interface, reduces intimidation, and helps users stay immersed.

**Role-Based Access**

To reduce confusion in group settings, we implemented three roles:

* **Admin** – Full permissions, including deletion and role assignment
* **Editor** – Can modify content but not settings
* **Viewer** – Read-only access

This follows the principle of **error prevention** and **visibility of system status** by showing role icons and access boundaries clearly.

**Pre-Made Templates**

Templates for project plans, meeting notes, and task lists help reduce the *cognitive effort* required to start from scratch. It supports **recognition over recall**, a key HCI guideline.

**5. User Research & Personas**

**Methods Used:**

* Online surveys
* One-on-one semi-structured interviews
* Contextual inquiries via screen sharing

**Findings:**

* 83% used 3+ apps for group work
* 75% wanted permission-based controls
* 65% felt overwhelmed by unstructured workflows

**Personas:**

1. **Tara (Student Leader)** – Organizes study groups, needs task delegation
2. **Justin (Collaborator)** – Contributes but doesn’t want to manage
3. **Clark (Visual Learner)** – Struggles with dry interfaces, prefers guided layouts

These personas informed the feature prioritization and UI decisions.

**6. Design Process**

**Sketching & Ideation**

Initial low-fidelity sketches were drawn on paper and digitized in Figma. Key flows included:

* Login & Auth
* Sidebar Navigation
* Editor Layout (Notes, Agenda, Action Items)
* Role Assignment Interface
* Template Browser

We conducted **heuristic evaluations** early using Nielsen’s principles to identify usability risks.

**Wireframes & User Flows**

* Prioritized clear signposting using **consistency and standards** (sidebar iconography)
* Applied **progressive disclosure** in settings and template actions
* Used **affordances** (checkboxes, toggles) for interactive elements

**Color & Typography**

* Chose a light paper-beige background for comfort
* Used a legible serif font for the editor to mimic handwriting
* Ensured contrast ratios met WCAG AA standards

Shape

**7. Interface Walkthrough**

**Page Settings**

Control access via link sharing, visibility toggles, and role dropdowns. Designed using **minimalist design** principles for non-technical users.

**User Profile**

Users manage preferences, including profile picture, email, password, and notification settings. Save/Cancel buttons are aligned to reduce accidental data loss.

**Workspace Dashboard**

Acts as a landing zone after login. Folders are sortable, searchable, and color-coded—supporting the **recognition**principle.

**Notebook-Style Editor**

Main canvas split into Notes, Agenda, and Action Items. Checkbox and bullet icons help organize thoughts. The notebook-paper aesthetic reduces digital friction.

**Team Collaboration**

Invite teammates, assign roles. Role tags are color-coded and persistent in the UI. HCI principle: **visibility of system status**.

**Template Library**

Clicking a template previews the structure. One-click “Use” action inserts content. Templates minimize startup time, especially for new users.

Shape

**8. High-Fidelity Prototype**

Built in Figma with:

* Responsive layout using auto-layouts
* Component-based styles (buttons, modals, nav)
* Interactive prototype with transitions, hover states, and modal flows

**Mobile-First Execution:**

Prioritized readability and tap targets on small screens. Navigation is sticky and collapsible to maximize usable space.

**9. Usability Testing & Challenges**

**Participants:**

* 4 users matching personas
* Tasks: create a page, assign roles, use a template, toggle dark mode

**Key Feedback:**

* “Notebook style makes it feel like I’m actually studying.”
* “Roles made it easy to trust others wouldn’t mess up my notes.”
* “Add a way to toggle dark mode—it’s too bright at night.”

**Challenges & Resolutions:**

* **Issue**: Font contrast was too subtle on notebook background   
  **Fix**: Increased font weight, reduced transparency
* **Issue**: “Create Page” button was hidden on mobile   
  **Fix**: Added floating action button
* **Issue**: Users didn’t know if they were an Admin   
  **Fix**: Role now displays persistently in the sidebar

**10. Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) Principles Applied**

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| --- | --- |
| **Principle** | **Example** |
| Visibility of system status | Live role display, template previews |
| Match between system and real world | Notebook paper design, folder structure |
| User control and freedom | Undo options, Save/Cancel buttons |
| Consistency and standards | Universal icons, role behaviors |
| Error prevention | Role restrictions and tooltips |
| Recognition over recall | Template previews, sidebar labels |
| Flexibility and efficiency | Keyboard shortcuts (future roadmap) |

**11. Future Work**

**Planned Enhancements:**

* Calendar and due date integration
* Built-in chat for real-time collaboration
* Syncing with Google Drive or Microsoft 365
* AI-generated templates based on meeting notes

**12. Conclusion**

Note successfully blends analog comfort with digital functionality. By following HCI principles, grounding our work in real user needs, and iterating based on feedback, we’ve created a tool that simplifies group collaboration and supports student productivity. While it began as a design project, the outcome has real-world potential.

If developed into a full product, Note could reshape how academic and remote teams work together, reducing friction and fostering clarity.