RENTAL CLUB

Design prototype in response to cost of living

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1 PROJECT BRIEF

We know that renting an apartment is a big problem for international students who come to study abroad for the first time. Coming to a new country, experiencing different people, interacting with different cultures, participating in another social model... all of these things can take a lot of energy from a student.

Renting alone can be even more difficult - they have no family or friends to go with them, no experience or background in renting, and simply cannot compete with other renters...
The information gap makes it extremely easy for international students to fall into rental scams and even incur huge financial losses as a result...

Hence, we have designed a rental club that allows international students to get information about the current rental climate in Australia in a safer, more trustworthy environment, and to develop and participate in the rental process together with the club staff to gain experience for future rental activities.

HMW

How might we provide reasonable price, various patterns and excellent service of renting houses
For international uni students
So that they can find satisfied living places

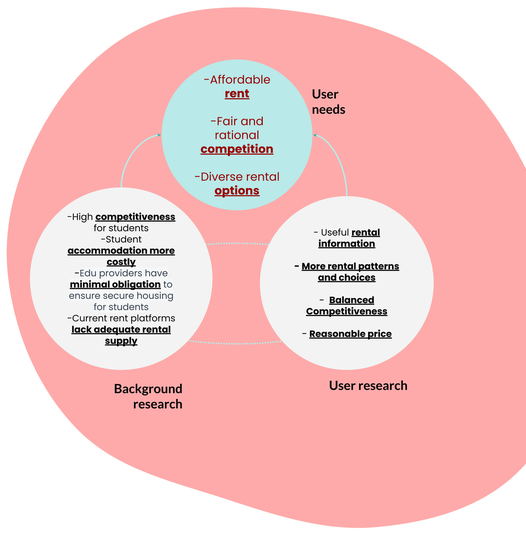
Prototype

The rental club will provide various rental-related services, including holding talks and activities, providing meeting chat, contract checking, and more. The club's services will be available both online through an app platform and through offline activities. By providing a complete helping process, our rental club will assist international students in navigating the complex rental landscape, make their stay more comfortable and solve the high cost of rental price problem they are facing.

2 USER NEEDS

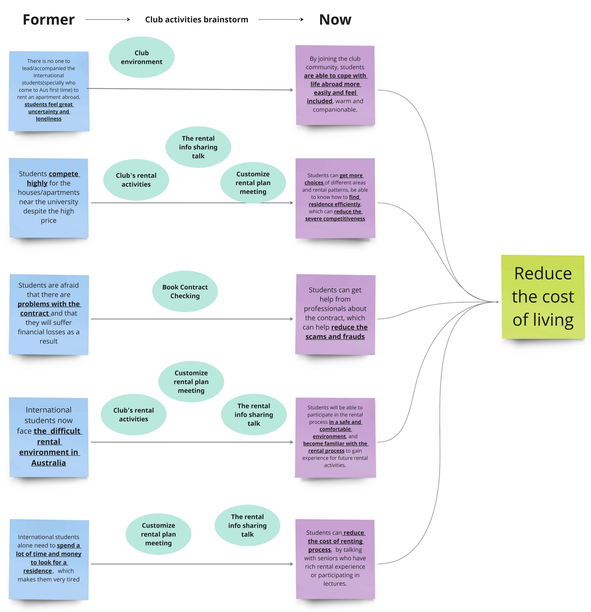
Goal of design

By combining the background research and user research, we concluded the main user needs, which are focused on three aspects: rental price, competition and rental patterns.
Also these are the direction of our design and we will center on the user needs to expand the design ideas.



3 RELATE TO DESIGN BRIEF

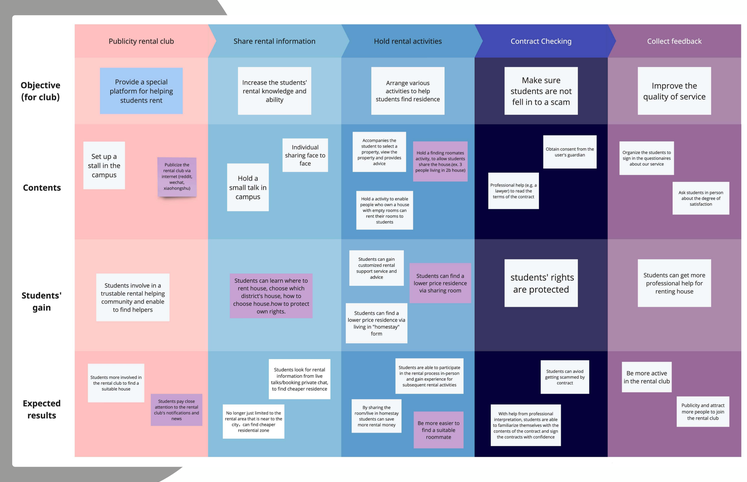
Through club activities brainstorm, our users, uni international students will have some positive changes in renting a house for themselves. They will feel easier and safer to find a satisfactory house, rather than being paid more money, facing high competitiveness and rental scams. Therefore, the expected results can reduce the living pressure of uni students and make them feel more comfortable about the abroad study and life.



4 CONCEPT

User Flow

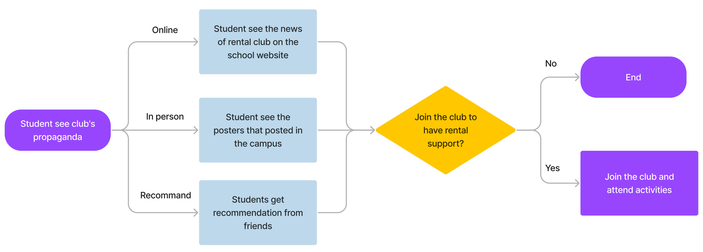
After brainstorming, we have developed a set of user flow - students will first notice our campaigns on campus or on social media platforms, and if they are interested, they can join and register as a member of our club and start a happy rental journey.

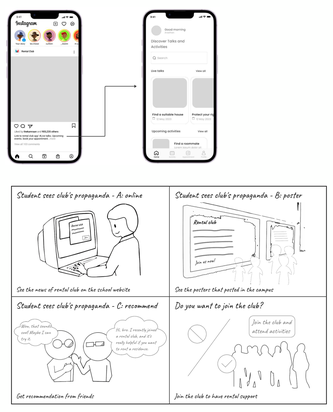


5 PROTOTYPE

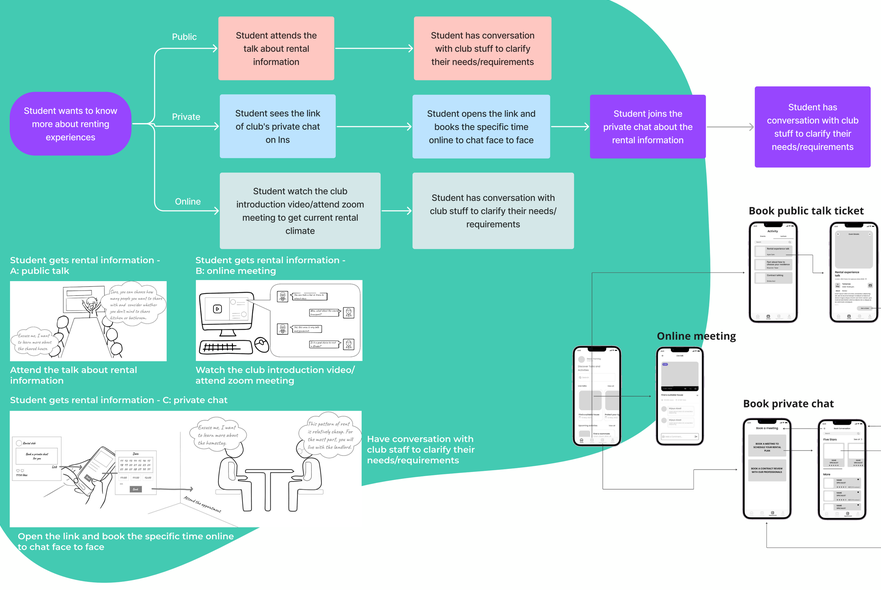
After developing the user flow, we began to map out scenarios - which included students participating in rental-related activities online or offline; watching online seminars; and making appointments with our staff or professionals at partner agencies for one-on-one rental planning or contract reviews.

1. Advertise rental club

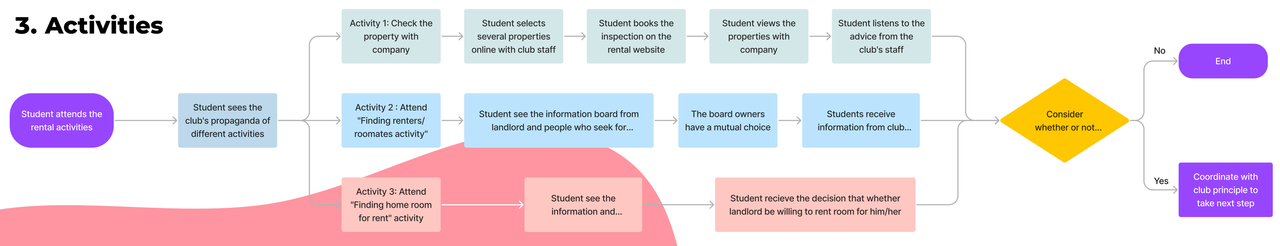


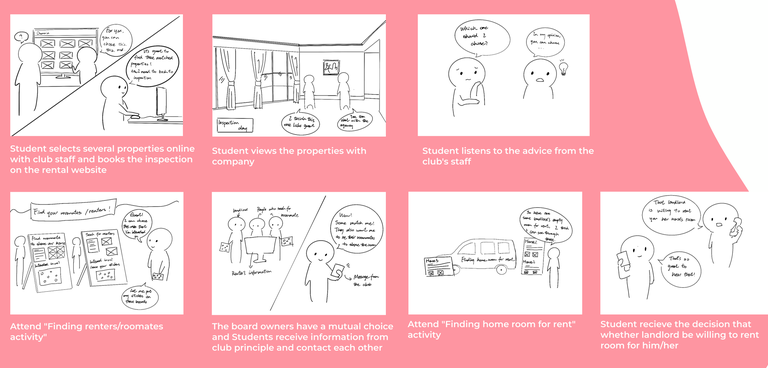


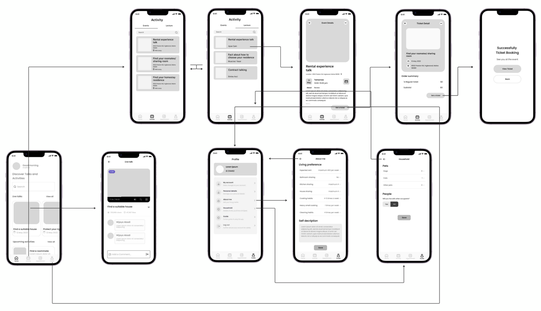
2. Share rental information



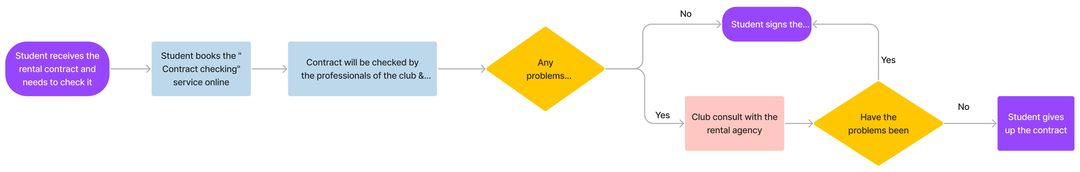
3. Activities

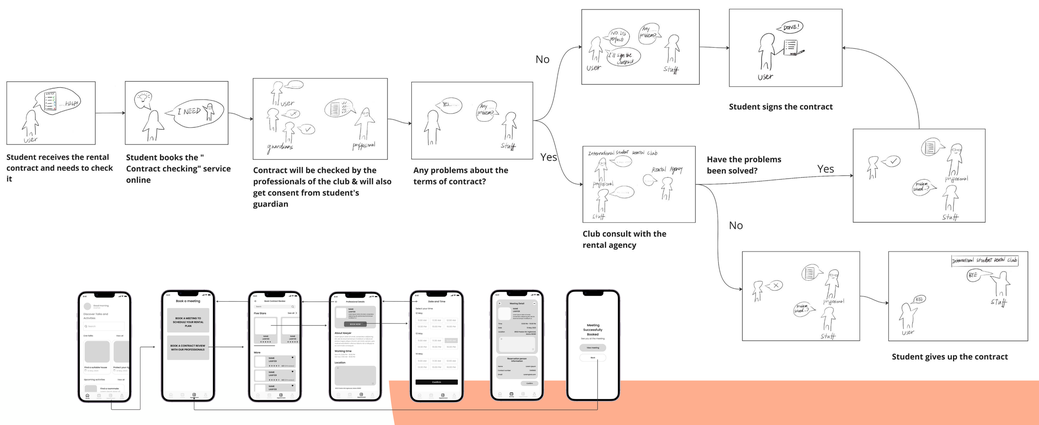




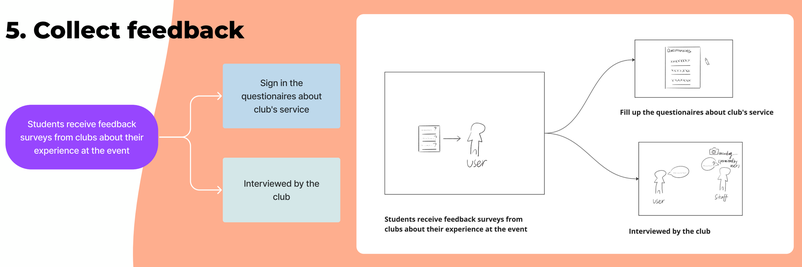


4. Contract Checking





5. Collect feedback



RENTAL CLUB

Reflect and critique process and final concept

Phase 01

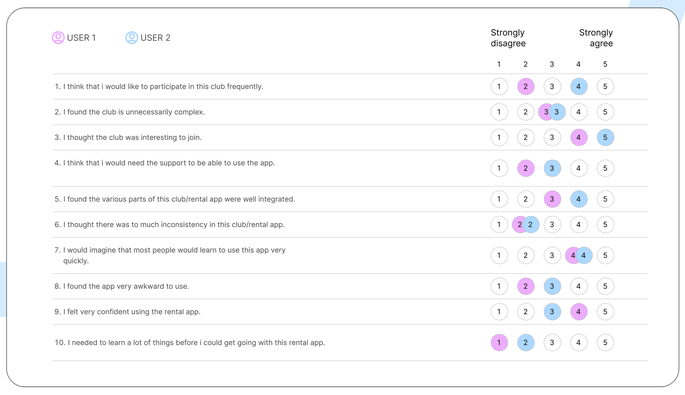
Feedback of User Test

Number	Task	Success 0 = Not completed 1 = Completed with difficulty or help 2 = Easily completed	Observation	User's reflection&comment	Others
1	Find the rental club, join in and view "How to find a suitable rental for you" talk video	0	the user click "home" icon — then click "find a suitable house" under the live talks section	so i click on this ? oh...and then...wow there is a live video! and then...i can probably type a comment here...	yeah this live stream could be very interesting
2	Suppose you have some issue about your rental residence choice, you want to book a meeting with club's member to help you, show me how you would do it	1	the user try to click the "+" button (on find a suitable house page) to find the appointment function — then realize it doesn't exist — click the "home" icon (on home page — click "activity" icon — click " appointment" icon — then click "book a meeting to schedule your rental plan" — booking successful now the user has to be prepared to meet the staff member in-person, then go to the appointed place and start talking with our staffs to get plans for renting.	ahh... I'm a little bit confused...ok i should go back to the home page...and i click this...oh...and these are my events...ahh i see...	the title could change to "book a meeting with rental mentor"
3	You want to attend offline activity to find your residence, book a ticket of "Find your roommates/ sharing room" activity	0	the user go back to the home page — click "find a roommate" under the "activities" section	so i suppose i go back to this first page, and then i can go to find a roommate...ok find a roommate adn sharing room over here...ummm....	i think it would be better that if you can make the events description more concrete...like name this events...reserve a ticket...something like that.
4	You are now in "Find your roommates/sharing room" activity, try to find the residence that attracts you.	1	the user are browsing the whole residences, communicate with club members frequently and discuss with other students for suggestions	i think i got a lot of informations here...I'll have to consolidate this information when I get home !	
5	Suppose you want to attend "Rental experience in Aus" talk activity, show me how you would do it	0	the user click "activity" icon — select "rental experience talk" under the events section — click "get a ticket" — then select the time — click confirm — check the information — click " get a ticket"	yeah pretty much the same as the previous task	...
6	You've choose the residence you want, now you need to use the app to edit your profile so that the landlord can see your information and make a choice, show me how you would do this	0	the user click the "profile" icon — then click " about me" start editing	i can see the profile ...yeah that's pretty obvious	...
7	Suppose you have successfully find a residence and the agency has sent you a contract, you're seeking for help to get a contract review from our rental club. Show me how you would do this.	0	now after booked a meeting with our professionals, the user has to be prepared to meet the meeting member. Kelly, the contract is too lawyer for detail checking (e.g. Terms of Agreements), the attorney will present the terms and conditions of the agreement that are relevant to the tenant's rights and obligations. If the lease agreement appears to be in fact infringe on the tenant's rights, the attorney will talk to the other agent and amend the terms and conditions until they meet the user's expectations.	oh yeah i remember how this works...click this...oh wow you guys has a lots professionals! i like this one... ok...	...

We have developed the user test through the **"Think aloud" method** which records the users' behaviour, comment and reflection by observation, and summarized the testing results by the **"SUS" questionnaire**.

User test can help us improve our prototype that has been formed on previous stage. By summarizing and reflecting the usability test, we can optimize the current products/services, and drive the final concept to meet user needs better.

Number	Task	Success 0 = Not completed 1 = Completed with difficulty or help 2 = Easily completed	User's reflection&comment
1	Find the rental club, join in and view "How to find a suitable rental for you" talk video	2	I feel like it's quite hard for me to attend the offline talk, since I've been exhausted after classes. I would prefer online talking more.
2	Suppose you have some issue about your rental residence choice, you want to book a meeting with club's member to help you, show me how you would do it	2	I can see that this club can help me in rental choices. But I'm wondering why I can trust you? I might concern a lot since it is a student-led organization.
3	You want to attend offline activity to find your residence, book a ticket of "Find your roommates/ sharing room" activity	2	Great app
4	You are now in "Find your roommates/sharing room" activity, try to find the residence that attracts you.	2	I like this activity, seems that I can find some friends/roomates here.
5	Suppose you want to attend "Rental experience in Aus" talk activity, show me how you would do it	2	Who will give the talk ? Are these professional person or experienced senior student?
6	You've choose the residence you want, now you need to use the app to edit your profile so that the landlord can see your information and make a choice, show me how you would do this	2	I think this page basically involves my basic information. It is quite important to show these living habits to have an agreement with the landlord.
7	Suppose you have successfully find a residence and the agency has sent you a contract, you're seeking for help to get a contract review from our rental club. Show me how you would do this.	1	How can I trust the people who view my contract? Can they be professional person? Do you have collaboration with other communities?



Phase 02

Reflection to User Test

After the user test, we discussed and concluded user's comment on our prototype, including service's advantages and limitations. We found out that there exists some common consideration from users, which reveals the deficiency in our prototype.

Advantages-Prototype

- Users think the whole service process is complete and easy to understand
- The club is attractive and interesting.
- The sharing talk is helpful, students can learn a lot from seniors.
- The activity of accompanying house viewings is useful
- The way to find residence is convenient and can efficiently reduce cost of living

Limitations-Prototype

- The property and orientation of the club are unclear
- Lack of authority leads to limited appeal
- Some of the ways of sharing information and resources are too academic that **lack emotion and interaction**
- Lack of documentation of **internal competency qualifications**
- Whether to cooperate with **external professional organizations**
- Not clearly state "How might we reduce cost of living pressures for people in Australia?"

What causes the limitations in prototype?

- We limited our thinking and planning in club's service process, ignored the set up of club and its basic operation mode
- We neglected user's mental process. What's their inner feelings when they participating in each activity.
- We use storyboard and timeline to explain the prototype, a demonstration video might be a better choice.

What causes the limitations of Usability Test?

- Only test the interface, ignore the **test for the whole service design**
- The prototype interface is **too high fidelity**, which causes the limitation to the feedback
- **The number of participants** is insufficient
- No well plan **the time limit for the user test**
- Insufficient **evaluation techniques**

Phase 03

Adjustments for the Final concept

According to the reflection to User Test, we made some changes to our prototype in respond to the design brief and user needs. The iteration mainly refects on **the nature of service, service flow and app interface**.

Identify the nature of our club-Who we are

Our rental club is an **accredited student organization** that helps international students with rental assistance.
Supported by the Australian Universities, we are committed to reducing the cost of renting pressures of International students, providing useful resources and appropriate shared housing & homestay patterns to help them find affordable and satisfactory residences.

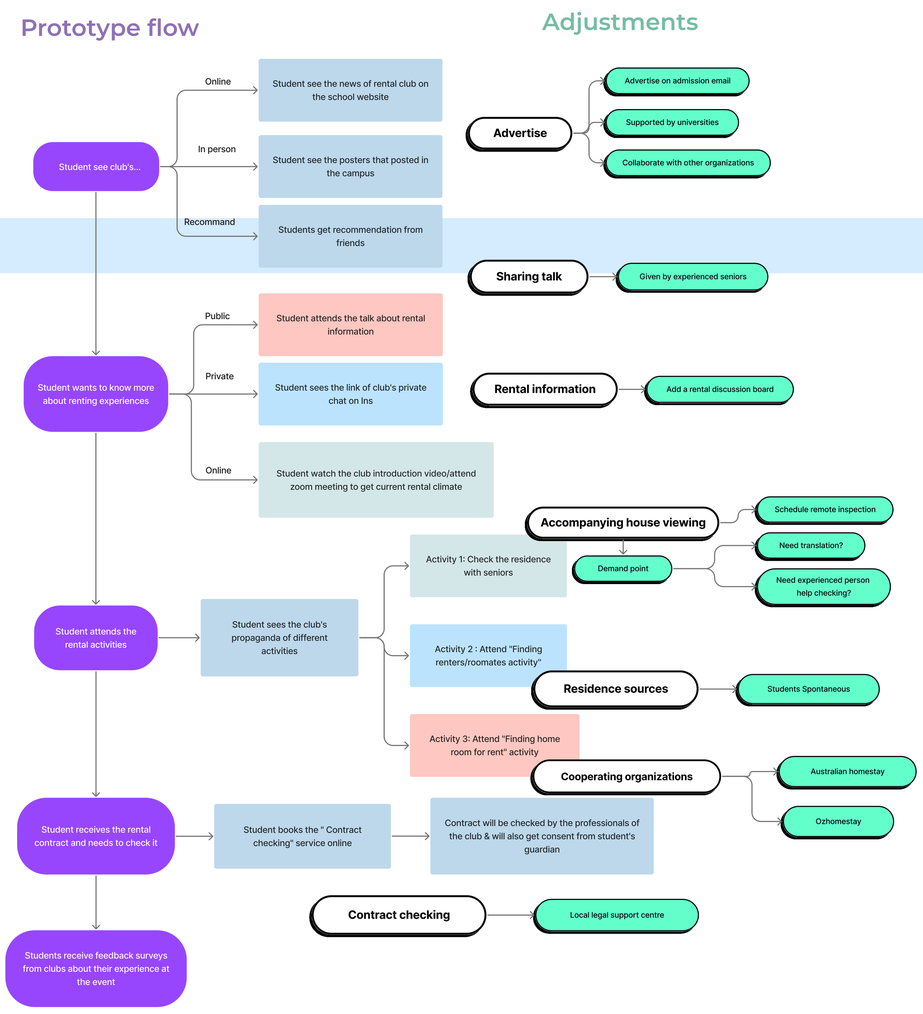
Adjustments for the service flow

1. **Advertise rental club-Enhance authority**
   - Declare that the rental club is supported by universities in Australia, also have strong partnership with local legal support organisations such as the Redfern Legal Centre. This collaboration significantly enhances the club's authority.

2. **Share rental information-Improve sociability and emotion**
   - In order to enhance the social element of this activity, for online rental information sharing sessions we will gather information from all parties involved through forums or WeChat groups to encourage centralized discussions. For our in-person information-sharing events, we'd like to providing an opportunity for international students to connect with experienced seniors who can offer valuable insights and advice on renting accommodations.

3. **Rental activities**
   - Accompanying inspection: Users can seek assistance from experienced seniors to conduct joint residence inspections, benefiting from their knowledge and expertise. Seniors can provide valuable advice, assist with translation, and facilitate communication with the agency.
   - Remote inspection: For individuals who have not yet arrived in Australia, they have the option to schedule online inspections. Seniors can act as substitutes, conducting inspections on their behalf and providing feedback on the residence.
   - Seek for co-renting activity: Consider both the landlord and the roommate habits to improve the satisfaction of sharing a room

4. **Contract review**
   - Establish a partnership with a professional legal support organization to ensure that users have access to expert assistance in case they encounter any contractual issues



Phase 04

Reflection to Final concept

Developing Possibilities

- **Use new technologies**, such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and more, to improve the rental service experience. For example, it **predicts rent trends** through data analysis, provides real-time rental information, and provides personalized rental advice for international students
- Develop **a virtual reality viewing platform** that allows international students to **remotely browse and experience** potential rental properties.

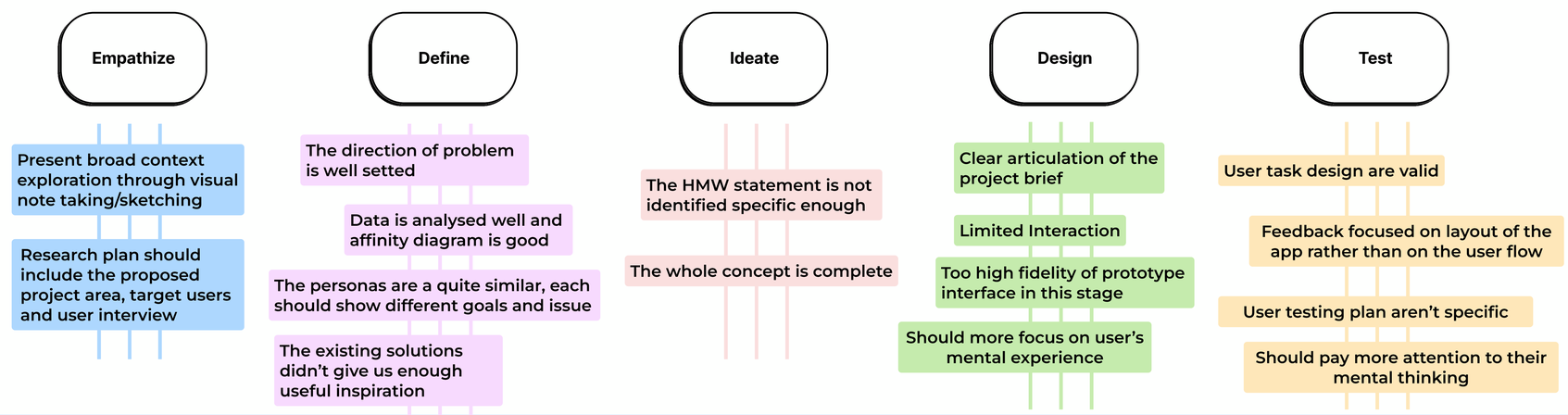
Limitations to final concept

- Facing the complex rental market in Australia, the rental club organized by students might **be limited to the capital, human and technical resources** to provide comprehensive and efficient rental services
- The supply of housing in **the international student rental market can be unstable**, which makes it difficult for student organizations to meet the rental needs of all international students

Phase 05

Reflection to the design process

Design process



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RENTAL CLUB

Final articulation of our current design concept

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Final design prototype

https://www.figma.com/proto/xmzXbLENonjlX4PVN0pxre/IDEA9106-Assignment-3?page-id=0%3A1&type=design&node-id=35-895&viewport=-1578%2C-3745%2C0.42&scaling=scale-down&starting-point-node-id=35%3A895&show-proto-sidebar=1

(Interactive prototype for Rental Club App)

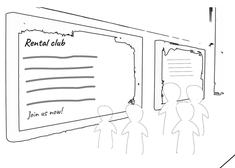
1. Advertise rental club

With support of university and other communities, Rental club is the official student organization, which can be accessed from university adimssion email/ school website/campus publicity

(Paper prototype for simulating offline club stall)

Online

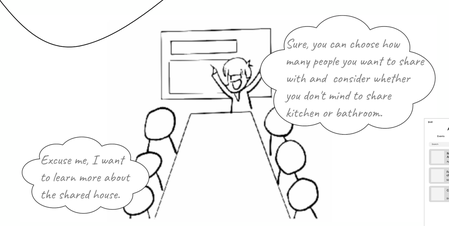
See Rental Club on the school website

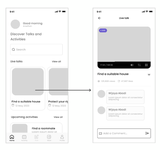


In-person

See the posters that posted in the campus

The construction of the club helps international students to share rental experience and resources, while helping them **adapt to the new environment**, providing them with **a social support network**, thereby improving the quality of services





Online

Live lecture

Join the Rental Club

Share rental information

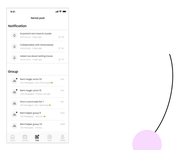
In-person

Seniors sharing talk

Attend private chat

Online

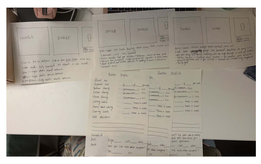
Rental discussion post



Know more about renting knowledge

2.Student attend the rental activities

Students can attend plenty of activities to seek for their residence. The activities are mostly conducted offline, providing different types of assistance in renting. Meanwhile, it also enable students to expand social circle.



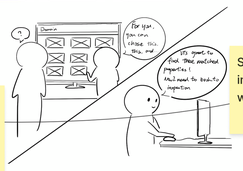
(Paper prototype for simulating offline activitiess)

Rental activites

1. Renting assistance

Students can ask for help during the renting process, including screening residences to choose cost-effective rent, get advices during inspection

Student selects several residences with seniors and get some advice



Student books the inspection on the rental website

(Paper prototype for simulating inspection activity)

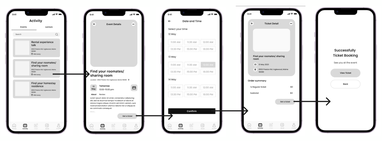
Student can book remote inspection if they are ooffsshore

Student can choose to view the residences together with seniors

Student can take some rental advice from the club's seniors

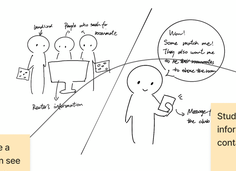
2."Finding residence/ roomates activity"

Students be able to find co-renting, sublease and landlord direct lease here.



Student see the information board from landlord and people who seek for roomates/sublease to share room and select the ones attract him/her

The board owners have a mutual choice, they can see student information from their profile

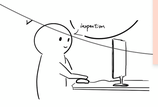


Students receive rental information from club and contact the residence owner

Consider whether or not rent this residence

3."Finding home room for rent"

Students can find homestay residence here, this is cooprated with other homestay organiztion platform



Student see the information provided by "Autralian homestay" and "Ozhomstay"

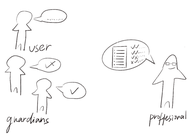
The lanlords have a mutual choice, they can see student information from their profile

Student recieve the decision that whether landlord be willing to rent room for him/her

Student upload their living preference and habits here to enable residence owner/ co-renting seeker find their ideal renter. In this way can release some rental competition presure, we aim to promote match patterns

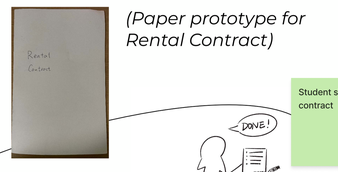
Student receives the rental contract and needs to check it

Student books the " Contract checking" service online



Contract will be review by the professionals of the club & will also get consent from student's guardian

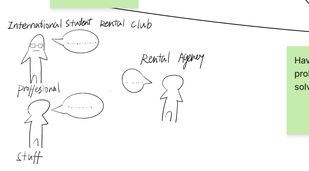
Any problems about the terms of contract?



(Paper prototype for Rental Contract)

Student signs the contract

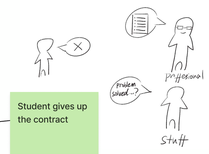
Club consult with the rental agency



Have the problems been solved?

Problem solved

Problem remained unsettled



Student gives up the contract

3.Contract Review

Once students have identified a rental property they wish to lease, they will receive lease terms from either a real estate agent or landlord. If students desire professional assistance to review the contract terms, they can book a contract review through our app. If any clauses are found to be detrimental to the students' interests, our lawyers will engage in discussions and amend the terms until they meet the students' expectations.

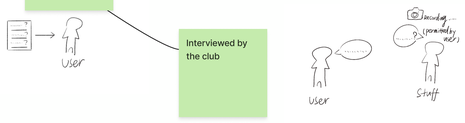
4.Feedback

We will collect feedback from students to help optimize the service in the future

Students receive feedback surveys from clubs about their experience at the event

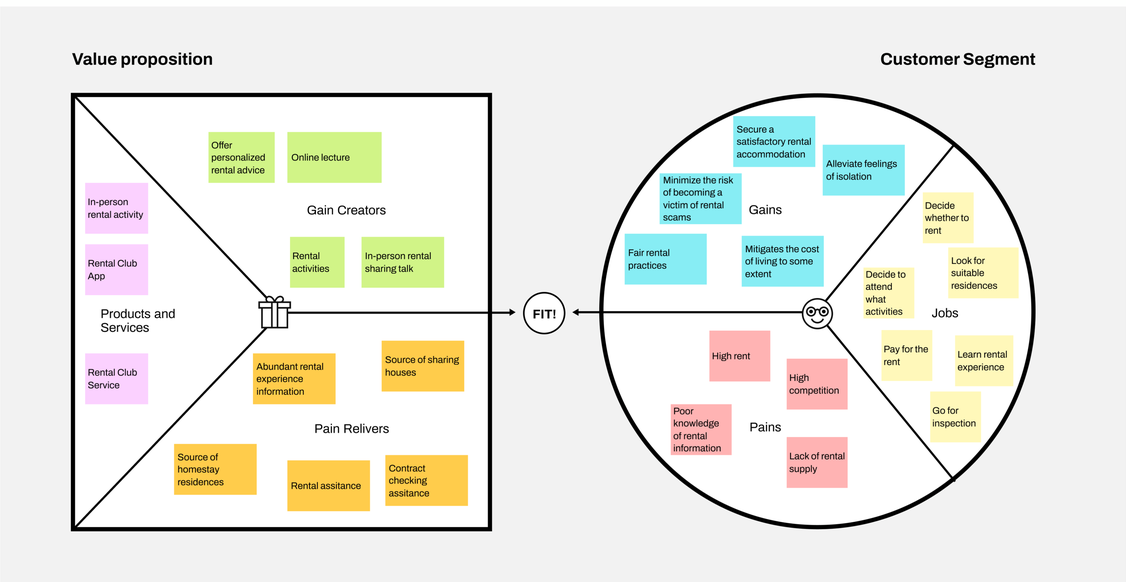
Sign in the questionaires about club's service

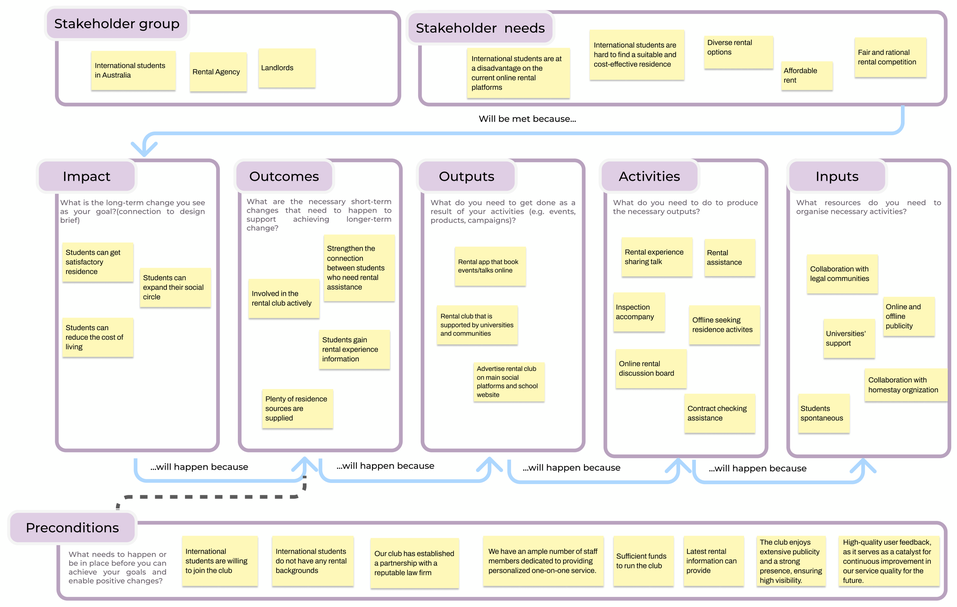
Interviewed by the club



Value proposition

We use "Value proposition" as the statement to explain the value of our design and the rationale for why user group would choose our product and service. It communicates the clearest benefits that our users would recieve by engaging in our design project.



Theory of change

Through the establishment of rental club and the provision of user-friendly software, our objective is to create a secure, comfortable, and reliable rental environment for our users. We are dedicated to streamlining the renting process, which enables users to not only save time and money but also find accommodations that meet their expectations. Ultimately, our aim is to contribute to the reduction of living expenses for our valued users.