

# Creativity #1 Assignment

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# 1. New Experience

Last week I decided to participate in a design competition for 48 hours straight. Just for context about my background. I'm a third-year interaction design student studying at Sheridan Trafalgar. My program consists of doing design work that ranges from graphic design, digital design, physical design and web design. A lot of the projects are group oriented where we collaborate to figure out solutions and utilize known processes to solve the action items found in the briefs. These projects normally span weeks if not months with regular check-ins, teacher support and a plethora of other resources that help us complete our project till we're evaluated. However, last week I wanted to change that completely and challenge myself under a new environment that I've never been in.



Student observing brainstorming notes from design competition.

Image by Create SC

The way design competitions are structured, is you're given a vague brief and have a set allotted time to complete it before it gets evaluated and ranked amongst other projects. This model is quite different from the one I'm used to as it's oriented heavily around performance-based metrics without much focus on the individual processes you take to get there. My goal here was to break out of the comfort of academic support and guidelines to create something that I found was meaningful through my own design method while using creative problem-solving to create a foundation for growth and project development.



Seminar talk discussing concepts in a design workshop.

Image by Create SC

Normally projects in school would provide a structural SafetyNet where we had to adhere to a strict method of carrying out tasks before reaching the final stages of the deliverable. However, being in a design competition would oppose these teachings and instead place autonomy and ownership as its core values to drive innovation and creativity which were areas I was eager to explore.

Competitions are set in three different stages of: preparation, design and evaluation. Which in a way, mimicked the framework for managing change within creative atmospheres.

With the team at hand, we were instructed to then collaborate and brainstorm to solve the problem which was surrounding creating a platform for addressing student mental health issues. Luckily, we were able to come up with several solutions and ideate around them to pivot our features when needed when creating our MVP. In the next day or two we expanded our ideas into stress testing them against standardized interaction flows and ensuring we're creating solutions for the right target audience. We used design deliverables to help facilitate discussion like affinity mapping and user flow journeys to assess solutions. Once completed, we developed a final pitch presentation to present to judges and receive feedback at the end of the 48-hour period.

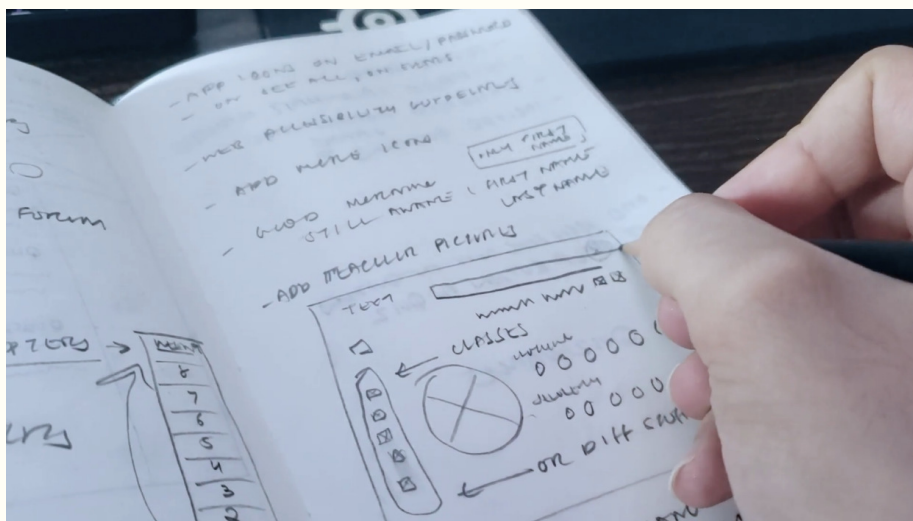


Image by Rohail Khan

## 2. Reflection

Overall, competing in this design competition helped me build skills that I never thought I could have while really giving me the opportunity to step outside of my comfort zone. Normally I'm fairly risk averse with the way I handle work and prioritize stretching out my tasks over a period to avoid strain near deadlines. However, competing and working in a strict 48-hour time span really pushed me to think of how I could be more efficient and streamline my workflow to optimize for any constraints.

My larger overarching goal of working within this competition was to develop my creative problem-solving abilities through defining, generating and understanding problems before executing them with proven strategies. I wanted to explore problem solving through IDEO'S design thinking methodology while providing a guideline to help instruct my design decisions. At the same time, I learnt it was critical in finding a balance between adhering to a process and still being open enough to accept other creative ideas.



Individuals brainstorming and writing notes for ideas.

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Luckily the problem provided was heuristic and we could execute our tasks with a defined proactive approach through informed decision making while using models of creativity from people like Alex Osborn. My normal instinct in situations with vague problem spaces is to opt for structure but I really tried to focus in on my divergent thinking methods to guide me in creatively opening up. This enabled me to approach problems from a different perspective that allowed me to practice the concept of mindfulness. I noticed during group projects in school this wasn't something I fully did as I was much more restrictive in how I handled and received input from peers. Yet with this new added ability I could fully bring awareness and acceptance to my work and open my thinking to include others in my design making processes. This changed how I felt about being mindful and now I saw it in a different light having been exposed to its benefits.

Understanding how I worked in group environments under pressure was critical too. I noticed myself taking upon a leadership role where I was guiding and leading design trajectories as the project progressed. During this stage I was ensuring that I was promoting an inclusive atmosphere to defer judgement and prioritize quantity while encouraging every idea. I wanted to adopt a lateral way of approaching problems where everyone in the team could jump in randomly and add richness to our discussions through new and novel ideas.

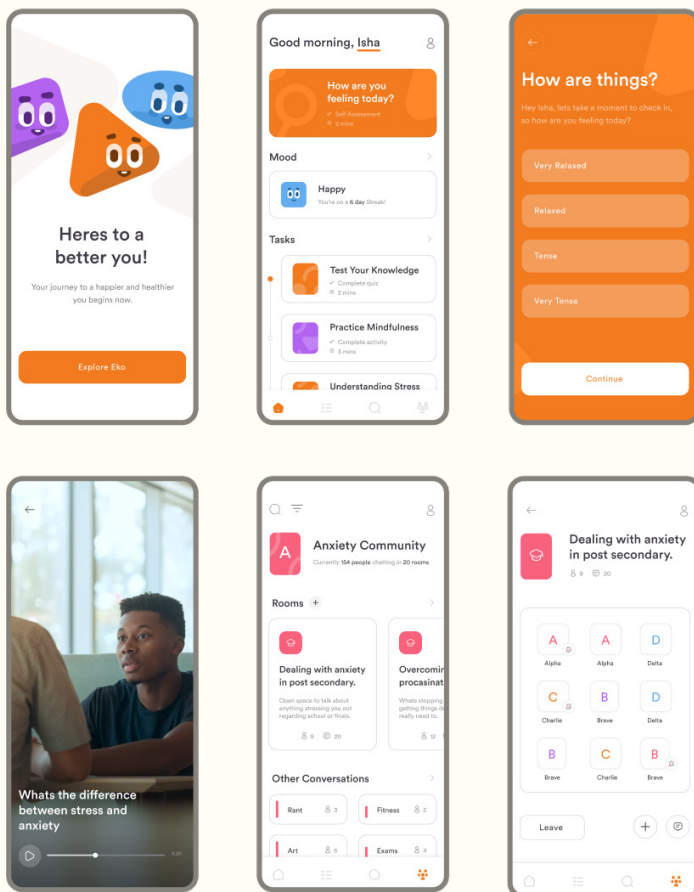


Team feedback session with mockups and wireframes.

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From a holistic lens this experience allowed me to open more and understand the skills and abilities I possessed while working in pressurized group environments. I learned a lot about constructing team morale and building the foundation for inclusive environments but also on how to incorporate proven creative problem-solving methods to ensure successful collaboration. I developed better convergent thinking models and demonstrated my ability to execute design thinking methods while being mindful of my peers in their strengths and abilities. Going forward, I would love to participate in an opportunity like this again to really test my abilities as a designer but more so as a creative problem solver.



High fidelity screens of Ekko mobile app

Image by Rohail Khan

Here's an image of my project that I created over the duration of a weekend. The application is a mental health platform that allows students to track, manage and receive resources for mental health related problems.