**IN3065 User-Centred System Design Coursework 2025**

**User Research Methodology**  
  
I conducted a small-scale user research study combining semi-structured interviews and naturalistic observation. The goal was to gain insight into the behaviours, motivations, and pain points students, graduates, and guests experience when accessing food and drink services on campus.

I began by drafting a template of guiding interview questions (included in the appendix), structured around themes such as how participants currently find food on campus, challenges they face, preferences in technology, and ideas for an improved experience. During the interviews, I followed this template but allowed space for flexibility, asking personalised follow-up questions based on the flow of conversation. This approach helped gather richer, more meaningful insights.

As interviewing students within my course (IN3065) was not permitted, I carefully selected participants from a variety of backgrounds, including students from other courses (such as computer science student not doing the course IN3065 and engineering students) and alumni graduates (past computer science graduates). This variety gave me a broader set of perspectives. I initially aimed to include guests or staff, but despite multiple attempts, I found it difficult to recruit willing participants within my timeframe. Many potential candidates needed significant explanation and were unavailable at short notice. As a result, I proceeded with the five most valuable interviews out of six completed.

To supplement the interviews, I conducted quick observational research by walking around several on-campus locations, including canteens, microwave areas, and coffee shops. I noted how users interacted with the space, the queues, self-service systems, and physical signage. This contextual information helped inspire several of the questions I asked during interviews and helped me better understand the users’ lived experience.

One of my participants was a graduate currently pursuing a career in UX design, which gave me the opportunity to incorporate additional usability-focused insights into my research. Their feedback helped validate some of the design directions I considered and enhanced the research quality.

All interviews were conducted as audio calls on Microsoft Teams, which enabled me to record conversations for later reference. This decision also helped participants feel more comfortable, as they weren’t distracted or self-conscious being on video. After recording, I created brief transcripts to extract key quotes and themes. Each participant was sent a consent form, which they returned promptly before the interviews began.

In total, the methodology allowed me to gather in-depth qualitative data that could inform the early design stages of CampusDine. Insights gained shaped my understanding of users’ challenges with dining on campus, such as locating dietary options, avoiding long queues, and the lack of real-time service information. These findings directly contribute to the direction of the app’s proposed features and interface.

**Written Summary of Key Findings from User Research**

To support the design of the CampusDine app, I conducted five semi-structured interviews with a mix of current students and recent graduates. The aim was to explore their experiences with food and drink on campus, understand their needs and frustrations, and identify opportunities for technology to improve the dining experience. The responses were analysed thematically, revealing strong patterns in behaviours, expectations, and pain points.

Participants demonstrated a range of eating habits. Some regularly brought food from home due to cost, convenience, or dietary preferences, while others purchased snacks or drinks from cafés but avoided full meals. Delivery apps like Uber Eats and Deliveroo were frequently mentioned, especially by users seeking more variety or better prices than campus services offered. Although on-campus outlets were available, they were often underused because of issues with visibility, accessibility, and value for money.

Price emerged as one of the most important factors influencing user decisions. Many participants felt that food on campus was expensive for the portion size and often not worth the cost. This was especially important for students on tight budgets. Dietary requirements were also a strong concern particularly the need for halal food options and users noted that a lack of clear labelling or transparency made it difficult to trust what was available. Convenience played a major role in users’ choices, especially during exam season or busy lecture days. Students wanted quick access to reliable information about food availability without having to waste time queueing or searching.

Several challenges were reported across the interviews. Seating availability was a major pain point; users often arrived at the canteen only to find all seats taken. Many participants were unaware of facilities like microwaves or smaller food outlets due to poor signage or a lack of navigation support. There was also widespread frustration about not being able to view food options in advance. Users often only discovered what was available after physically entering a location, leading to wasted time or disappointment.

Interviewees showed strong interest in using an app with real-time updates on queues, seating, and opening hours. A digital menu showing clear ingredient lists, dietary labels, and prices was seen as essential. Most participants expressed a preference for pre-ordering food online, especially those who disliked queueing or preferred to avoid face-to-face ordering. In terms of feedback, quick tools like star ratings were much preferred over longer surveys or QR codes.

Accessibility and usability were also important themes. Participants suggested simple but meaningful features such as font size controls, clear layout, and keyword filters (e.g. halal, vegan, low-cost) to help them find food that suited their needs. A built-in map showing where to find microwaves, seating zones, or specific cafés was also widely supported.

In summary, students and graduates want a dining experience that saves them time, respects their preferences, and offers clarity. An ideal solution would be an app that is simple, informative, and personalised removing uncertainty and enabling confident, convenient food decisions on campus.