

# PLACEMENT REPORT

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synergy learning

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## INTRODUCTION

I have had the privilege of spending the last 12 months on placement as an Intern UX Designer at Synergy Learning. I have been able to shadow, learn, contribute and gain valuable experience in different areas. This helped me hone my skills and better myself as a designer in major ways that I am excited to share with you here.



# synergy learning

Synergy Learning are highly experienced Totara and Moodle Partners that offer intuitive, accessible and engaging LMS (Learning Management System) solutions to an array of customers with varying needs.

Starting out as a joint venture between Ulster University and Fujitsu with investment from Invest NI in 1997, the company has evolved and grown alongside the landscape of eLearning. Over 1,100 projects across 40 countries have been completed to date and a strong customer base exists within the DACH region (Germany, Austria, Switzerland). Some customers in the last year include Save the Children, NHS, United Nations, IBM and Goethe Institut.

SL is a remote first company with 50+ employees working internationally and a hub based at the Catalyst Innovation Centre in the Titanic Quarter (Belfast). On my first day I joined 1Team. This name reflects our common vision, mission and values despite our diverse roles and experiences. Within 1Team, I joined the UX circle. Other circles include Development, Consultancy, Systems, Marketing, Support, QA, Project Management etc. My attendance varied between remote and in person at the hub. Throughout the year I attended All Hands events; scheduled days where all employees met together at the hub, which had a business focus but with lots of socialising. These were a great way to get to know everyone, especially 1Teamers based overseas.

# MY ROLE

My role was an Intern UX Designer within the UX Circle, working alongside 3 front end developers, a UX designer and a UX consultant. A small team with significant responsibilities.

The LMS world was completely new to me. This was also my first ever full-time work experience. I set myself a key goal to make a meaningful contribution. However, I realised quickly that this wasn't something I could achieve from the get-go. I first needed time to learn the ropes and get accustomed to various new software, applications and practices. I began by demonstrating my willingness to learn and adapt, gradually taking on various tasks and responsibilities that would enable me to add value to the UX Circle and 1Team.



# MY TASKS

Here are some of the tasks I undertook in my role:

## Visual Reviews

A responsibility I was exposed to early was executing Visual Reviews (VRs). This is a QA test cycle uniquely undertaken by designers, which occurs after initial theme development. These involved checking that everything looked and operated correctly as per the concepts and UX requirements, then raising any bugs and assigning them to developers to fix.

I learned to create and execute test cycles in Jira, and became proficient with practice. My early VRs took longer to complete as I had to refer back to documentation and refine how I reported bugs.

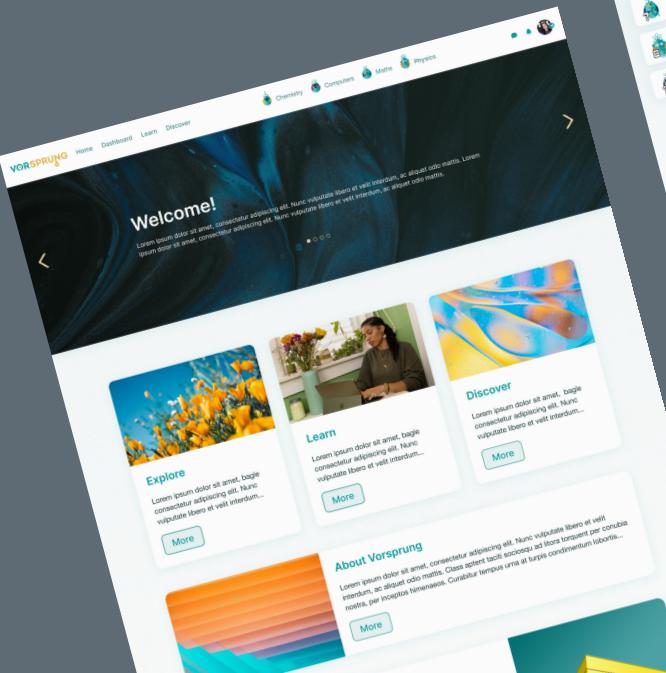
The waterfall development model used at Synergy Learning requires that certain tasks are completed before others can be started. This required flexibility in my scheduling of VRs to match up with when the themes were ready.

## Bespoke Design

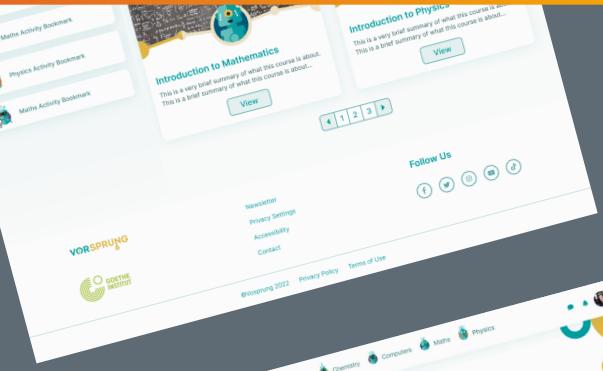
Customers have 2 UX solution options depending on their needs, these were our Spark Theme and/or Bespoke Design/Development.

The process for bespoke concept design typically involved a call with the customer to establish UX requirements. This would be followed by designing concepts against those requirements, inline with their branding. An internal review then takes place with members of the UX Circle before posting on Invision for the customer to review and leave feedback.

I started with practice design tasks based on estimates and specifications from past bespoke projects before moving on to live projects. One live project I worked on was for Save the Children who were upgrading to the latest version of Totara. I designed concepts for a course page and a dashboard with custom features. I spoke with them a number of times to understand exactly what they wanted and we negotiated on what was doable. I received great feedback from the customer for my work and they were pleased with the resulting upgrade.



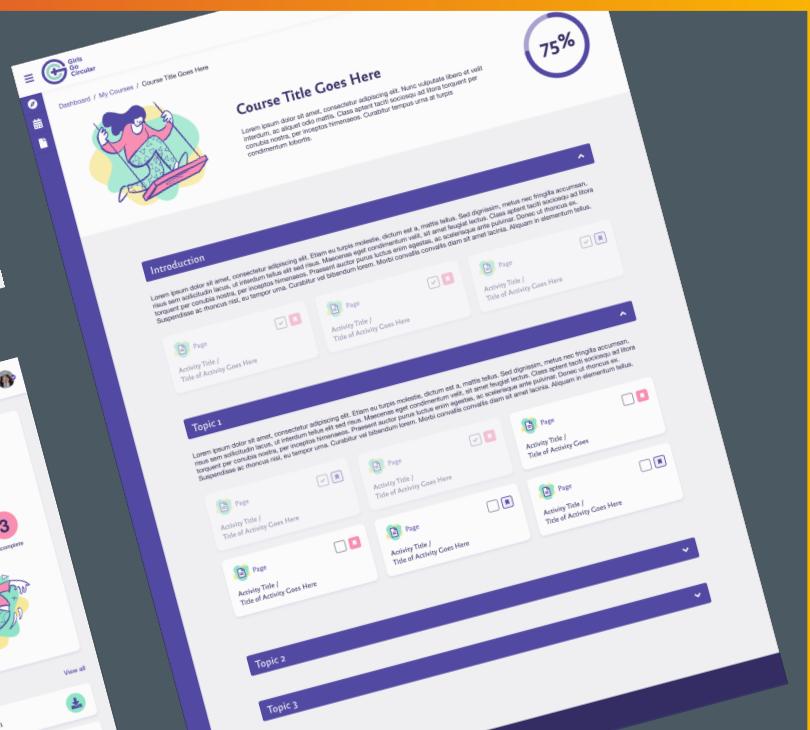
The Vorsprung Learning Platform features a modern design with a dark header bar containing the logo, navigation links (Home, Dashboard, Learn, Discover), and user profile icons. The main content area has a dark blue background with a large "Welcome!" banner at the top. Below it are three main sections: "Explore" (with a yellow flower image), "Learn" (with a person working at a desk), and "Discover" (with a colorful abstract image). A sidebar on the right contains links for "Maths Activity Bookmark", "Physics Activity Bookmark", and "Chemistry Activity Bookmark". At the bottom, there's a footer with links for "Vorsprung 2023", "Privacy Policy", and "Terms of Use".



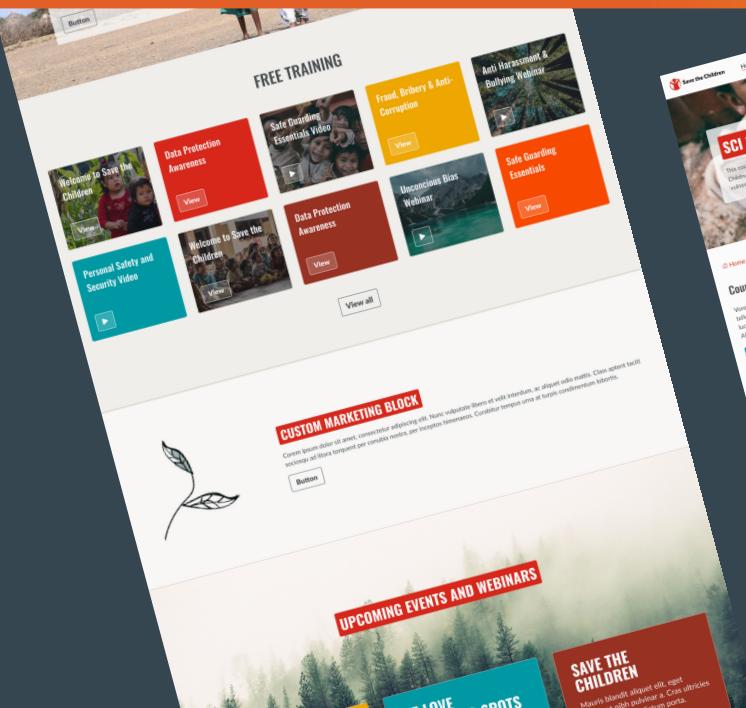
This screenshot shows a course page titled "Introduction to Mathematics". It includes a brief summary of the course, a "View" button, and a navigation bar with tabs for "Section 1", "Section 2", "Section 3", "Section 4", and "Section 5". On the right, there's a "Follow Us" section with social media icons.



The Girls Go Circular login page features a purple header with the logo and navigation links. The main form has fields for "Username" and "Password", a "Remember username" checkbox, and "Log In" and "REGISTER" buttons. A note at the bottom says "Cookies must be enabled in your browser".



The dashboard shows a "Last Accessed" section with a progress bar at 75% and a "Course Title Goes Here" placeholder. Below this are sections for "My Courses" (listing three courses with completion percentages 7, 4, and 3) and "My Certificates" (listing one certificate). A sidebar on the left shows "Course Title 1" and "Course Title 2". The right side has a "Course Navigation" menu with sections for "Section 1", "Section 2", "Section 3", "Section 4", and "Section 5". Each section contains a "Topic 1" with a preview image of a robot.



The Save the Children training platform has a light blue header with the logo and navigation links. The main content area features a grid of training modules: "Welcome to Save the Children", "Data Protection Awareness", "Safe Guarding Essentials Video", "Fraud, Bribery & Anti-Corruption", "Safe Guarding Essentials", "Welcome to Save the Children", "Data Protection Awareness", "Unconscious Bias Webinar", and "Safe Guarding Essentials". A "CUSTOM MARKETING BLOCK" is visible on the right. At the bottom, there's a "UPCOMING EVENTS AND WEBINARS" section with a red banner and a "SAVE THE CHILDREN" logo.



This screenshot shows a "Course Introduction" page for "SCI SAFEGUARDING ESSENTIALS". It features a large photo of children smiling. The page includes a "Pre-course Quiz" section with a "Quiz Future" button and a "Pre-course Quiz" button. Below it is a "Safeguarding Essentials e-learning" section with a "Quiz Future" button. The right side contains a "Assessment" section with a "Quiz Future" button and a "Safeguarding Essentials Final Assessment" section with a "Quiz Future" button.

## SL Design System

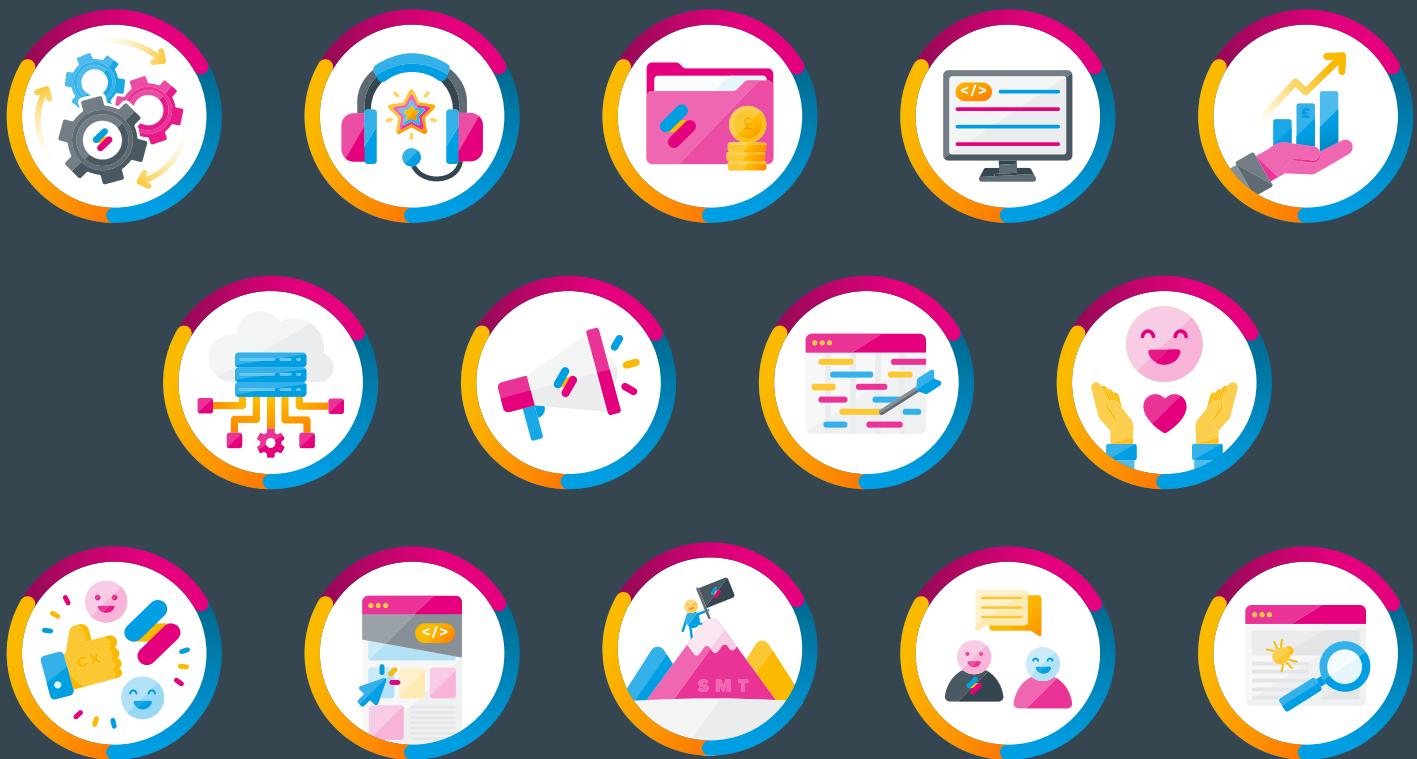
I worked to gain proficiency in Figma and used it to assist in updating the company's Design System. Much of my time was spent building out complex variable components for different Spark and core LMS features that could be utilised in future bespoke concept designs, speeding up the design process exponentially. I loved working on the Design System, building out each feature or page, it was like solving a puzzle. I used my Moodle/Txp demo sites to examine the feature and all the possible variables like states and quantities before building it out, starting from atoms.

## Site Configs and Certificate Templates

There's typically not much involvement from UX Designers in Spark Theme implementation when customers have opted not to have bespoke features. However, to gain more customer call experience, I shadowed Spark Theme requirement calls led by the UX Consultant and had tasks assigned from these. They included UAT, and occasionally live, site configurations for customers. This sometimes involved designing and setting up custom certificate templates and badge sets. Site configuration for a customer involves configuring all the desired features/add-ons, applying their branding and populating the site to give them an idea of how they could best utilise it. This was a great way to build experience working on projects and communicating both internally with PMs and externally with customers.

## Iconography

Acknowledging my passion for iconography and illustration, I was given opportunities to enhance some internal and customer facing spaces with vibrant icon sets. I designed a new set of icons to represent each circle in the 1Team Directory on our Confluence Site. I later got the opportunity to give our internal Kokua and customer support portals a much needed branding glow-up. This included working on a new login page illustration, new request type icons and some general CSS updates. The process here involved a lot of iteration and obtaining feedback from UX, Marketing and my mentor which helped me to deliver a satisfactory result.



#### Access Request

Request or change access to a system



#### Employee

Request to onboard / offboard employee



#### Software Support

Requesting support for any applications such as JumpCloud, Avast!, RingCentral etc



#### Hardware Support

Support with your hardware



#### Request New Hardware

For example, a new mouse or monitor.



#### Request New Software

If you need a software license, raise a request here.



#### Service Incident

Report a service incident relating to one of our internal services



#### General Query

Please only select this option if your query doesn't fit into one of the above categories.

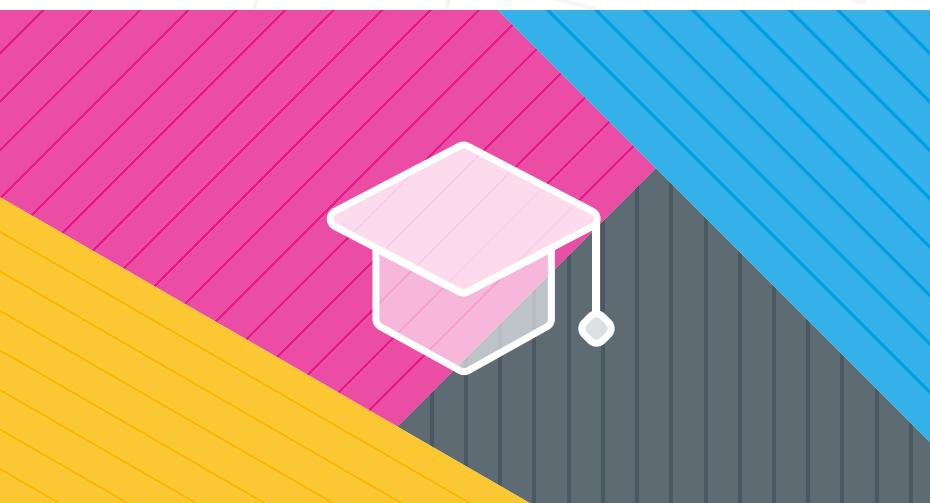


#### Tempo Time Log

## Asset Library

Some customers had their own graphic designers and assets, while others did not. I proposed the idea of an asset library when working on a certificate template and default imagery for a customer site config. I saw that the process could be simplified where the assets themselves weren't overly branded beyond colours and logo. Visual aesthetics are important in the perception of usability and I felt each customer should be able to have a visually engaging site for their learners. My suggestion was to have an asset library in Figma, not dissimilar to our Design System in structure, with different style options for imagery, badges and certificates etc. Colours could be easily customised to match the customers branding. I discussed this with consultancy first given their knowledge of customer needs to find out what customers would want/need in terms of assets. Once I understood that, I started the library with a few asset styles and badge sets.





# REFLECTION & EVALUATION

## PLACEMENT COMPETENCIES

My course prepared well in terms of UX design before I joined Synergy Learning. I was competent in understanding design principles, accessibility, user research etc. However, in order to contribute meaningfully and perform my assigned tasks well, I had to much further develop skillwise.

### Hard Skills

- I became proficient in Figma, going from never really using it previously to being able to build out complex components and pages with ease.
- To complete my onboarding tasks, I undertook courses to become a Certified Administrator in both Totara and Moodle Academy. I continued to build knowledge and understanding of these platforms along with our Spark theme throughout the year.
- I learned how to use Jira, our project management tool, to create and manage my tasks. Along with Asana, this helped me to stay on track, increase my productivity and communicate progress effectively.
- I learned how to set up Moodle/TXP demo sites on my system using Docker, a useful step closer to the skillset of a UX developer.
- I had the opportunity to enhance my CSS skills while working on the Kokua and Customer Support portal visual updates.
- Through exposure to different practices and approaches both on internal and customer projects, I was able to increase my UX knowledge as well.



## Soft Skills

- My teamwork and communication skills improved as I learned how to effectively communicate with colleagues, particularly PMs, keeping them informed when things were on track but especially when they weren't.
- I developed customer service skills in communicating with customers, using Asana and Invision but also on calls. Providing clear annotations on concepts and being able to give support for any queries or concerns became a big part of my role as I got more involved in customer projects.
- I have also gotten better at taking initiative and reaching out to others for clarity, assistance, feedback and opportunities to shadow and learn.
- I have made major improvements in my time management skills, becoming adept at setting realistic estimates and sticking to them. I also know how to effectively manage and prioritise different tasks now, which is crucial when working between multiple internal and customer related projects.
- I have grown more skilled at note taking in calls and writing documentation.
- All of the tasks I've worked on have increased my overall adaptability and problem solving skills as well.



# FEEDBACK

- I'm innately very open to receiving feedback as I'm always striving to improve my outputs and myself as a designer. This year was not without its hurdles and my ability to respond well and assertively to feedback has been instrumental in all my achievements this year.
- One of my biggest challenges was with my communication skills. Initially, I didn't know how best and how frequently to communicate on progress internally. After getting feedback and seeking the advice of my mentor, I took more initiative in setting up calls, requested clarity on what was needed from me and made a point of making regular updates on all my tasks, keeping everyone in the loop on progress.
- Seeking feedback was essential for me. I had regular review sessions with my mentor and Marketing on my Iconography designs. When I worked on practice bespoke concept designs at first, there were a lot of "red pen marks" made by the UX designer. I would take note of what I didn't get right and why, then integrate that learning into the next task.
- In regards to other tasks like working on the Design System, certificates and Site configs, I would always seek feedback on these to make sure everything looked and operated correctly, and would always then rectify any issues.

# IMPACT OF PLACEMENT

## Professionally

- I have skills in UX design and working in a professional environment.
- I am highly proficient in Figma which will help me to realise all my big ideas.
- I can communicate effectively with customers.
- I can demonstrate a high level of skill and care in UX design for a variety of different outputs.
- I have made valuable contributions to UX design at Synergy Learning and have left an imprint in the company's visual history.

## Personally

- I have a strong sense of self-belief, in all my abilities and in my potential.
- I have learned that it's okay not to know things so long as you have the self-drive to learn and actively seek-out opportunities to improve.
- I have a passion to continue learning and acquiring new skills.
- My strengths and weaknesses are clear to me now in a way that will help me perfect my craft and reach my potential as a designer.

# CONCLUSION

I am so grateful to have been a member of 1Team for the last year. I've learned so much and had the opportunity to do things I didn't fully believe myself capable of. I look forward to the future, and my final year, with a sense of self-belief and confidence instilled from my time with Synergy Learning.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have to thank everyone in 1Team for contributing to what has been such a wonderful year for me.

In particular, I must thank everyone in the UX circle for the different roles they have played in teaching me the ropes, and helping me flourish in skills and confidence. I also want to thank everyone I've had the opportunity to work with on projects, for all your kindness, patience and encouragement.

Most of all I have to give a huge thank you to Eimear for being the most spectacular mentor and friend that I could have possibly asked for. All that I have achieved this year is in large part credited to her unrelenting encouragement, support and guidance.

I also want to thank everyone I've had the opportunity to work with on projects, for all your kindness, patience and encouragement.