Research

Features of Note Taking apps

An app like this should allow users to quickly take notes, open assignment pdfs, annotate files, edit notes and group all notes by class, topic or year.

Users should be able to easily find their notes to read, review and edit later.

Sorting features

A good notes app should have features that allow users to group notes together like a file system you'd find in a typical operating system, as well as allow users to add tags or comments to notes.

Cloud Storage

Notes should be able to be stored locally or in the cloud to allow users to access their notes across different devices i.e. phones, tablets, laptops.

Collaboration

Option to make notes shared amongst selected users to collaborate on projects. (Guinness, H. 2018)

Text Formatting

When typing notes, users should be able to format the text with features like bold and underline that you would find in text applications such as Microsoft Word.

Examples of Apps

- Evernote
- Microsoft OneNote
- Google Keep Notes

Review of Apps

Google Keep Notes

Key Features

- Recent notes
  Immediately accessible to users.
- Ribbon Toolbar
  Quickly make notes, draw, add photos, make voice notes.
- Search bar
  Search for key words or phrases to find your notes.
- Side bar
  Displays all notebooks the user has made as well as archived notes, deleted notes and settings.
- Reminders
  Add reminders to notes you want to revisit later.
- Notes
  text formatting options and ability to import other files into your note.
  Collaboration option to allow multiple users to work on a note.

Google keep Notes has all the key features of a good note taking app. The design is simplistic and easy to use.

The display of recent notes on the home screen is very disorganized looking, with preview of notes being shown based on the length of the content, so large notes will take up more of the recent notes section meaning less notes can be displayed. These notes can be dragged to different areas of the home screen, but their size cannot be reduced.

Evernote

Key features

- Recent and suggested notes
  Shows recent notes and suggests notes for you to review.
- Scratch Pad
  Allows users to quickly jot down notes or reminders and decide how to save them after
- Recently captured
  recent images, documents, audio files, emails and web clips
- Search bar
  Search for key words or phrases to find your notes.
- Customize homepage
  Add or remove extra shelves and pin important notes.
- Notes
  text formatting options and ability to import other files into your note.
  Default templates to easily format your note.
  Collaboration option to allow multiple users to work on a note.

Very similar functionality to google Keep Notes but with a much more customizable homepage. The ability to connect all your emails and documents to the app allows users to manage all their academic tools in one place.

A large portion of the homepage is taken up by an unsightly stock image with a greeting message. This space could be much better used or just simply removed and used to give space between shelves on the very compact home screen.

The search bar at the bottom of the screen feels counterintuitive. Perhaps the customize button at the top of the app could be removed and placed in the sidebar and replaced with the search tool.

One Note

- Recent notes
  displayed in blocks on the homepage.
- Ribbon Toolbar
  Quickly make a note, draw, take a photo, make voice notes.
- Search bar
  Search for key words or phrases to find your notes.
- Filter
  show notes based on filters such as date and type.
- Toggle homepage
  toggle between recent notes on the homepage and notebooks users have created.
- Notes
  text formatting options and ability to import other files into your note.

Typical, simplistic design of home screen from previous apps.

Much more intricate text formatting options for user's notes.

Similar to keep Notes, the recent notes are displayed in boxes on the home page, however, large files like images or drawings won't take up large amounts of space like Keep Notes, instead opting to only display the title of these files to save space.

Unlike the previous two apps, the mobile version of OneNote lacks the option to invite collaborators to notes, instead reserving this functionality for the desktop version. Luckily, notes synch across devices but this will make it more difficult to make use of this feature.

Proposed app:- QuickNotes

The homepage has a simplistic design and immediately displays recent notes to let the user access them quickly.

There is a tool bar at the top of the homepage allowing the user to select between three screens: recent notes, notebooks, and academic tools.

The academic tools screen allows users to link their emails or upload their files and view them here so that they can access all their academic tools from one app.

The app will have a tool bar at the bottom of the screen allowing users to make a new note, import and annotate files, take a picture, and make voice notes.

A search bar is necessary for finding documents quickly with key words. This can be found at the top of the homepage, above the tool bar.

Opening the search screen also allows users to filter files based on tags, dates, or notebooks.

The screen displayed when creating a new note should have a toolbar at the bottom of the screen to format text for the note. A toolbar at the top will have the option to add collaborators to the note and add tags.

Underneath the recent notes on the homepage, you'll find the "Scratch pad" that will allow the user to quickly write down notes without having to worry about creating a new note first and allow the user to decide how to save this note afterwards.

There is a settings bar at the top, left of the search bar, where users can customize their homepage with features such as dark/light mode or sign out/ switch accounts.
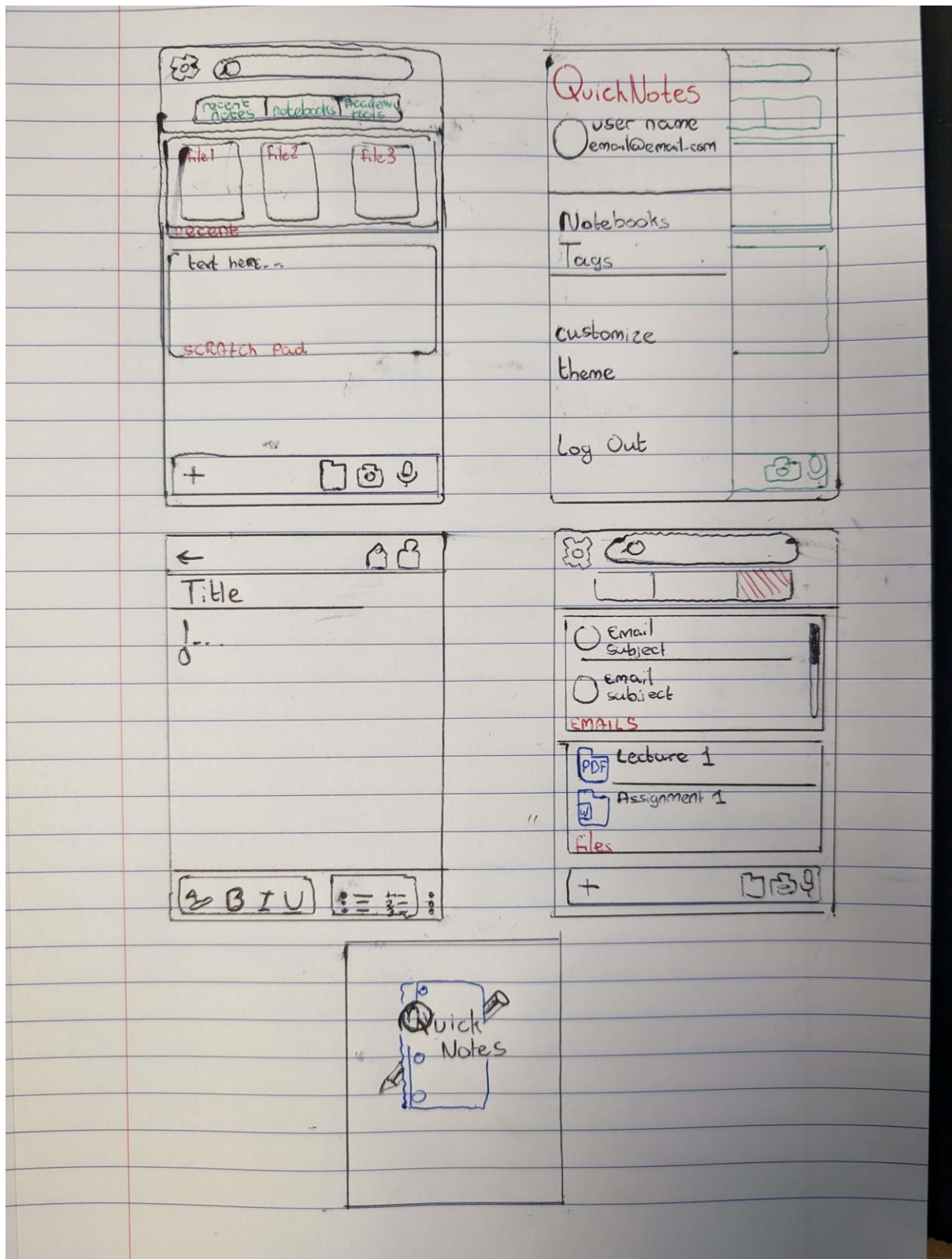
Use by typical user

My persona, Sam, would be able to open the app to the homepage at the start of each lecture.

If this current lecture is a continuation of another lecture he's had recently, he'll be able to pick up where he left off with the "recent notes" section of the homepage. If not, he can search for the module code using the search bar where he'll be able to find any workbooks he's made for that module, access them, and create a new note for the current lecture.

If he is in a rush and doesn't quite have time to search through his saved notes, he can use the scratch pad shelf on the homepage to quickly start taking notes, then save them to his notebook after class.

Sam can save his notes to notebooks allowing him to organize his notes.

Later, he will be able to search for his notes by finding them in the recent notes section, finding the notebook he saved them to in the notebook section or searching for them with the search bar and search filters.

References

Guinness, H. (2018). *The 10 Best Note Taking Apps in 2018*. [online] Zapier. Available at: https://zapier.com/blog/best-note-taking-apps/.