



App Redesign: UniLeeds

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Introduction

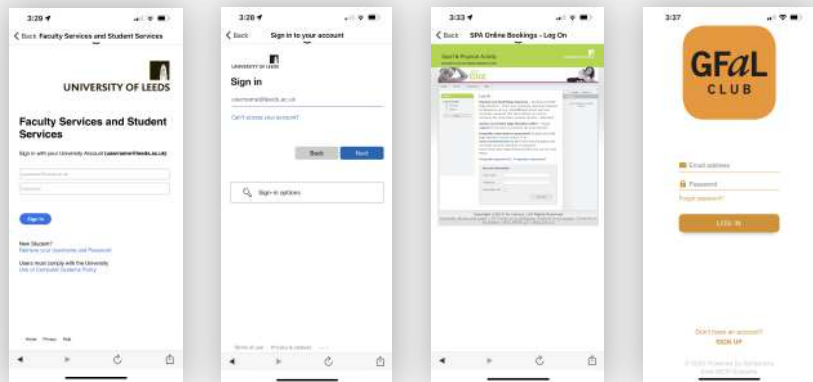
As a student of University of Leeds, the UniLeeds app is an integral part of our student life. With a need to use the app on a daily basis in support of our academic life, I have been able to make some personal observations with respect to the limitations of the User Experience (UX) it offers and the inadequacies in the User Interface (UI) that can be improved upon. It is for this reason, I decided to choose the UniLeeds app for the App Redesign project.

However, keeping in mind the constraints of the timeline, this project focuses on offering design solutions for only a few pain points listed below, observed solely from a student's perspective:

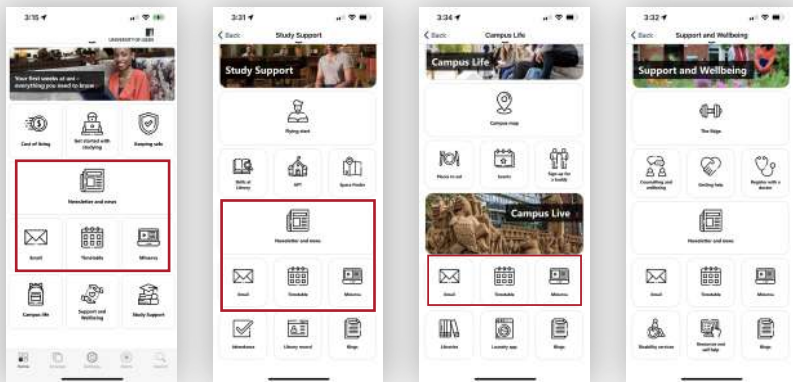
- A. The app requires the user to perform multiple sign-in tasks to access various university portals which makes it a tedious, time consuming and recurring experience for the user.
- B. The functional categories of the app comprise of repetitive options and the functions that are most relevant/ in-demand with the users are either not integrated or are not quickly accessible which can be an unsatisfying experience for the user.
- C. The 'Alerts' icon/feature is not functional. It does not provide the user with any notifications.
- D. The layout of certain UI elements results in unnecessary utilization of space.
- E. The overall appeal of the app is not in line with the current UI trends and lacks an emotional impact.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the aim of this project is to refine the UX/ UI design of the app in order to enhance its usability as defined by UXPA (2014). The same can be accomplished by drawing on selected principles of the elements of UX (Hartson and Plya, 2012), Usability Heuristics (Nielson, 1994) and the dimensions of Interaction design (Smith and Silver, 2007).

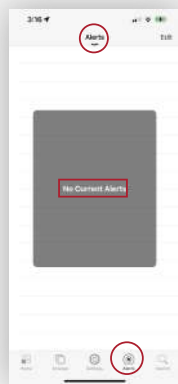
A.



B.



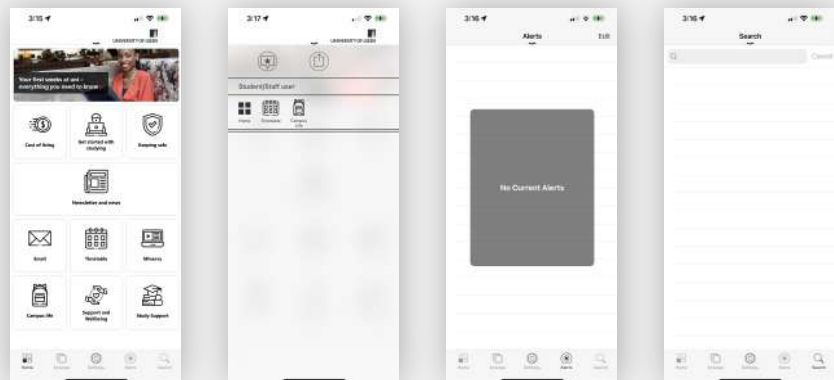
C.



D.



E.



Idea Generation

Empathize: Being a frequent user of the app myself it was easy for me to empathize with user needs and examine the usability of the app from a student perspective. I performed an in-depth study of the app keeping in mind the principles of the elements of UX (Hartson and Plya, 2012), Usability Heuristics (Nielsen, 1994) and the dimensions of Interaction design (Smith and Silver, 2007) and made a note of all my observations highlighting the key challenges and the areas of opportunity for making the app more user friendly. Listed below are a few design solutions brainstormed for each of the 5 focussed pain points:

A. The app requires the user to perform multiple sign in tasks to access various university portals which makes it a tedious, time consuming and recurring experience for the user.

- It will be useful to include a one-time log in task/ screen right at the beginning of the user flow, signing into a user profile with student information that will be accepted across all university portals.

B. The functional categories of the app comprise of repetitive options and the functions that are most relevant/ in-demand with the users are either not integrated or are not quickly accessible which can be an unsatisfying experience for the user.

- Revisit and regroup all functions according to most relevant/ frequently used functions and eliminate any repeat categories or functions.
- It will be useful to integrate functions that are in demand with the user but are not available on the app or are not directly accessible such as Microsoft Teams, Calendar (with embedded school timetable), Campus Map (with embedded Space Finder), Student Services (for Academic Records, Module Enrolment, Absence Notification, Payment Gateways and so on), Leeds University Union, Edge, Great Food at Leeds, Career Services, Accommodation and Support (includes all forms of suppose, study, campus, wellbeing and so on).
- Additionally, it will also be useful to incorporate features such as day, date, time, current location and weather update to further the practical value of the app.

C. The 'Alerts' icon/feature is not functional. It does not provide the user with any notifications.

- While the app does have a UI component representing 'Alerts', however, the app fails to notify the user with any updates. Thus, it will be helpful to add a functional notification icon for notifying user with new emails, announcements, upcoming calendar events, teams alerts and so on.

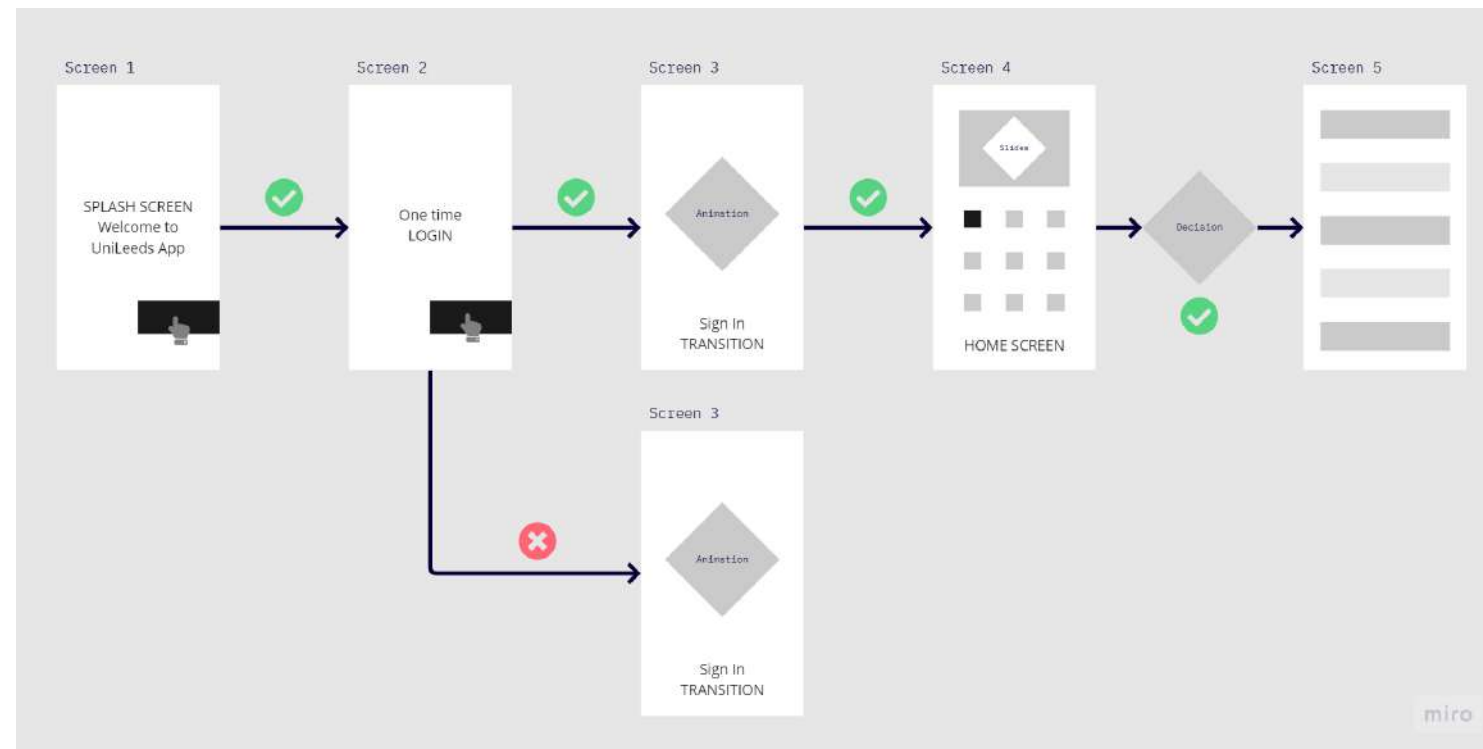
D. The layout of certain UI elements results in unnecessary utilization of space.

- Regrouping and identifying key functions also allows us to do away with the 'Arrange' icon and the drop-down menu being redundant.
- Strategically reallocating the screen space keeping all UI components in an organised and structured manner without losing the essence of the app and making it easy to understand and use so enabling the user to navigate through it faster every time (Nielsen, 1994).

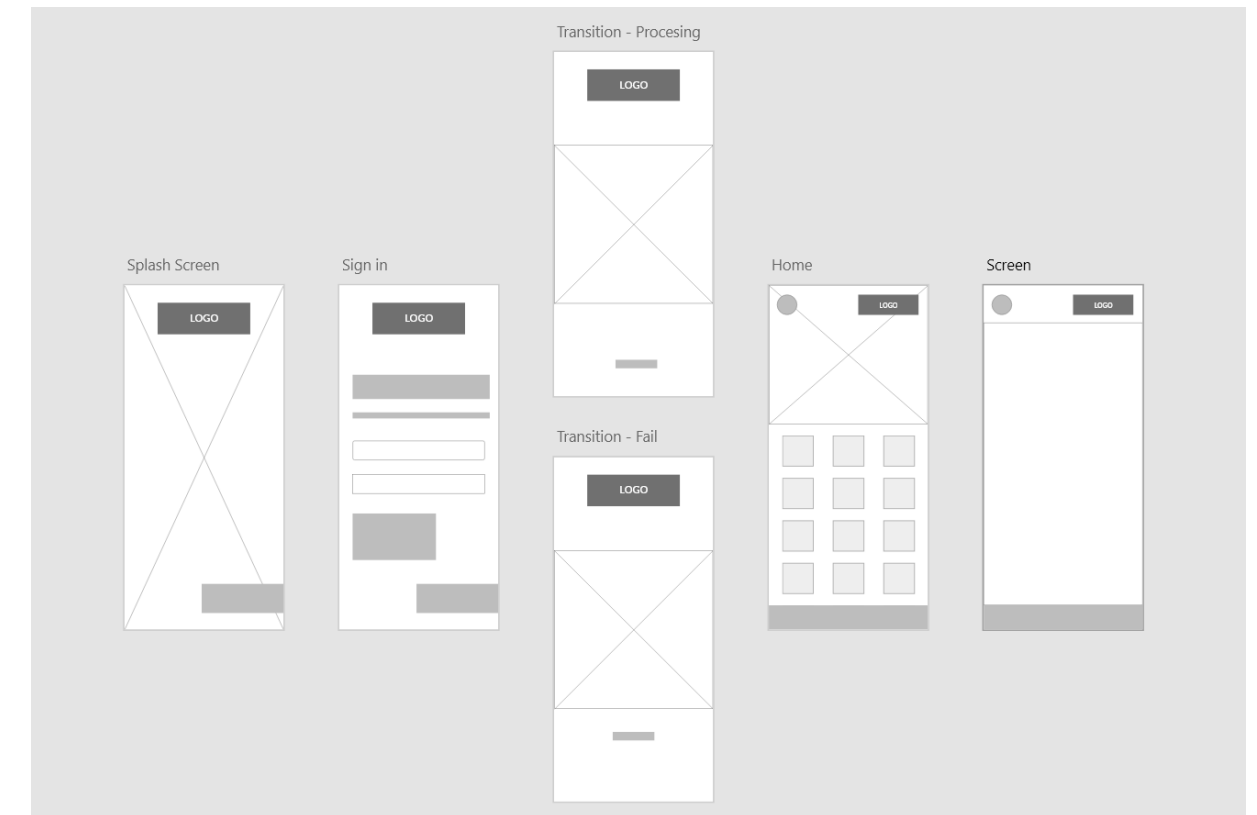
E. The overall appeal of the app is not in line with the current UI trends and lacks an emotional impact.

- According to Smith and Silver (2007) the visual representation is one of the key dimensions of interaction design. Since the University of Leeds brand colours are in black and white, we are limited in our scope of UI colour themes, however, we can attempt to enrich the UI appeal by following modern UI design trends in line with the colours of the brand and featuring more eye-catching UI components.
- We can also explore the opportunity for the use of animated illustrations and icons wherever possible, for instance, during page transitions, adding aesthetic value to the app, engaging the user's attention and generating an emotional impact (Hartson and Plya, 2012).

Development



User Flow: Once the fundamental limitations of the app were analysed alongside the opportunities for implementing specific design solutions, a general user flow to represent the proposed solutions was mapped drafted using the user flow template available in Miro.



Low Fidelity Wireframes: Based on the user flow I created low fidelity wireframes on Adobe XD which helped me in translating the proposed ideas into a more structured user flow and providing a blueprint for designing a working prototype of the app with all the essential UI components.

Development

High Fidelity Wireframes: Taking inspiration from a combination of Behance, Dribbble and Pinterest resources on current/ modern mobile app UI design trends in black and white I began styling the low fidelity wireframes. While most of the UI components were created in Adobe XD, the Adobe XD plugins were used to source the icons and the animated illustrations. A mix of line and filled icons have been strategically used to maintain a clean minimilastic look at the same time generating enough contrast for engaging the users and guiding user actions.

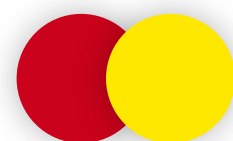
Keeping the essence of the brand colours in mind, the entire UI design follows a colour theme of black, white and grey. However, small elements of colours have been featured in the form of illustrations, notifications, time of the day and some hover/toggle modes to instil recognition, create emotional impact and break the monotony of the appeal.

The fonts used follow a distinct hierarchy across the UI design for ease of comprehension and readability. Lato is a popular choice of typeface in modern UI design associated with characteristics such as professional, clean, young, warm, approachable, easy to read (Xiao, 2016) and effortlessly complements our app.

Colour Pallete



#000000 #727272 #BDBDBD #EFEFEF #FFFFFF

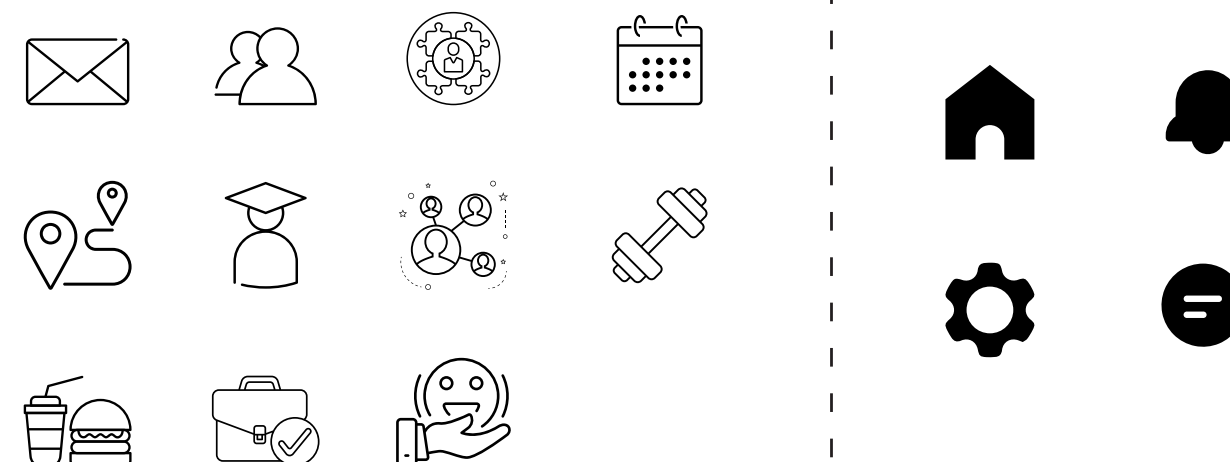


#D0021B #FFEE00

Typeface

Lato
Heading 1
Heading 2
Body Copy
Body Copy

Icons (Line and Filled)



Animations (Illustrations and Icons)



Logo Variations (White and Black backgrounds)



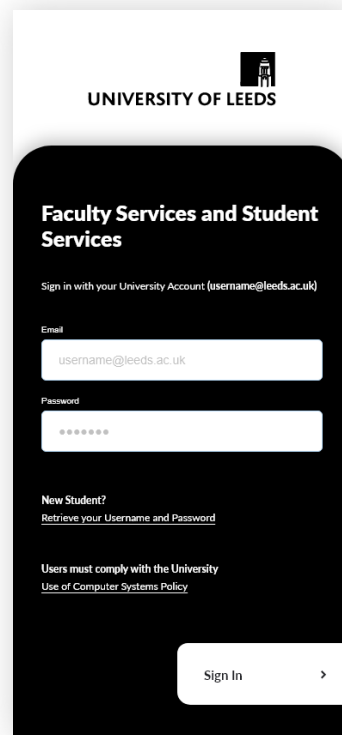
Development

SPLASH SCREEN



ATTEMPT TO ENRICH THE UI APPEAL BY FOLLOWING MODERN UI DESIGN TRENDS IN LINE WITH THE COLOURS OF THE BRAND AND FEATURING MORE EYE-CATCHING UI COMPONENTS.

ONE-TIME LOG IN TASK/ SCREEN



USER PROFILE WITH STUDENT INFORMATION



USE OF ANIMATED ILLUSTRATIONS AND ICONS WHEREVER POSSIBLE, FOR INSTANCE, DURING PAGE TRANSITIONS, ADDING AESTHETIC VALUE TO THE APP, ENGAGING THE USER'S ATTENTION AND GENERATING AN EMOTIONAL IMPACT

ADD A FUNCTIONAL NOTIFICATION ICON FOR NOTIFYING USER WITH NEW EMAILS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, UPCOMING CALENDAR EVENTS, TEAMS ALERTS AND SO ON.

STRATEGICALLY REALLOCATING THE SCREEN SPACE KEEPING ALL UI COMPONENTS IN AN ORGANISED AND STRUCTURED MANNER

ADDED FEATURES SUCH AS DAY, DATE, TIME, CURRENT LOCATION AND WEATHER UPDATE TO FURTHER THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE APP.

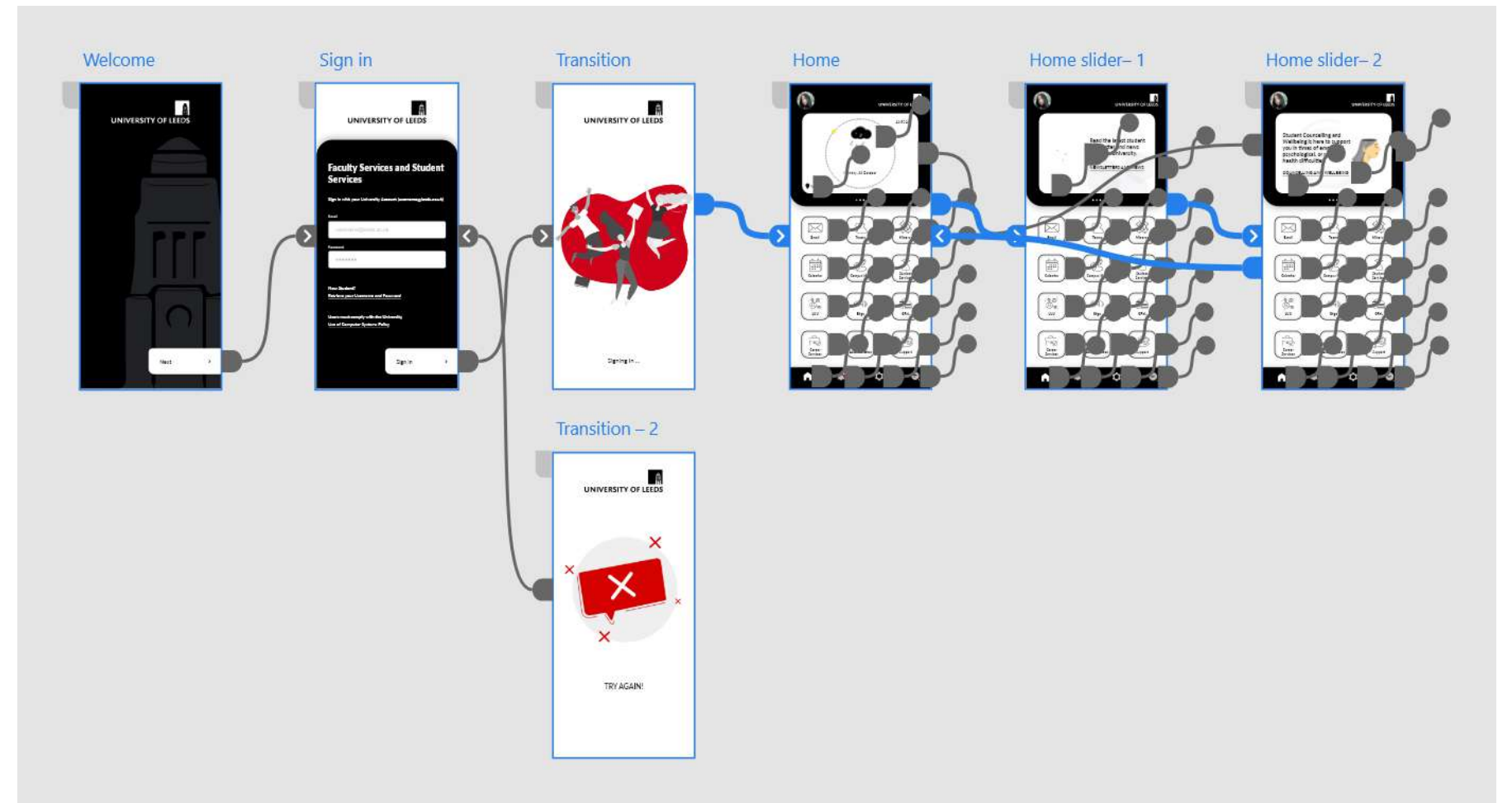
REPEAT CATEGORIES OR FUNCTIONS ELIMINATED. REGROUPED ALL FUNCTIONS ACCORDING TO MOST RELEVANT/ FREQUENTLY USED FUNCTIONS

INTEGRATE FUNCTIONS THAT ARE NOT AVAILABLE ON THE APP OR ARE NOT DIRECTLY ACCESSIBLE SUCH AS MICROSOFT TEAMS, CALENDAR (WITH EMBEDDED SCHOOL TIMETABLE), CAMPUS MAP (WITH EMBEDDED SPACE FINDER), STUDENT SERVICES, LEEDS UNIVERSITY UNION, EDGE, GREAT FOOD AT LEEDS, CAREER SERVICES, ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT (INCLUDES ALL FORMS OF SUPPORT, STUDY, CAMPUS, WELLBEING AND SO ON).

Development

Prototyping: The high-fidelity wireframes were used to create a working prototype of the redesigned app on Adobe XD. Mostly Tap transitions have been used to navigate from one screen to another following the user flow. Time triggered transitions have been applied to a transition screen for signing in and to the auto animate slides on the home screens promoting important services offered by the university. These interactions have been inbuilt specifically to engage user attention and evoke an emotional response. Additionally, hover/ toggle states of UI components have been designed with significant contrast to the default states of the components to effectively guide user action and provide smooth navigation experience in the app.

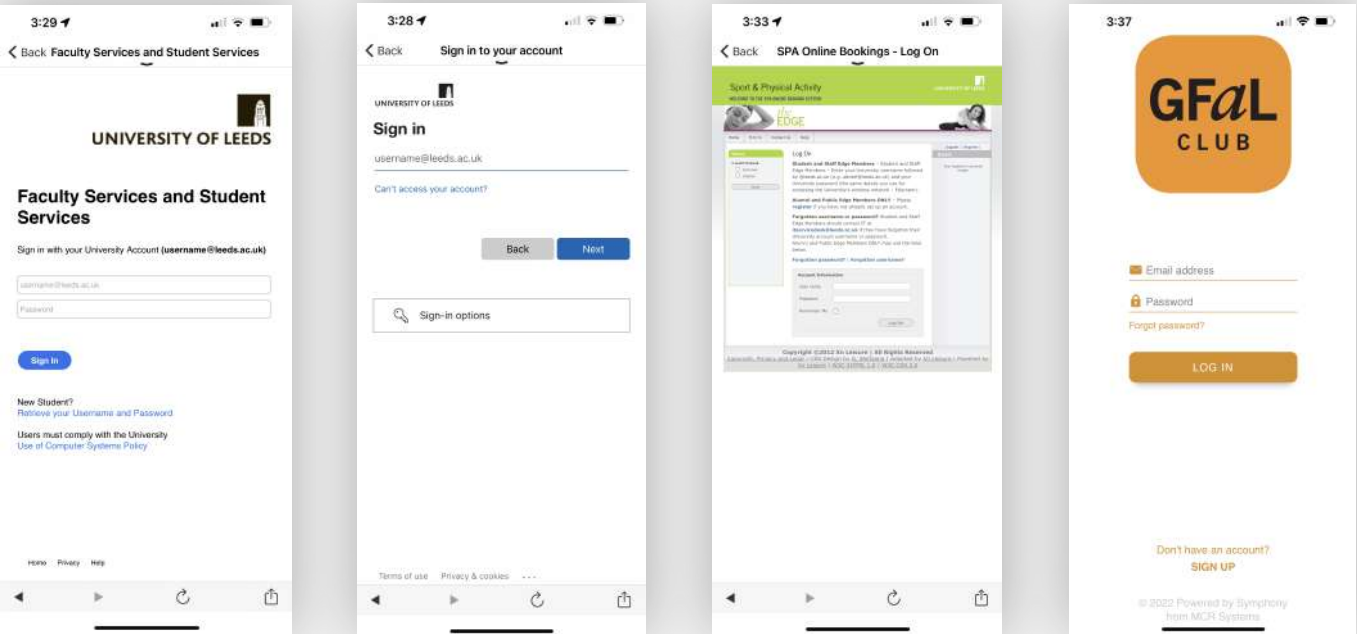
<Working prototype video file uploaded to submission link on Minerva separately>



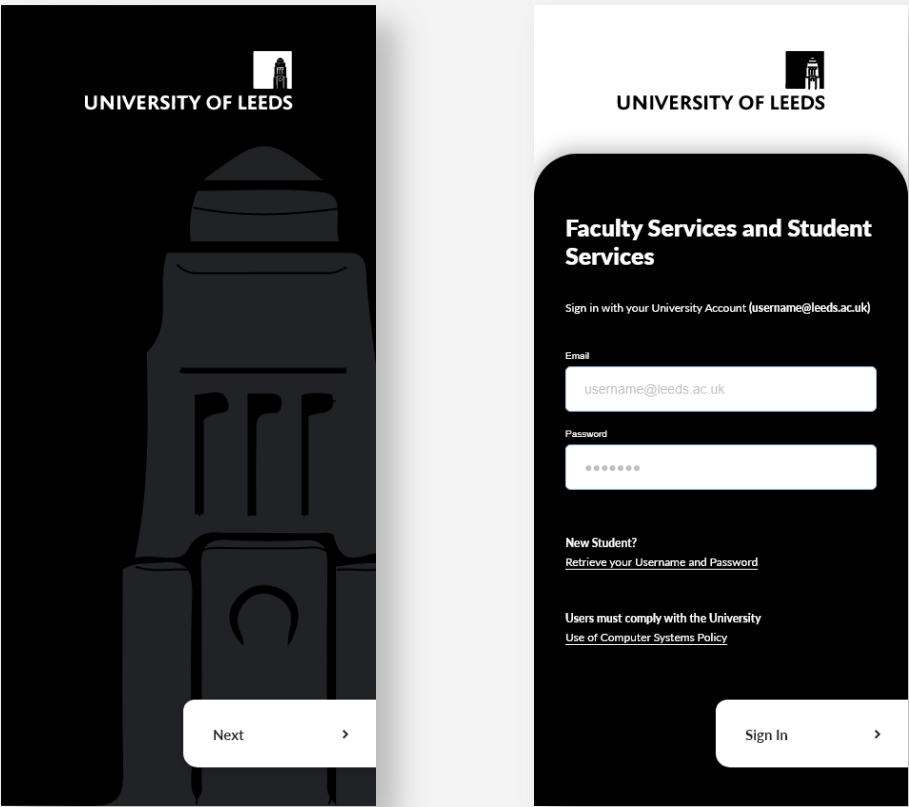
Final Outcome

The final prototype of the redesigned app is focussed on improving the user experience and user interface based on selected principles of the elements of UX (Hartson and Plya, 2012), Usability Heuristics (Nielson, 1994) and the dimensions of Interaction design (Smith and Silver, 2007). The issues addressed and improvements introduced can be viewed in the following before and after comparative demonstration:

BEFORE: No welcome screen and multiple sign in tasks to access various university portals.

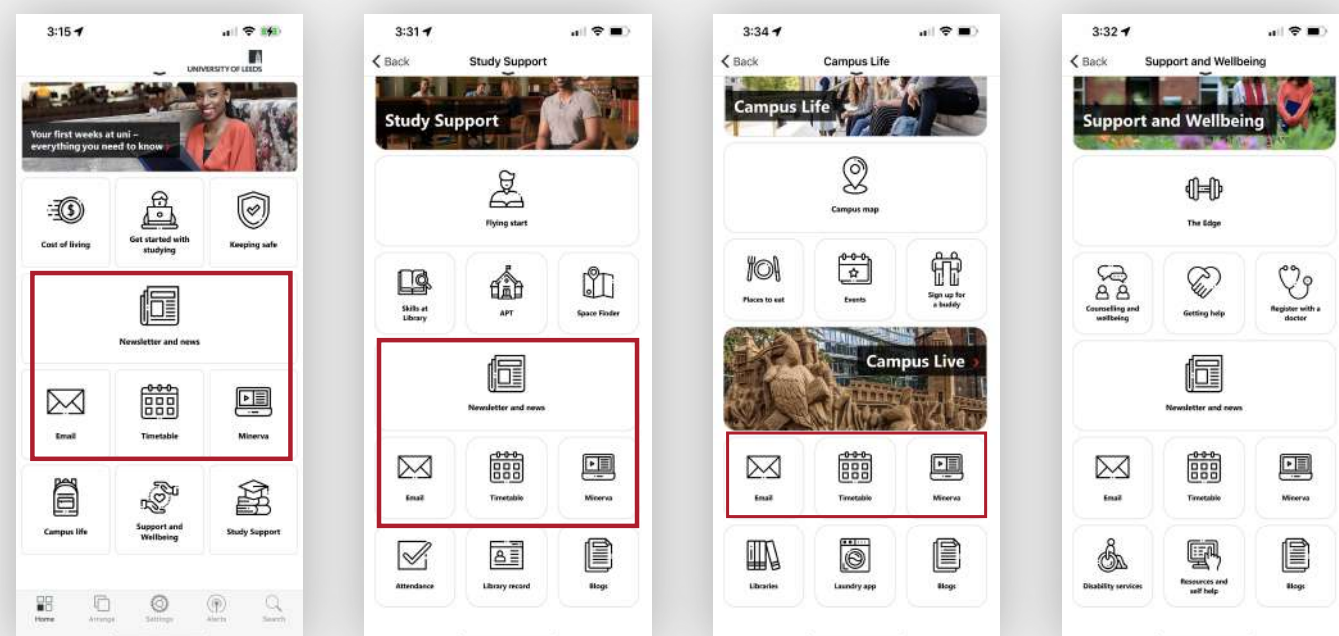


AFTER: Welcome screen with one-time log in task/ screen right at the beginning, signing into a user profile with student information that will be accepted across all university portals.



Final Outcome

BEFORE: Repetitive options and the functions that are most relevant/ in-demand with the users are either not integrated or are not quickly accessible.

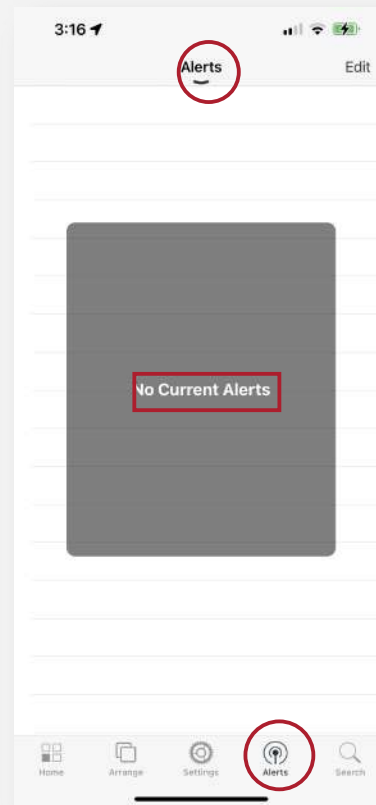


AFTER: Regrouping according to most relevant/ frequently used functions and eliminating any repeat categories or functions. Integrate functions that are in demand with the user but are not available on the app or are not directly accessible. Incorporate features such as day, date, time, current location and weather update to further the practical value of the app.

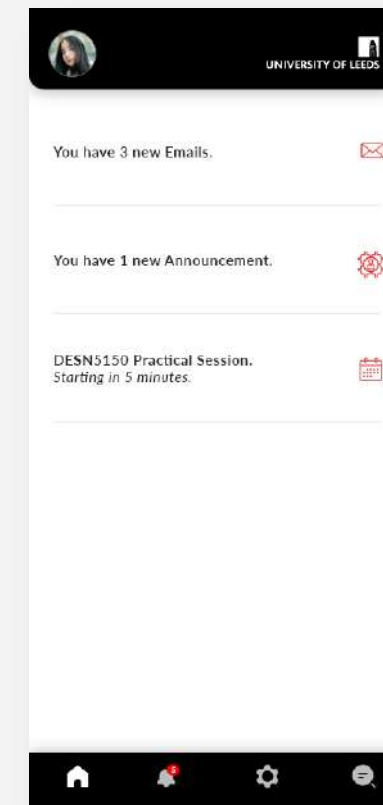


Final Outcome

BEFORE: The 'Alerts' icon/feature does not provide the user with any notifications.

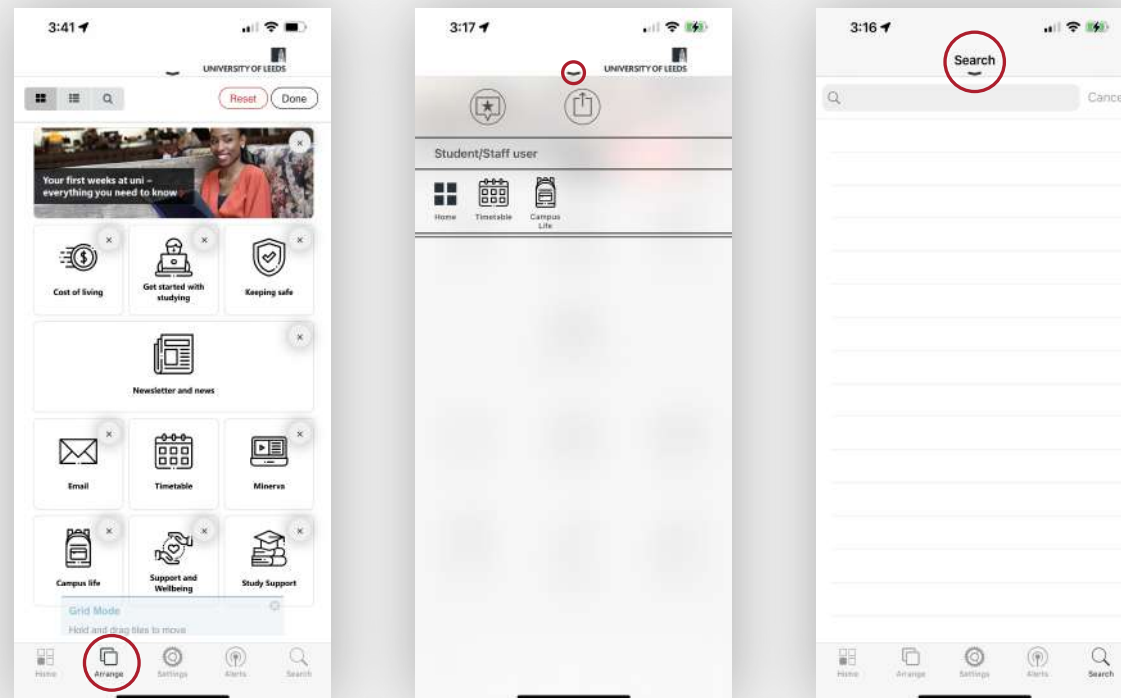


AFTER: Add a functional notification icon for notifying user with new emails, announcements, upcoming calendar events, teams alerts and so on.



Final Outcome

BEFORE: The layout depicts unnecessary utilization of space.

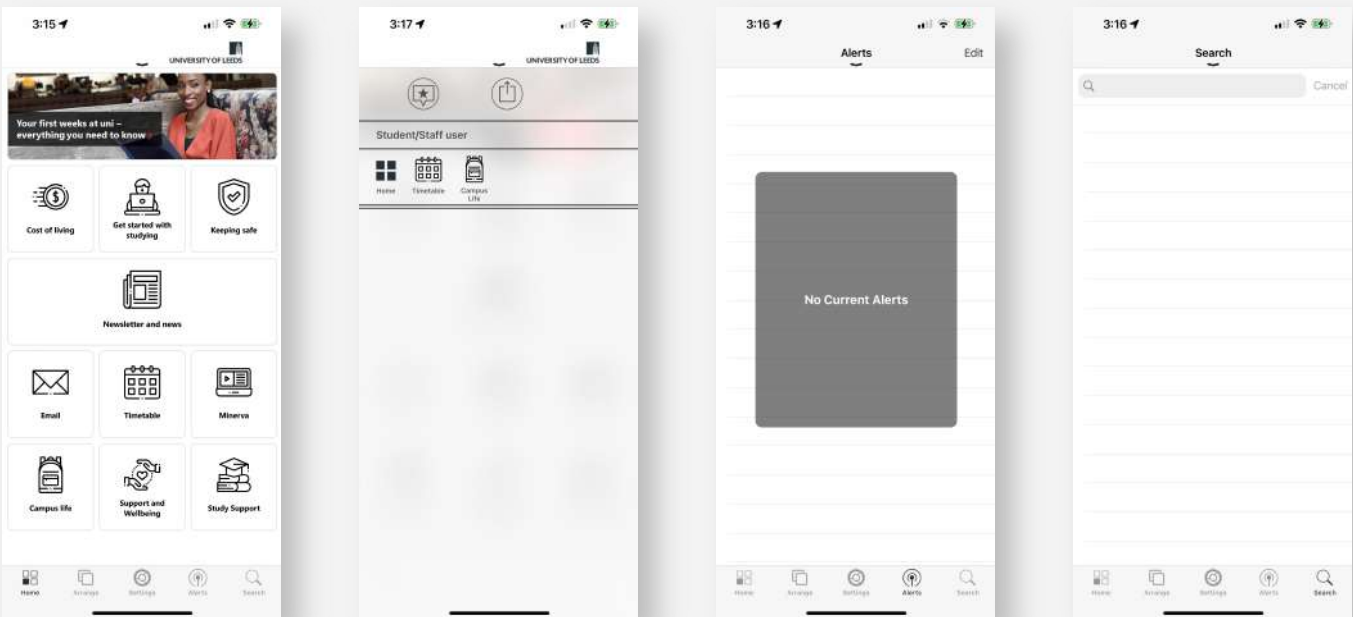


AFTER: Regrouping and identifying key functions also allows us to do away with the 'Arrange' icon and the drop-down menu being redundant. Strategically reallocating the screen space keeping all UI components in an organised and structured manner (Nielsen, 1994).

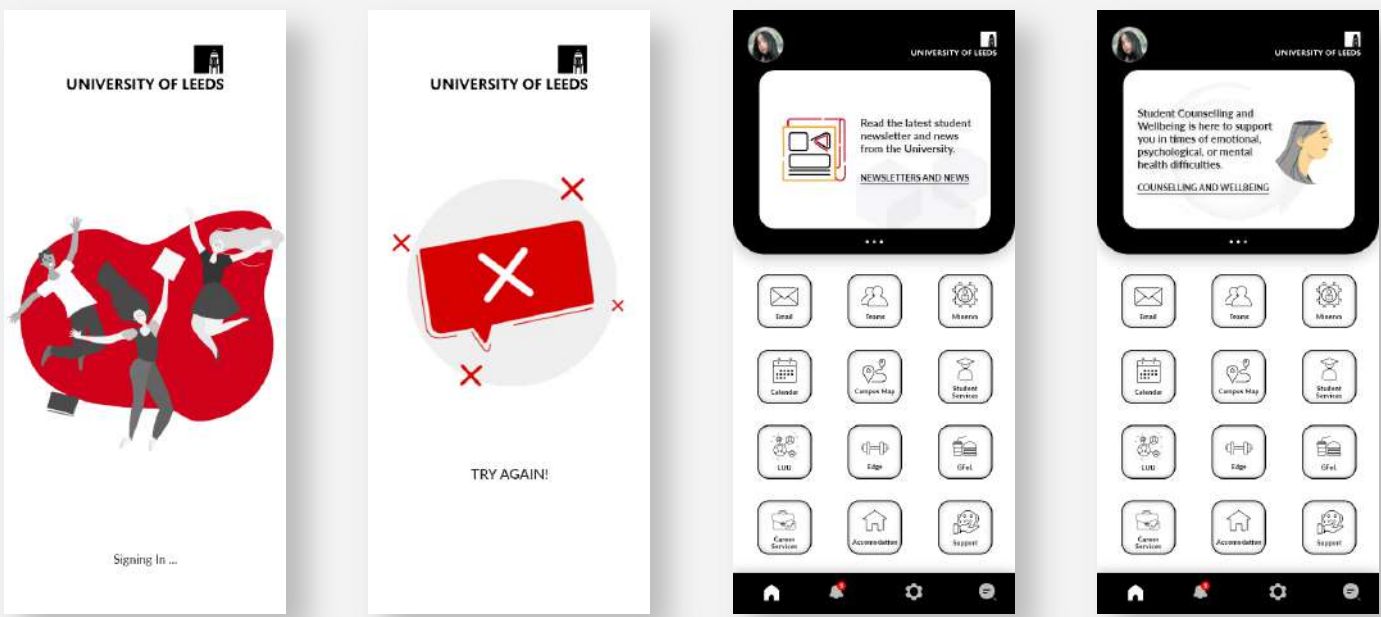


Final Outcome

BEFORE: The overall appeal of the app is not in line with the current UI trends and lacks an emotional impact.



AFTER: Enrich the UI appeal by following modern UI design trends in line with the colours of the brand and featuring more eye-catching UI components (Smith and Silver, 2007). Also, use of animated illustrations and icons during page transitions, adding aesthetic value to the app, engaging the user's attention and generating an emotional impact (Hartson and Plya, 2012).

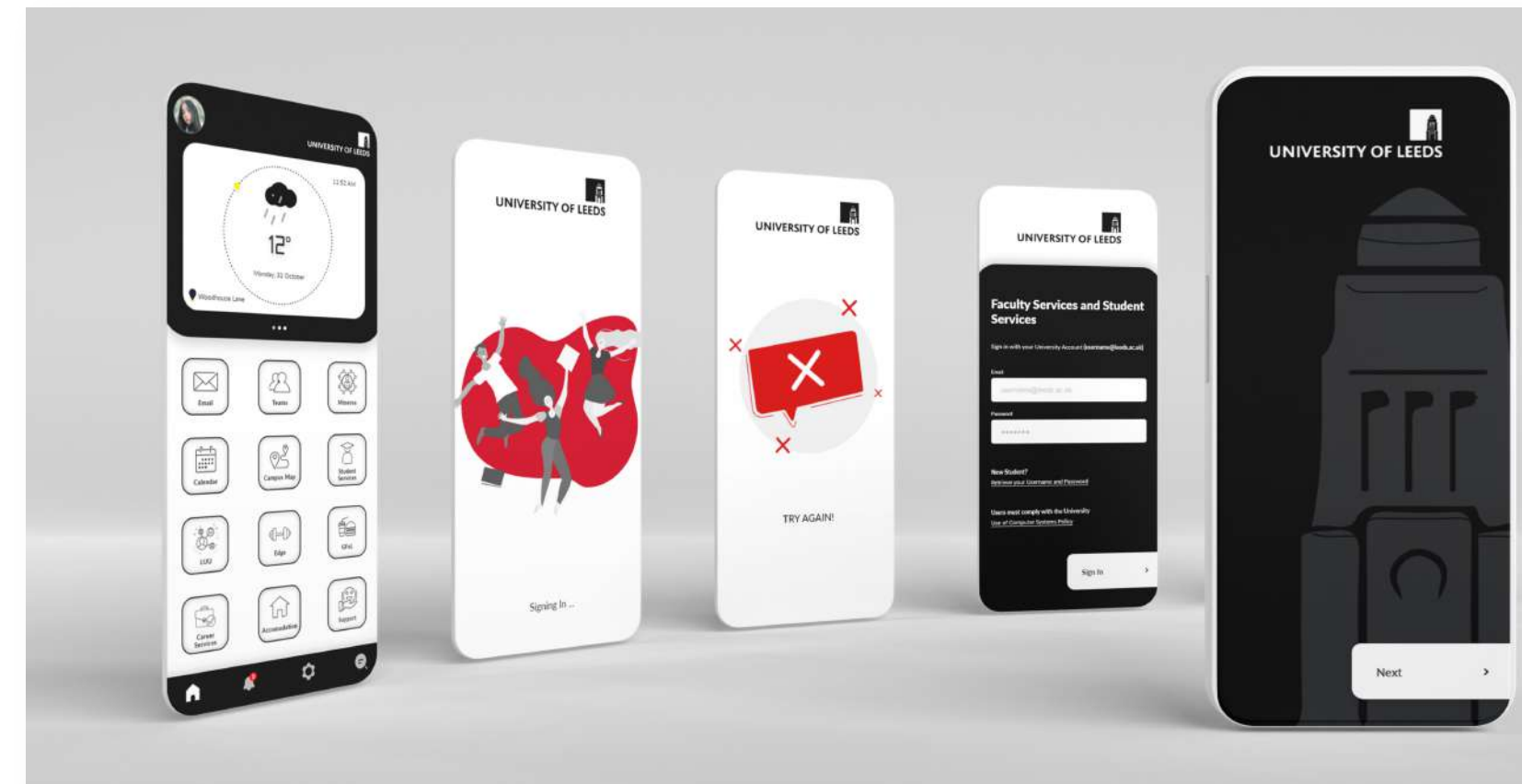


<Animations can be viewed in interactive prototype video file>

Final Outcome

While the proposed redesign of the app reduces the complexity in user experience and improves the user's engagement through its improvised UI appeal, there are certain limitations of the design that need to be technically validated from a programming perspective such as the integration of Microsoft Teams calendar and the School timetable, the integration of space finder with the location map and the feasibility of having a onetime app login in acceptable across all partner websites of the university such as edge, great food at Leeds. Additionally, the UI cannot remain consistent while accessing the partner portals through the app which have their own UI. For instance, on accessing emails through the app will display the UI for Microsoft Outlook instead of the black and white UI theme of the University App.

This work has been useful in acquiring new knowledge and skills in producing UX UI design. Use of design tools such as Adobe XD and Adobe photoshop have been significant in the implementation of an interactive prototype for this design. New software capabilities were discovered in Adobe XD that allowed for inclusion of animated illustrations and icons and preview them in a working prototype. Furthermore, with reference to frameworks of the elements of UX (Hartson and Pilya, 2012), Usability Heuristics (Nielson, 1994) and the dimensions of Interaction design (Smith and Silver, 2007) have been particularly useful in the ideation and development of this redesign.



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW PROTOYPE](#)

References

Hartson, R. and Pyla, P.S. 2012. *The UX Book: Process and guidelines for ensuring a quality user experience*. Elsevier.

Nielsen, J. 1994. Enhancing the explanatory power of usability heuristics. *In Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, pp. 152-158.

Silver, K. 2007. What puts the design in interaction design. *UX matters*.

Smith, G.C. 2007. What is interaction design. *Designing interactions*, pp.8-19.

Xiao, V. 2018. Lato — The Font. 16 June. [Online]. [Accessed 3 December 2022]. Available from: <https://medium.com/@veronikax.uidesign/-lato-the-font-9334ff74ed1f>