

Plan for Accredian's communication dashboard feature—Accredian Connect

Background

To foster stronger connections within the student body, Accredian is developing a feature that helps students interact and engage with each other on the platform itself. Currently, students often rely on external communication networks like WhatsApp, Telegram, and LinkedIn for group discussions, collaboration, and professional networking. These external networks scatter student communication, making it challenging to maintain an academic focus. By integrating a communication dashboard within Accredian, we aim to consolidate these interactions, ensuring that students remain on the platform for their social, academic, and professional needs.

Problem Statements

1. **I am** a student who wants to interact with my classmates and collaborate on projects.

- **But** I'm struggling to organize and track discussions because I'm juggling multiple communication channels.
- **Because** external apps aren't tailored for academic or structured collaboration.
- **Which makes me feel** frustrated and scattered.

2. **I am** a student who wants guidance and support from peers and mentors.

- **But** finding mentors or study buddies on external platforms is difficult.
- **Because** there's no integrated feature that allows matching based on academic goals.
- **Which makes me feel** disconnected and unsupported in my academic journey.

3. **I am** a student interested in building my professional network and showcasing my skills.

- **But** I rely on LinkedIn and other sites where my academic identity is lost among other professionals.
 - **Because** there's no way to build my student profile within the learning platform.
 - **Which makes me feel** limited in building meaningful connections with like-minded peers.
-

Goals

1. **Primary Goal:** Create a single platform for students to communicate, collaborate, and support each other, minimizing the need for external communication tools.
 2. **Success Metric:** Increased daily active usage on the Accredian platform, high engagement rates within student groups, and a 50% reduction in the use of external networks for academic communication.
 3. **User-Centric Goals:** Simplify collaboration and networking by providing relevant functionalities tailored to academic and professional needs, like group chat, resource sharing, and mentorship.
-

Hypothesis & Feature Description

- **Hypothesis:** If Accredian Connect can offer a structured, interactive, and value-driven communication hub tailored to students' academic and professional needs, students will choose it over external platforms.
- **Feature Description:**

- **Sub-Communities:** Topic-specific groups that allow students to interact over shared academic interests.
- **Personalized Profiles with Skill Tags:** Profiles showcasing each student's skills, interests, and academic goals.
- **Real-time Chat and Voice Rooms:** Enables focused and efficient communication for study groups and projects.
- **Resource Sharing Hub:** Organized space to store and retrieve shared resources within study groups.
- **Study Buddy Matching:** AI-powered matching for study partners based on interests and schedules.
- **Collaborative Whiteboard and Task Management:** A tool for brainstorming, task assignments, and project management.
- **Mentor Connect:** Allows students to connect with mentors based on academic interests and career goals.
- **Achievement Badges:** Gamified rewards for active participation and knowledge sharing.

- **Event Calendar:** A central place to organize and manage events and study sessions.
 - **Impact on User:** These features will make Accredian Connect the one-stop hub for students, ensuring easy access to academic, social, and professional interactions within a structured environment. This will reduce the need for external networks and foster a stronger academic community.
-

Vision Narrative

Meet Sam, a second-year student at Accredian, who's looking to connect with classmates to prepare for upcoming exams. Sam usually juggles multiple WhatsApp groups and struggles to keep track of relevant study materials. He wishes there were an easier way to find study partners and stay organized.

One day, Sam notices the Accredian Connect feature on his dashboard. He creates a profile, tagging his areas of interest and academic goals. Within minutes, he's matched with a study buddy with similar goals. Sam joins his class's sub-community and starts using the resource-

sharing hub, where he finds helpful notes and can contribute his own insights.

Soon, Sam becomes a top contributor in the group, earning him an achievement badge that recognizes his efforts. Inspired, he decides to sign up for Mentor Connect, where he's paired with a senior student who shares insights into career paths aligned with his goals.

By the end of the semester, Sam has built a network of friends, organized several study sessions, and even attended a few campus events—all through Accredian Connect. He now feels empowered, organized, and connected, with no need to turn to other platforms.

Key Trade-Offs & Decisions

1. **Scope vs. Depth:** Initially, we could have implemented limited functionalities to launch quickly. However, after analyzing student needs, we decided to offer a broader set of features like mentor connect and whiteboards, prioritizing an in-depth, comprehensive experience.

2. **Real-time vs. Asynchronous:** Although real-time communication is resource-intensive, we chose to include it to mirror familiar, popular platforms and to encourage frequent use.
 3. **In-Platform Networking vs. LinkedIn Integration:** Instead of integrating LinkedIn, we decided on custom profiles with skill tags tailored to academic use, ensuring the platform remains focused on the student experience.
-

Concept Mocks

Below are initial wireframes for key functionalities:

1. **Home Dashboard:** Showing student profile, suggested study groups, and quick access to recent messages.
2. **Sub-Communities Page:** Organized by topics, each with group chats, shared resources, and events.
3. **Mentor Connect:** A profile search tool with available mentors, showcasing relevant profiles and easy scheduling options.
4. **Resource Hub:** A clean, searchable space for document sharing and organization.

5. Study Buddy Match: A simple matching interface with available students and a chat initiation button.

For illustration, I'll create some wireframes if required, or these can be outlined based on user flow.

Risks & Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Low User Adoption	Launch an onboarding guide to familiarize students with key features and demonstrate the platform's advantages over external apps.
Overwhelming Feature Set	Gradually release features, beginning with basic communication and sub-communities to ensure a smooth adoption curve.
Privacy Concerns	Implement strong privacy settings, allowing users to control who can view their profiles, join groups, or connect with them.

Resource and Data Management Issues	Store shared resources in an organized, accessible format with categorization tools. Utilize an efficient back-end database.
Over-reliance on Gamification	Ensure that badges and rewards are meaningful to avoid superficial engagement, focusing on community-driven participation.

Appendix: Research

Competitive Analysis:

1. **WhatsApp & Telegram:** Pros - real-time chat; Cons - lacks academic structure and resource organization.
2. **LinkedIn:** Pros - professional networking; Cons - geared toward professionals, not students with academic needs.
3. **Google Classroom/Drive:** Pros - document sharing; Cons - lacks engagement features and social networking.

Surveys & Metrics:

1. **Survey of Existing Students:** To assess primary communication channels and the value of features such as mentor matching and study groups.
 2. **Engagement Metrics from Competitors:** To understand retention and engagement benchmarks for chat and collaboration apps within educational platforms.
-

This feature plan for Accredian Connect not only consolidates essential academic interactions but also offers a unique, student-centered social network that builds loyalty and keeps students on the platform. The result is a dynamic, integrated community that supports academic growth, professional development, and meaningful student connections.