

- Service/Journey Design and UX
How might we simplify the process for first-year university students in finding residence and living, ensuring a user-friendly experience with available resources and support?
- Names of group members (first and last names, in alphabetical order by last name)
- Concept Statement. What is the vision of what you hope to design this term? Be very specific. Your concept statement is to be a summary of your project to be used as a synopsis or "boilerplate" description of your project in all of the deliverables. This is a high-level mission statement of your project. Include a description of the kinds of users expected, a brief statement of what users can do with it, and why it's useful (what problems it solves). Make sure you state the overall goals and objectives for your final deliverable, and who will benefit from its creation. Approx 1/2–1 page.
- Competitive analysis. What similar experiences are already in the marketplace (if any)? How do they compare? A matrix or similar graphic or table might make this easier to read and understand. Be specific and detailed Approx 1 page
- Content required for the project. What kinds of content will this project need to provide? I don't expect that you will have amassed all of the content yet—but you should at least have an idea of what the content categories will need to be. This can serve as an outline for the project, and I should be able to determine the content & flow that will be contained in the project. Approx. 1-2 pages.
- The UX Plan. This will undoubtedly change over the course of the term. But based on your readings and our lectures so far, what do you think (at least preliminarily) that you are going to need to do to design the vision that you've outlined in your concept statement? Think about the design process you are going to use to create your deliverable, and the steps involved (empathy, definition, design, research, prototyping, testing, iterations, etc.) What does your plan look like on a calendar? Create a set of mini deliverables (milestones), and due dates for yourself. This should be approximately 2-3 pages in length (narrative) plus a calendar with important milestones

- Concept Statement (Approx ½ - 1 pgs): Thea

As exciting as it is for first-year students entering university, it does come with challenges through the adulting journey. Such can be going through the process of finding and securing a living arrangement for the following year. For students, it can be difficult where and when to start looking, what resources to trust and even the varying costs depending on students' preferences. To address the needs of first-year university students, we hope to be able to create an experience that will help break down the process of finding a living arrangement that provides accessible resources and support that can be easily filtered to the needs of the student.

The expected and primary targeted users will be first-year university students who will soon be entering their second-year of university. Users will be able to engage in this experience to access information of available living options, costs, and process of securing it. Students will be able to take a short quiz that measures their preferences, needs and wants in which the system can filter for them immediate choices that will best fit them. Additionally, user-friendly resources including student support, virtual tours and a generated list of recommendations that align with their preferences can bring additional insight to students when searching for their living arrangement. It is hoped with the extra resources provided that users will be able to have a smoother time finding their living arrangement, as well as endure less stress during the search, empowering first-year students to make good decisions and enhancing their overall university experience.

Overall, we hope to be able to make it easier for first-year university students to find a living arrangement best suited for them. By providing accessible resources and personalized support, our experience hopes to enable a smooth navigation process to enhance well-being during their university time.

- Competitive Analysis (Approx. 1pg): Aryana

Whilst analyzing our concept on the map it is evident that there are other experiences available to help students find a living space that is personalized to match some of their needs such as location, preferred number of rooms, costs, and roommate matching. Most off-campus apartment companies in the Waterloo region such as, Preston House and Sage Living, include picture's of their properties, interactive maps, a common q&a section, management information, as well as have made some of their touchpoints user-friendly, with only some providing further resources such as floor-plans, roommate matchings, and virtual tours. However, one thing all of these experiences include is a brief questionnaire regarding the student's personal preferences so the platform can suit students with an accommodation it thinks is best.

Focusing on Preston House, the experience they offer students is an interactive map demonstrating their building locations and its proximity to the University. They also show building support services available, along with pictures of the exterior and interior of the building. Preston House allows students to book tours through their website that provides a user-friendly

experience through a simple questionnaire that asks questions such as building preference and gender-unit preference. However, the inability of Preston House allowing students to book virtual tours on their platform, or the lack of interactive virtual floor plans, along with limited information available on the pricing of their properties, limits students on the supposedly easy accessible information they need to make detailed, accurate decisions that fits their needs.

Sage Living distinguishes itself through having virtual floor plans available, as well as easy to use interactive 3D plans for students to view as if they were in-person walking around the unit themselves. They included simple touch points within the 3D plan that names and displays all the utilities and amenities available within the unit. Sage Living also differentiates itself from Preston's student platform experience by providing details with star bullets on what exactly is included in each floor plan, along with simple yet bolded details surrounding utilities and what one has to pay extra for. However, they have also not included information on the base price, nor resources on roommate matching, experience sharing nor budgeting guides for students.

Furthermore, a table is shown within appendix 1, analyzing both the advantages and disadvantages for both major off-campus housing experiences in relation to the features, details provided, and ease of user experience for the end-consumer. Whereupon, the tailored experience we hope to create not only will address the major concerns and improvements many students can see and physically experience when using these various off-campus experience platforms, where ultimately its inconsistent, unclear, and vague information can often leave students feeling more frustrated and stressed than before. Hence, we hope to address these concerns for first-year university students on a search for a living arrangement that best caters to their needs through making improvements, but also adding on features such as, clear price breakdowns, platforms for sharing experiences, detailed descriptions of the unit and more.

- Content Required (Approx 1-2 pgs): Netharrshan, Addin
 - What the relative price
 - What kind of places are available

As students dive into their first year away from home, a challenge that everyone faces is not just about finding a place to crash but discovering a spot they can call home. This platform aims to provide a comprehensive solution for students seeking top-quality student housing. It offers many listings of housing options, detailed descriptions, financial transparency, and a vibrant community-sharing area. The platform aims to redefine the student housing experience by fostering a network where students can find a home that not only meets their needs but also aligns with their aspirations and unique wishes. There are 12 different features we will highlight that help students make the best choice.

1. **Comprehensive List:** This platform includes detailed information for on-campus and off-campus residences. For on-campus residences, it includes dormitories, single or shared apartments, and accessible housing options which are more preferable to first-year students and for off-campus housing it includes a variety of apartments, ranging from tiny apartment units to multi-bedroom layouts, shared-housing with roommates, all conveniently located close to campus. Include information about accessibility features for disabled students, such as wheelchair ramps, elevators, and accessible parking.
2. **Detailed Descriptions:** On-campus dormitories offer convenience and common amenities such as study lounges and meal plans. They are normally leased by semester or academic year. Off-campus apartments provide a variety of floor designs and amenities, including fitness centers, and are often leased on a yearly basis with subleasing choices and parking availability. Shared housing or room rentals are an affordable option that offers adjustable lease terms and amenities based on the property and roommates. Each option offers different preferences and needs, so that students can find an ideal living arrangement.
3. **Compilation of Resources:** It's not just about finding the perfect place to stay; it's about ensuring that students have all the information and tools they need to thrive during their university experience. From practical tips on budgeting to insightful guides on navigating the intricacies of roommate dynamics, we've curated a diverse range of resources to address the various challenges that come with this transformative period. Need advice on time management, or perhaps insights on maintaining a healthy work-life balance? We've got you covered. Our commitment is to empower students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make the most out of their academic journey, creating a holistic and supportive platform that goes beyond the accommodation search.
4. **Access to Support Services:** This platform encompasses the university's different support services, which address a wide range of student needs and issues. It even has a university-run volunteer group that helps students find safer and better living options, as well as alerts them to housing frauds. It also includes a feature that allows you to call a special constable in an emergency. This platform works with local housing authorities to give information about affordable housing options and rental assistance programs.
5. **Price Breakdown:** Spell out the costs for different places so you can figure out where you can afford to live. This encompasses monthly average housing cost for on-campus living, off-campus rentals, room rentals, or shared-house arrangements with roommates.
6. **Budgeting Guides:** This platform also offers financial literacy resources to assist students in finding their ideal home and navigating adulthood on a budget. It offers help with budgeting, such as paying rent on time, meal planning, textbook or grocery shopping, and finding affordable entertainment options. The platform also provides information on

financial aid options and scholarships, specifically designed for housing costs. These resources help students explore opportunities for grants, loans, or scholarships to alleviate the financial burden of living expenses, allowing them to focus on their academic performance without financial stress. With these resources, students can navigate adulthood with confidence and not only save a lot of their money but also live in a better environment.

7. Integration: Stick some interactive maps in there that show where each residence is, how close it is to campus, what transportation options you got, and what's nearby. By integrating features like residence markers with pop-up details indicating distance from campus, available transportation modes, and nearby facilities such as grocery stores, restaurants, and recreational areas, students can make more informed decisions about their living arrangements.
8. User-Friendly Features: Let users filter residences based on where they want to be located - make it easy for them to find their dream spot. Provide multilingual support to cater to international students.
9. Platform for Sharing: This platform provides a unique chat feature designed for students to share updates, news, and personal experiences about their living situations and other topics of interest. It's a platform where students can spill the tea on their daily lives, offering advice, sharing stories, and connecting with others facing similar situations. This also serves as a place where students can express themselves freely and can build connections with other students.
10. Rating System: This platform offers a rating system, allowing students to submit responses on their housing situation, support services, and any accidents. Students can contribute helpful information to their friends by grading dormitory cleanliness, support staff attentiveness, academic advice, and maintenance workers.
11. Diverse Range of Students: Our platform is dedicated to creating an open and welcoming environment in which all students feel comfortable regardless of their background or special requirements. It hosts events and various informative sessions for all kinds of students whether they are domestic, international or students with any disabilities.
12. Resources for Special Requirements: Our platform includes a lot of resources for students with special requirements. Our aim is to ensure that every student has a positive and comfortable living experience. Moreover, our platform offers a dedicated section specifically designed to address the unique requirements of students with disabilities or special needs. Here, students can find information on accessible housing options, support services, and resources available on campus. Whether someone

requires mobility assistance or any other accommodation this platform will serve as the best place for them.

- UX Plan (Approx. 2 - 3 pgs):
 - Saailesh Narendran
 - Piranavan Ragavan

Appendix 1:

Preston House Experience

Advantages	Disadvantages
Easy interactive map demonstrating building proximities.	Lack of interactive floor plans for students to view.
Incorporates access to building support services.	Limited and/or unclear information on pricing and utilities .
Simple, easy questionnaire to gain basic individual preferences.	The inability to allow students to book virtual tools creates hassle for many students.

Sage Living Experience

Advantages	Disadvantages
Easy interactive map demonstrating building proximities.	Questionnaire is very broad, and does not take into consideration roommate matching.
Includes interactive 3D virtual tours, and interactive floor plans.	Information on base price is still unclear through the website.
Simple, user-friendly touchpoints and attention-grabbing details to show important details.	Limited resources available for students through websites such as no tips nor help guide for students.

February						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2 Deliverable #1 DUE	3

4	5	6	7	8	9 Progression Check	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23 Progression Check	24
25	26	27	28	29		

March						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 Progression Check	8	9
10	11	12	13 Deliverable #2 DUE	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21 Progression Check	22	23
24	25`	26	27	28	29	30
31						

April						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 Deliverable #3 DUE	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13

14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

UX Plan Write-up:

Empathizing:

Empathizing is the most crucial component of the process, as it holds the foundation of the end solution. The difference between the UX design process and the regular design process is the connection between the organization and users are prioritized throughout the process. The strength of the user engagement and connection between the organization and user can conclude the accuracy of the solution. By empathizing with the users, we understand their background, their difficulty, and feedback on how they can feel more at ease. This would be considered primary research, which is normally done in-person with strategies such as interviews, door-to-door surveys, card-sorting activities and more. Along with their response being recorded, their other reactions such as change in voice tone, hand gestures, eye movement, and all recorded and later analyzed within an empathy map. Realistically to discover trends within data, 10-15 participants would have to be recorded within the primary research, or else research would not be sufficient to start creating decisions. Additionally, secondary research would have to be conducted related to the questions and targets used in the primary research. Sources such as credible blogs, government statistics, and organization data would be examples of accurate secondary research. Secondary research would mainly be used to confirm the results in the primary research and whether the primary research is accurate.

Defining the statement:

After the empathizing stage is done and the problem exists, the defining statement can be made. The defining statement normally consists of the “how might we” statement and it can dedicate the purpose of the solution. By creating this statement, it can identify who the users are, the problem and what the solution will do.

Ideation:

Ideation is the process of the team coming up with solutions to our definition statement. Here the team would go through multiple processes of coming up with ideas but not settling on them. Here we would up as many ideas varying with unique solutions, to have the best chance on a solution. Then the team would decide on the screening process with ideas they like to pursue. Our team would ideally come up with one solution and back up just in case the first one did target the problem or fix what we thought.

Prototyping:

Prototyping is the phase where the team uses the idea that they came up with to their solutions. They make something physically interactive and can also be displayed. During this phase the team would decide different ways to make a physical prototype where a user can interact with it. This is not the final product, this more of a proof of concept that our solutions can be effective and like the users/consumer are interested in our product. In the end our goal is something our groups can create that a user interacts with. It is a good proof of concept that brings out ideas like having a physical form.

Testing:

Testing is taking our prototype the team came up with and running a test, to see if it solves our problem and well out users can interact with. Here we would collect our secondary research, The team would make selections of tasks and questions to ask a target user to participate in our testing phase. This would give them our prototype to see how a regular would use. Through these tests would find the positives and negatives of the prototype. Here is where our group would decide if we need to revert back to certain steps in the design thinking process. If the flaws are minor we could adjust the original prototype and improve. Otherwise if the flaws are major we as a group we need to decide what are the next steps to continue forward. The team would initially want to achieve the information through the testing phase making the deciding factor on what to do with the prototype.