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**SOEN 342**

**Phase 1**

# Abstract

Our objective is to create a platform that will benefit students struggling to keep up with academic demands. By veering away from traditional methods used by reputable services such as Wyzant, Pearson, The Princeton Review, and Skooli, and providing an intuitive service that rewards its users for progressing, we can incentivize students to be proactive about their education, and motivate them to learn. We aim on providing a gamified experience similar to Classcraft, but moreso geared towards a tutoring environment instead of a classroom. This, in turn, makes learning more engaging and interactive for both the student and the tutor.

# Part I: Market analysis

## Analysis 1: [The Princeton Review](https://www.princetonreview.com/academic-tutoring#!science)

The Princeton Review is an existing E-Academy platform that provides 24/7 assistance to students in need of a tutor. The platform itself can feel overwhelming as it is not very well organized, making it unclear to a potential user how they can benefit from the services provided. Indeed, many of the tabs' functionalities overlap with one another, and a clear description of the platform is difficult to find. Moreover, this service can be very expensive for students, providing very limited access for the amount charged. In fact, users are limited to 1 to 10 hours of service a month, the upper end of which will net them $339.99.

Our goal is to create a platform that will provide a much simpler navigation experience, and a more efficient way to display our available services in order to avoid deterring students looking for an intuitive solution. For example, upon creating a profile, our platform will prompt the user to select their desired subjects then pair them with a qualified tutor. They will then have the ability to view their tutor's relevant information such as their name, their reviews, their qualifications, and the subjects they tutor. In addition, our platform will attempt to cater to the student and tutor's availability, and automatically schedule sessions that are convenient for both parties.

Furthermore, we are aiming to offer the best support and services to everyone without alienating struggling students seeking to succeed academically due to high costs. In order to do so, we plan on offering a simple, affordable subscription plan, including a free trial that will allow students to dip their toes into the features our platform provides before committing to the service.

## Analysis 2: [Classcraft](https://www.classcraft.com/)

Classcraft is a platform which offers a reward program to encourage students to become better learners. It uses a format inspired by games to reward students with points, level increases and unlocks to motivate them to do better. Teachers can implement Classcraft into their classrooms. The students can then be added into the class, and the teacher and the parents can observe the progression and stats of the students. Reward points are earned through completing tasks, assignments, etc. Teachers can continuously see a student's scores and progression, and quickly intervene if the student is falling behind. Teachers can also see the level of interaction between students and a task, and gauge which activities are the most enjoyable to their students based on this metric. Additionally, Classcraft includes a discussion board, enabling classroom-wide communication, as well as private chat rooms between students.. The platform gives each student an equal opportunity to earn points. Instead of creating a competitive environment similar to most popular games, Classcraft encourages collaboration by using a class system, motivating students to support each other to improve.

Much like Classcraft, our platform will have a visual progression and reward system to motivate our students to keep learning. Our system aims to have many features revolving around the student-tutor relationship. We will provide several options such as personal meetings, a chat system, recordings, and a shared board system. Parents will also have the ability to keep track of their child's progress.

In terms of differences, Classcraft is more like a plug-in for teachers to integrate within their classrooms, similar to moodle or zoom. The platform is designed for a traditional schooling environment in which students attend their classes at a given time and have no flexibility in choosing their courses or their instructors e. A teacher would implement this in their class if they like the features Classcraft has to offer. Classcraft is geared toward teacher-classroom relationships, and cannot offer a more personal experience for students. There is therefore no free subscription trial nor specific classes offered in Classcraft. With *Something Clever*, students will have the opportunity to personalize their experience thanks to the ability to select the courses they need help with, and to have one-on-one sessions with their tutor.

## Analysis 3: [Superprof](https://www.superprof.ca/)

Superprof is an online platform where tutors can independently offer their teaching services, while students can search for them and book tutoring sessions.

The highlight of this website is its modern and eye-catching User Interface (UI) design. The chosen font looks contemporary and is easily readable, the color palette is simple and consistent throughout the website, and the different components are well spaced out, which provides a sense of welcomeness and breathability. Moreover, everything that is shown has a purpose. In other words, there is no superfluous content that bloats the experience, making the platform very straightforward and efficient to use.

Unfortunately, while the Superprof website is very good, it is not perfect. Indeed, we find that the search result page displaying the different tutors available looks similar to a dating app, taking away from some of the platform's credibility. We would improve on this flaw by making our tutor profiles look more professional by reducing the size of their display pictures, and accentuating their description and qualifications to highlight their skills and abilities. Furthermore, being only available between 6:00 AM and 2:00 PM from Monday to Friday, Superprof's support service hours are fairly limited. Our plan is to offer support every day from 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM so we can accomodate to people who are busy during the day.

## Analysis 4: [Wyzant](https://www.wyzant.com/)

Wyzant is an E-Academy platform that provides 1-on-1 lessons with freelance tutors online or in person. Tutors can independently sign up to Wyzant and offer their services directly through the platform, while students have the ability to freely search for a tutor that can meet their needs.

Using the search bar, students can type keywords for specific subjects and filter through the tutors that fall under their required price range, experience, and credentials. Each tutor profile has ratings and reviews that allow students to compare and choose the best tutor for themselves. Before booking a lesson, students can chat with their potential tutor directly through the Wyant website or application to ensure that they are a match. Additionally, Wyzant offers a “Good Fit Guarantee” which provides the first hour free if the first lesson is not satisfactory.

On the tutor's end, they are given the ability to create a free profile and receive immediate access to tutoring opportunities in their subject of expertise. In addition, they can select their students, set their rates, and get paid through direct deposit for a quick and secure payment.

The main similarity between Wyzant and our system-to-be is the option for students to view a tutor's profile and touch base with them through a chat system before deciding to enroll in their lessons. In terms of differences, we will provide a point system that will allow students to progress, motivating them to keep learning through rewards and recognition. Our system will help create a tutor-student relationship in which tutors will be awarding these experience points based on their student’s performance. In addition, tutors within our system can propose to schedule and create sessions for their students based on their needs, whereas Wyzant’s system works solely for students hiring tutors for case-by-case scenarios.

## Analysis 5: [Pearson](https://www.pearson.com/en-us.html#main-content-starts)

Pearson is a learning platform providing resources for students and educators alike. Students can have access to labs, lessons, programs that let them track their progress, and a collection of free use textbooks for class. The platform also includes a section to find and purchase books and tools for specific courses as well as a “Build your curriculum” feature for users to browse through programs and create a more personalized learning experience.

The user interface presented by the website is simple, easily readable, and intuitive. Navigating through the main page is rather satisfying, as the colors used are not overwhelming and every section is clearly separated through cards or panels that make it natural to follow. Navigating to the “Pearson+ Channels” section presents the user with another eye-catching page, containing more vibrant colors and modern visuals. While the user interfaces of these pages are charming aesthetically, there is a clear inconsistency between their designs. In fact, some more specific pages, which might not have been updated, present an overwhelming amount of information and an intrusive navigation bar that may take up a large part of the screen.

Pearson offers a platform comparable to *Something Clever*, as they are both websites that propose services to students and educators directly within their interface rather than redirecting to other applications. Both platforms offer tutoring services, practice problems, as well as personalized tests to review material. Another similar concept between our e-academy platform and Pearson is the subscription model that comes with multiple services such as access to a curated list of hired tutors, a progression system, reviews, etc. The display that Pearson opted for, however, is rather limited. Students browsing our website will be able to choose from a plethora of tutors for a specific subject of their choice and navigate through the list in an efficient manner through the use of filters and keywords among other things.

## Analysis 6: [Skooli](https://www.skooli.com/)

An interesting E-tutoring website we found appealing was Skooli. Skooli is a 1-on-1 tutoring platform, where students in need receive private tutoring lessons from a certified tutor. The tutors at Skooli are only matched with one student at a time to maximize the attention dedicated to the student.

With Skooli, students will rarely need to sign up, as most Learning Management Systems used by schools are integrated in the sign-in system. Therefore, a student will only need to sign into their LMS account to access Skooli. Once signed in, the extensive list of Skooli tutors will be searched for a match with the student’s needs. If needed, the student can also easily drop in their homework for help from any adequate tutor. When matched, the student and tutor will be able to communicate via live audio. To properly tutor, both parties will have access to the multi-user whiteboard functionality which will allow them to share their thoughts as if in a class. Skooli's UI is also very extensive and offers almost every menu option a student might think of.

Multiple features in Skooli’s system are desirable in any E-academy system. *Something Clever*, for example, matches Skooli’s multi-user whiteboard with a shared board system where every user will be able to write and draw on the same board. *Something Clever* will also allow live audio communication to minimize wasted time on typing.

Though Skooli's system and website seem very complete, the UI does feel rather cluttered, having multiple navigation items each of which is filled with text and options. Such a design choice can seem very discouraging for a new user, especially a young student. Additionally, we noticed that Skooli's system lacks the services to encourage parent engagement and communication with the tutors. We believe that it is important for parents to be able to easily see and track their young students’ progress. Therefore, *Something Clever* includes the possibility for parents to register many of their children themselves. Parents will then be able to track the progress and achievements of the child, all the while receiving constant feedback and comments from the tutor on the child’s progress. Parents can even watch recordings of every session to ensure the tutoring is at their desired pace.

# Part II: E-Academy Presentation

## Users

### Students

* Can create an account.
* If the student is over 18 years of age, they can sign up for a subscription and receive a free trial.
* Can create and personalize an avatar to represent their progress on the platform. Said avatar has a list of basic cosmetics available, with more to be unlocked as the student uses the platform.
* Can select specific subjects on their profile to pinpoint their tutoring requirements.
* Can create a schedule to mark their tutoring availability.
* Can keep track of their progress and statistics through a level-based system using their avatar. As the user progresses, their avatar's level will increase and they will be rewarded with cosmetics and other benefits (such as account page designs, sound effects, and more) decided by their tutor(s).
* Can view their assigned tutor's profile and decide whether or not they fit their needs. If they do not want to be paired with a specific tutor for whatever reason, they will have the option to search for another one.
* Can view recordings of past tutorial sessions.
* Can communicate with the tutor through a chat system.
* Can connect to the shared board and will have limited access to features such as drawing and writing if the tutor enables it.
* Can upload/download relevant documents.
* Can cancel/postpone tutoring sessions.

### Parents

* If the student is below 18 years of age, the parent can create their account, sign up for a subscription, and receive a free trial.
* Can be assigned to multiple student accounts (the parent account can create an account for each of their children, and will have parental access to all of them).
* Can receive an overview of a student's progress and profile.
* Can review their children's tutor's profile and decide whether or not they fit their needs. Like the student, if the parent does not want the services of a specific tutor, they can decide to search for a new one.
* Can view recordings of their children's past tutorial sessions if the student account is set to let parents view their recordings.
* Can communicate with the tutor through a chat system.
* Can upload/download relevant documents for their students.

### Tutors

* Can create a profile and set up a schedule of availability.
* Can connect to the shared board.
* Has access to features such as drawing, writing, uploading documents, and creating exercises on the shared board and can provide limited access to the student if needed.
* Can assign exercises to students during and after tutoring sessions.
* Can view an overview of their assigned students' profiles.
* Can receive requests for new students requiring tutoring if a schedule match is found.
* Can decide whether or not to accept a student's request for tutoring.
* Can give experience points to students based on performance and completing exercises.
* Can select rewards for students based on their progress (cosmetics, or other as discussed above).
* Can view recordings of their past tutorial sessions.
* Can communicate with their students via a chat system.
* If the students are under 18, they can also communicate with their students’ parents.
* Can cancel/postpone tutoring sessions.
* Can schedule and create sessions for their students.

### Administrators

* Can add tutors to the system.
* Can manually match student and tutor schedules.
* Can reassign tutors to students.
* Can access all student and tutor profiles and uploaded course materials.

## Proposed Features

* Account creation
* Profile/avatar creation and customization
* Automated tutor-student schedule matching
* Chat system
* Shared board system:
  + Drawing
  + Writing
  + Pasting images/documents
  + Exercises with answers only visible to the tutor
  + Video calling
  + Recording
* Progression system:
  + Avatar experience and levels
  + Cosmetic rewards based on progression
  + Statistics
* Homework assignment
* Document and recording viewing
* Tutor approval system for students/parents
* Student approval system for tutors

## Project Value

According to the University of Chicago, student performance can improve dramatically if presented with an immediate reward or incentive [1]. In the current zeitgeist of instant gratification, it is crucial to provide students with a learning experience that caters to their needs.

Most tutoring services act as a tool to facilitate communication and connection between tutors and students, while following traditional tutoring paradigms. Our goal is to provide a platform that goes beyond the standards of regular tutoring, and incentivises students to perform well and stay motivated by offering short-term objectives and rewards.

By providing necessary features for online learning such as a shared board, and a chat system, students using our platform will have all the tools they need to excel in their desired subjects. And through our original experience points system, we gamify the act of studying to make it an enjoyable experience for students and tutors alike. Thanks to this system, we can offer incentives to entice the user to keep using the platform without feeling demoralized.

## Requirement Elicitation Techniques

Here are some requirement elicitation techniques that our team used to create our features list and platform specifications:

### Brainstorming

As a team, we met together to have a brainstorming session during our introductory meeting. After doing some brief initial research and being inspired by the already available services, we came up with many of the fundamental ideas that became the basis of our proposal for an E-Academy platform.

### Interview

Members of our team reached out to the stakeholders for our project (those being, the TA who was in charge of managing the project for this class, Ahmed Rebei, and the class professor, Joumana Dargham) so that we could interview them on the specifics and details regarding what needed to be done regarding our platform. This happened during and after class, through emails, and during scheduled meetings between the TA and the team.

# References

[1] Harms, W. (2012, June 26). *Immediate rewards for good scores can boost student performance*. University of Chicago News. Retrieved September 28, 2022, from <https://news.uchicago.edu/story/immediate-rewards-good-scores-can-boost-student-performance>