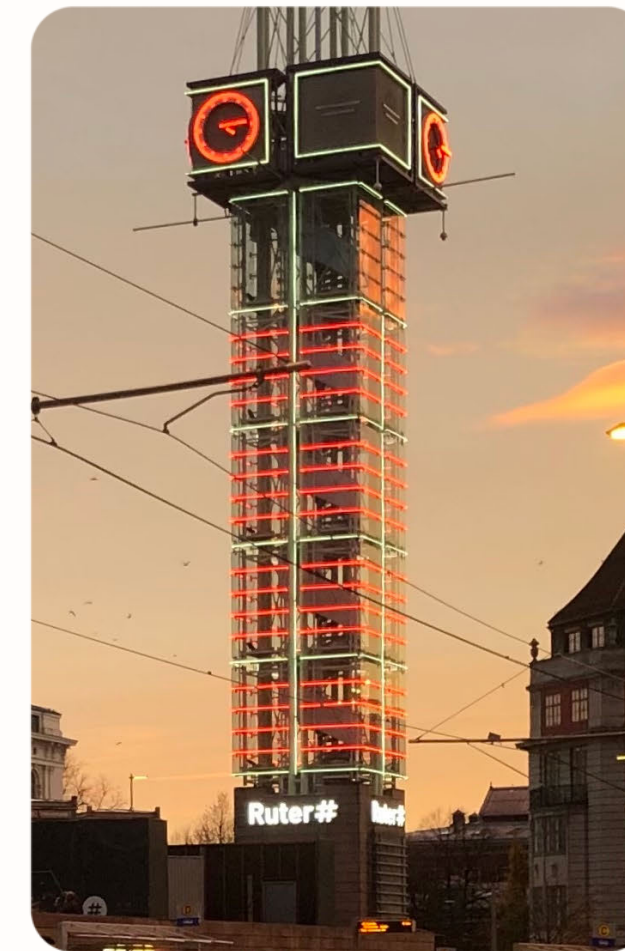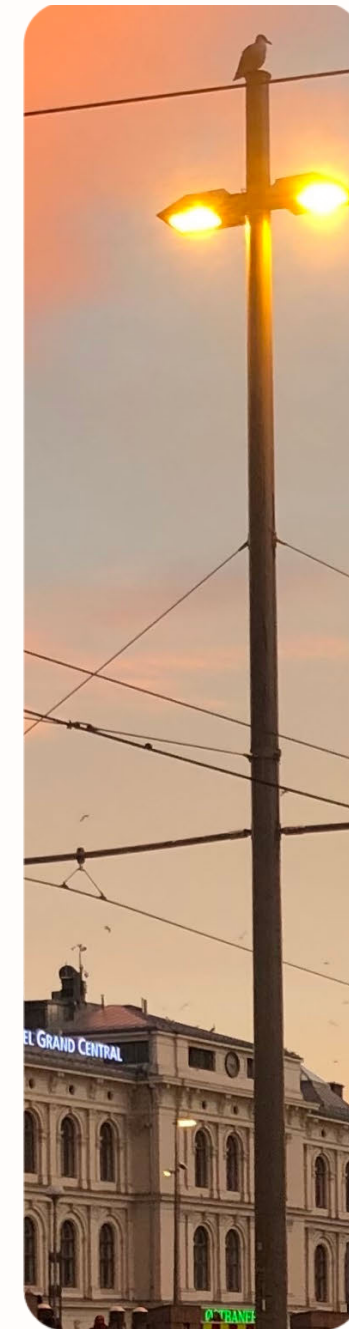# To whom it may concern.

Exploring the digital job market
with a focus on student employability
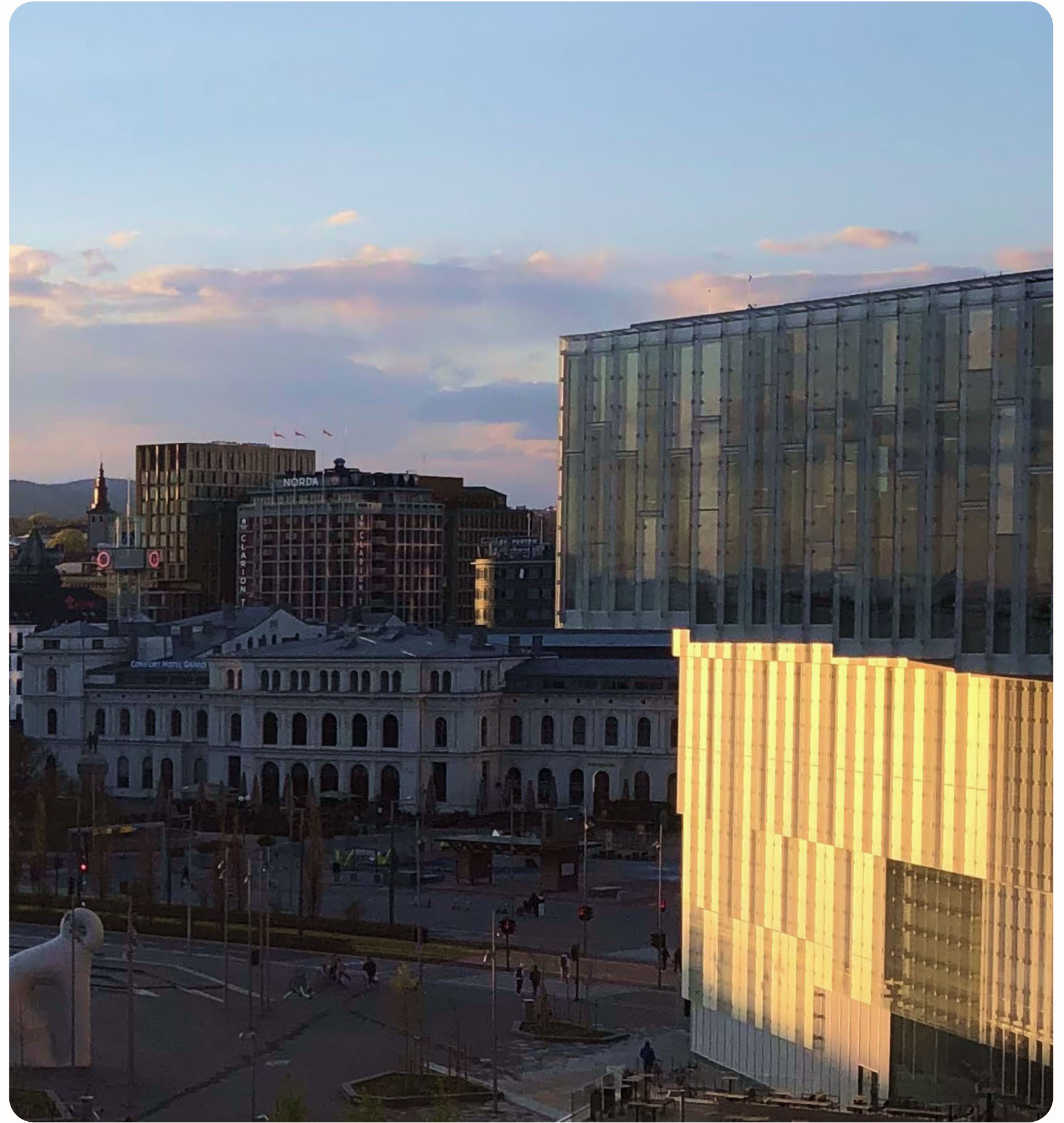
Candidate:
Lene Utklev Gaupen

Supervisors:
Simon David Clatworthy
Lars Marcus Vedeler

Field:
Interaction Design
Service Design

The Oslo School of Architecture and Design
Spring 2021

This project follows NSD guidelines.

Names and information of interviewees by request

Abstract.

To whom it may concern (TWIMC) is an exploration of the digital job market with the students at higher institutions in Oslo, Norway as its primary target group. It is a design project in the intersection between service and interaction design, working within a mature market that contains a plethora of services, platforms and products.

In TWIMC, I have explored the existing job market with an analytical approach in order to gain an understanding for the landscape I am working within. Findings from this approach revealed opportunity areas, navigated the direction of my project as a whole, and helped shape the outcome immensely.

Simultaneously, I have engaged and observed my target audiences through conversations and interviews with an empathic approach, in order to develop a holistic understanding of the people I am designing for, and the problems I am trying to solve.

There has been three target groups in this project; the students (primary), the career guidance counsellors (secondary) and the employers (tertiary). However, the main focus and the decision making factor of TWIMC are the students.

From the before mentioned methods and approaches, I synthesised my discoveries into five key findings. I formulate these findings into "how might we" questions, that helped me make concrete decisions later in my project.

The result is my app-concept Creer. Creer aims to assist the student on their journey in creating their own career path by providing needed and relevant content, and postings (job advertisments) catered towards the students.

Motivation.

During the last two years at The Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO), I have learned both the importance and joy of user-centric design. In my bachelor of Design and Visual Communication, the focus was more towards "How do we sell this", not so much "What do the users need?". AHO has given me the tools and viewpoint to transform my earlier knowledge from a consumeristic, to a more socially and environmentally sustainable approach.

At this school I have had the opportunity to work with large, experimental projects to small-scale, micro interactions. To me, these type of projects feel like a luxury, a benefit of being a student. To contrast this, and as a preparation for what comes after the student life, I wanted my diploma to be realistic.

A project that creates the space for a design delivery that is made for the present, not a hypothesised future.

Prior to my study at AHO, I went through the process of navigating the digital job market while being situated in Oslo, Norway for the first time. I had no network after studying abroad, no relevant experience on my CV, and no experience with the application process overall.

There had been little to no focus on student employability at my university, and as an international student, the guidance center could only assist me if I was planning to stay in UK. The job application process was long, tiresome and unfruitful. Now as a full-time student again, the need for a job next to studies represents a type of insurance for me, a way developing relevant competency for after my studies.

I see the same happening to friends and classmates. But where I had the "luxury" of having job hunting as my main priority, they were juggling studies and the application process. Job hunting is hard work, and students should be able to focus primarily on their studies.

These are the two main drivers for why I have chosen to explore the digital job market with a focus on student employability for my diploma.

Table of content.

Introduction.

This chapter provides information regarding the context of To whom it may concern. I write about the background of my project, introduce my target groups and how I have prioritized them, and why I have picked Oslo as a geographical scope. I also present the process I have used as a navigational tool in my project, and what methods I have utilized.

Background.

Student economy often requires an extra source of income during studies, especially when attending universities in capital cities, such as Oslo (Rosenlund-Hauglid, 2015). Additionally there is an increasing pressure and need from the post grad market for first time applicants to already have some level of job experience when joining the "adult work life". Thus, finding a job that is flexible around the student's existing full time job (their studies), is essential for many students to make ends meet, and it is also an important step on their individual career path. Finding these jobs however, can be difficult, potentially even more so for students that are new to their respective cities, universities, even countries, where they are navigating the job market without a network to consult or rely on.

Digital job application services and platforms have grown in popularity and population. Although easily accessible, this contributes to making the whole process more time-consuming as the students have to navigate through a plethora of job application platforms.

In addition, an increasing trend in the market of utilising advertisement algorithms, social media and email marketing increases the amount of potential contact points the students have to juggle. More often than not, the student engages with the different touch points without any initial insurance that the job listed will be a fit in terms of availability and experience.

Based on this context I hypothesised that there could be space and a need for a solution that focuses on assisting students (International and Norwegian) in finding fitting, flexible part time work in the Norwegian market. The following question guided me in my research, exploration and ideation phase:

What would a digital product, tailored primarily towards the student, need to entail?
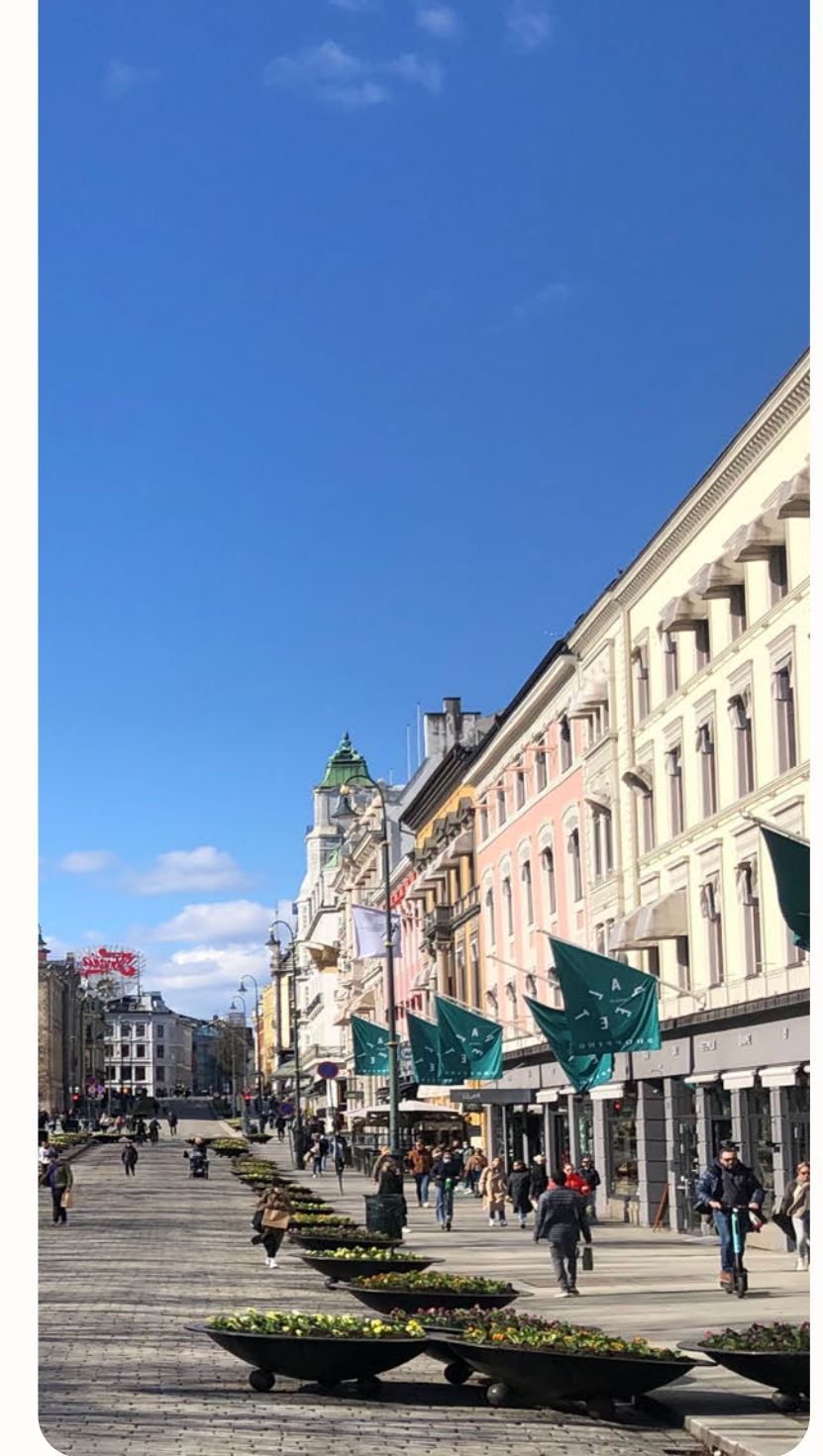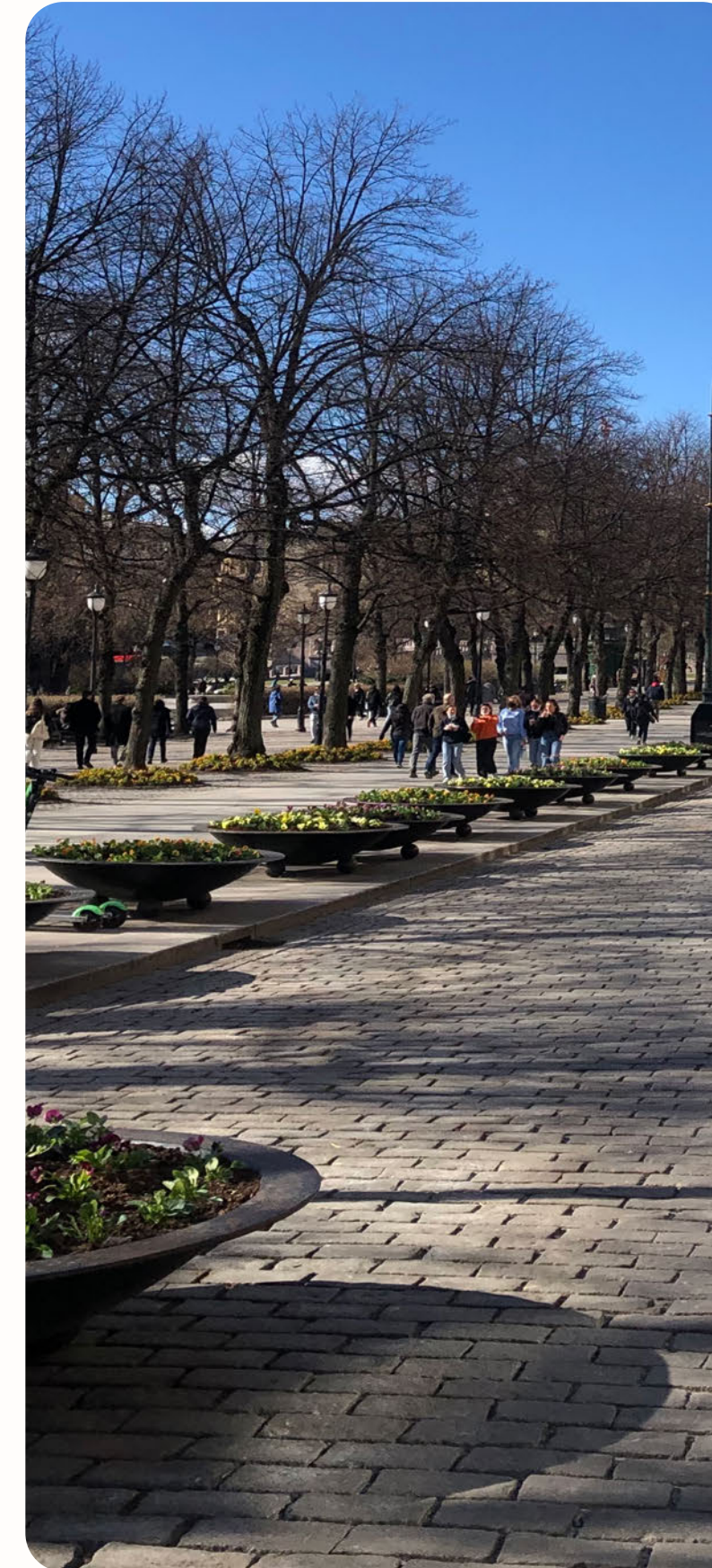
Target groups.

Although my hypothesis has always been the same, the initial research question of this project varies slightly from the current one. It was my intention to balance the students, and the employers as equal in this project, both in research and user engagement. I intended to explore how a digital solution could be designed so its ideal for both parts of the job application process, the students and the employers. However, findings from the research phase, as well as limitation in terms of respondents from the workplaces contacted, resulted in the focus naturally evolving throughout the process to be more student centric.

TWIMCs primary target group are International and Norwegian students of higher education located in Oslo, the age-group limited to 20-30. The guidance counsellors at the institutions is regarded as a secondary target group, and the employees as tertiary.

Why Oslo.

Norway ranks amongst the highest in Europe when it comes to quantity of time students use for paid work rather than studies (Keute, 2018). With more than 85 000 students in higher education, Oslo is the largest student city in all of Norway (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2021). Research shows that the students here also work more than any other students in Norway (Rosenlund-Hauglid, 2015).

As Norways largest student city, there is also a multitude of institutes, colleges, polytechnics and universities. The four major ones hosting around 81 000 of the 85 000 students in Oslo (Nygård, 2019).

There is a wide range of offers towards the students, either through the local Studentskipsnaden (SiO) or by offers connected to the individual institutions.

As such, Oslo seemed like an excellent geographical scope for the project, both in terms of services and user groups.

In 2021, COVID is still very much affecting our everyday life, and it was uncertain how things would play out this semester.

With COVID restrictions adding certain levels of limitations to the project, especially in terms of mobility, focusing my scope on Oslo seemed like a sensible choice. It works as a starter-city, in order to place the concept into a realistic context. Hopefully, my delivery will be scaleable and relevant for other geographical areas as well.
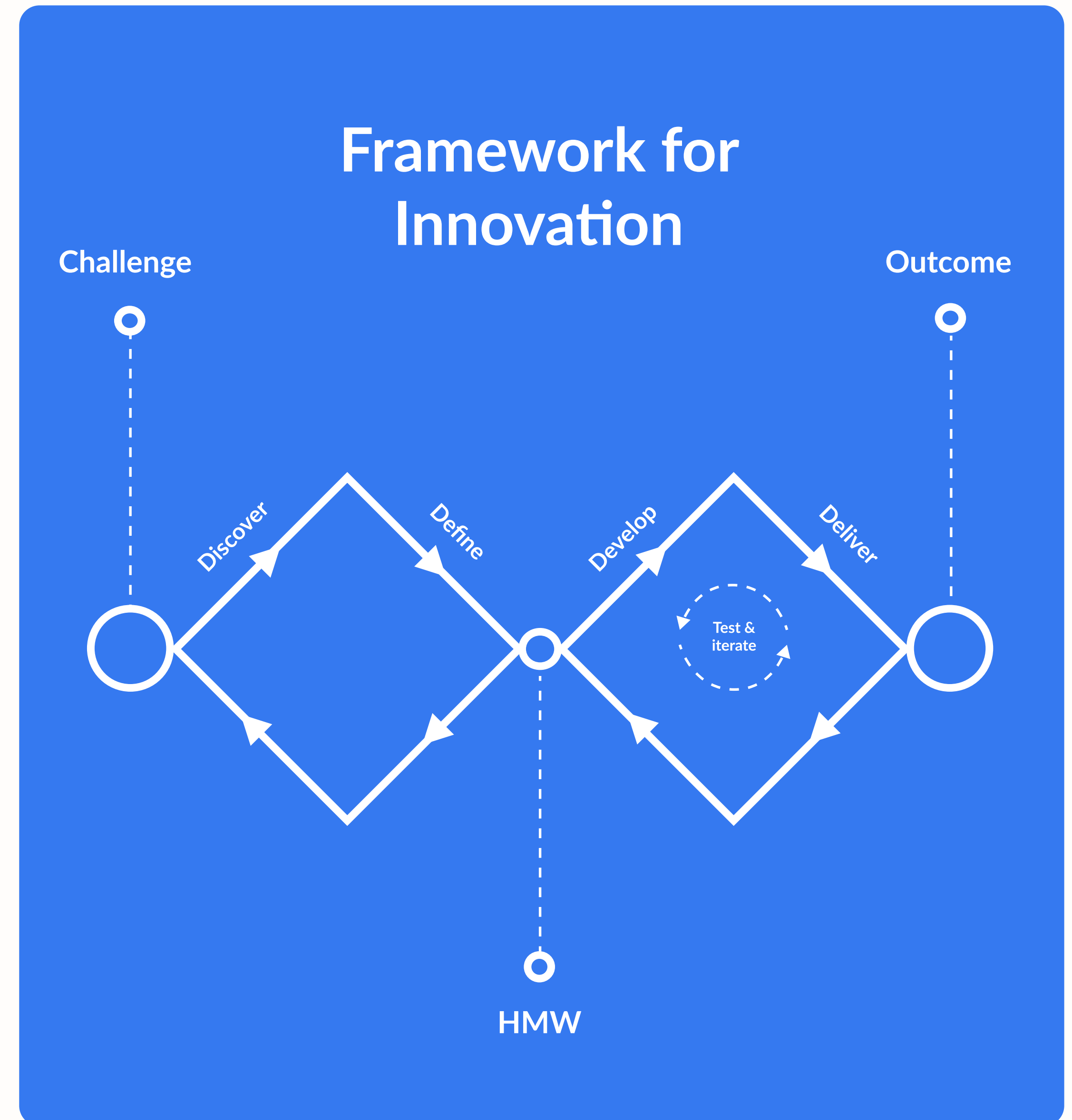
Process.

When planning my diploma, I structured my process after the well-known divergence-convergence model, the double diamond. I've found that the simplicity of this method has been a particularly good structure for projects within the realm of innovation.
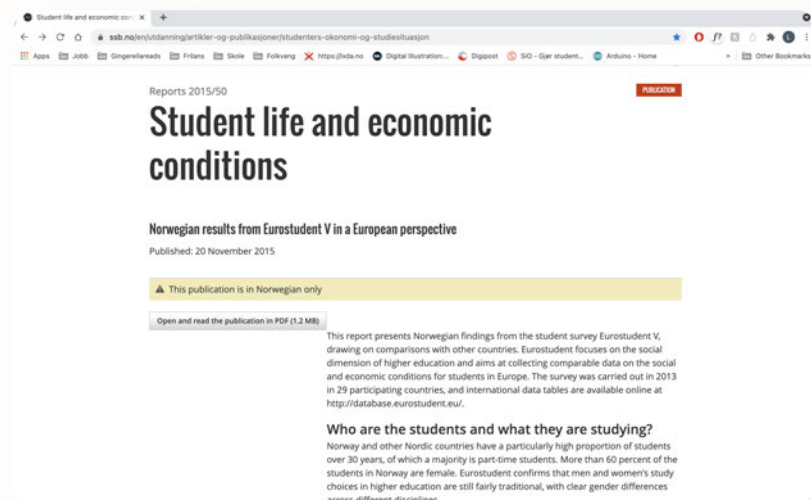
However, as I began my project, I discovered an updated version. The method reformulated the Double Diamond into a "Framework for Innovation". In the framework, we are introduced to four design principles. I have used these as overarching "rule-of-thumb" for my process as a whole.

The Design Council also categories the methods used in correlation to this model in a Methods bank. Here the tools are categorized into three main areas: Explore, Shape and Build. The combination of tools and methods used in this project have been sorted into these categories. (Design Council, 2019)

▷ **Put people first**

Start with an understanding of the people using a service, their needs, strengths and aspirations.

▷ **Communicate visually and inclusively**

Help people gain a shared understanding of the problem and ideas.

▷ **Collaborate and co-create**

Work together and get inspired by what others are doing.

▷ **Iterate, iterate, iterate**

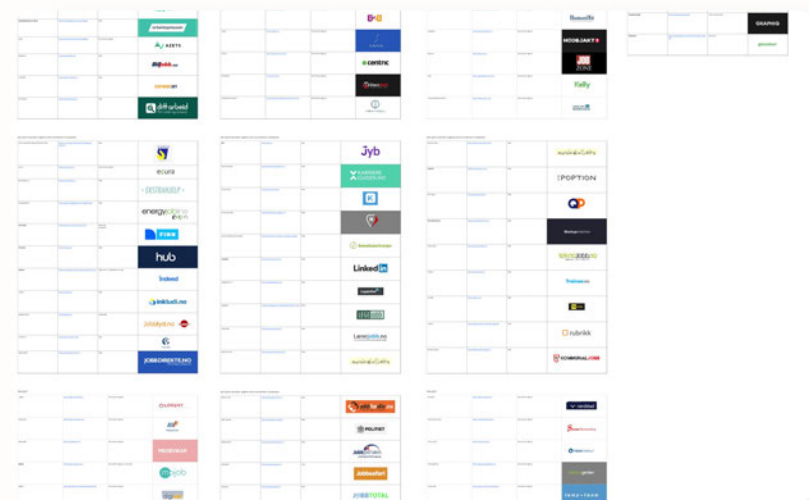Do this to spot errors early, avoid risk and build confidence in your ideas.

Framework for Innovation

Challenge

Outcome

Discover

Define

Develop

Deliver

Test & iterate

HMW

Applied methods.

Desk research

Finding, reading and analysing relevant articles, projects, surveys and documents.
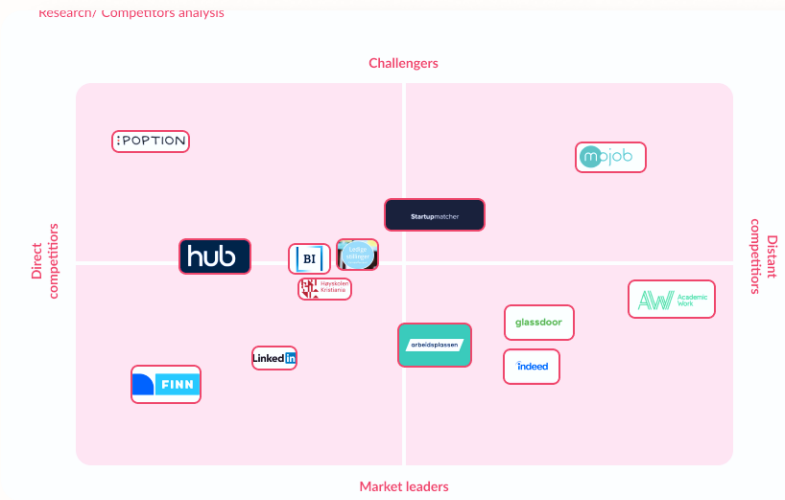
Explore

Market research

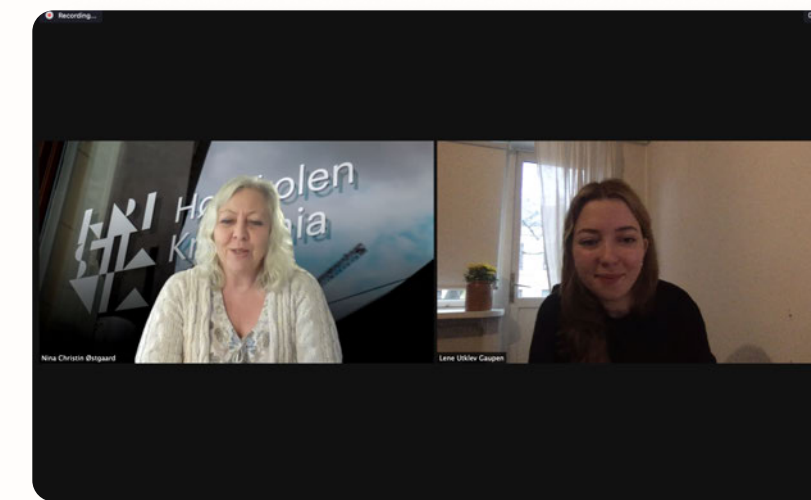Get an overview over existing offers, services and platforms

Explore

Competitors analysis

Analysis of market research in order to map out look direct and distant competitors

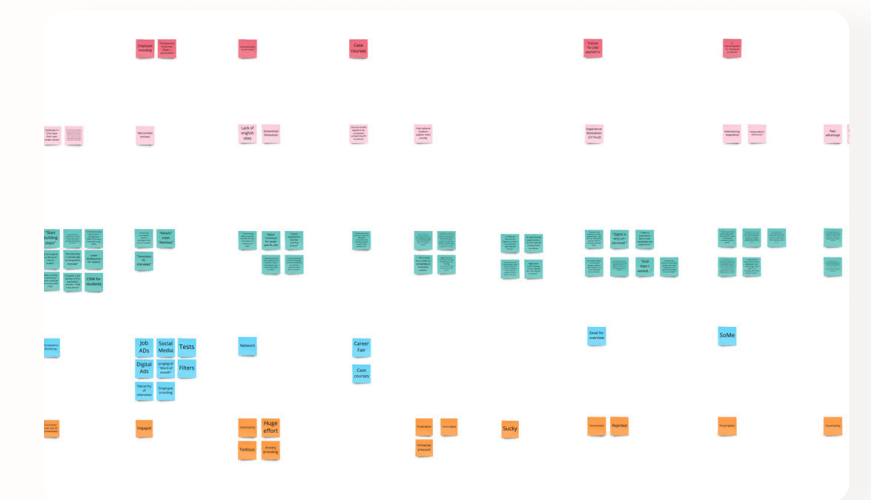*Explore & Shape*

Interviews

Talks with experts, actors, workplaces and students to uncover and understands insight towards drivers and barriers.
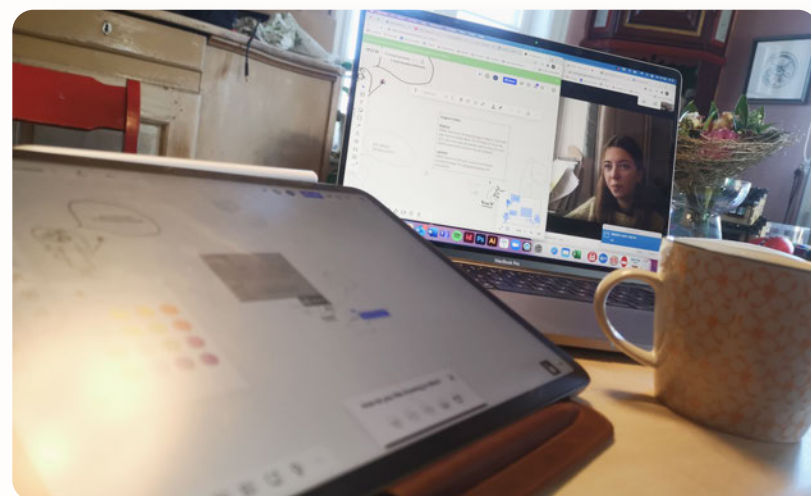
Explore & Shape

Thematic analysis

Mapping and categorizing findings from interviews in order to uncover themes and recurring statements for ideation
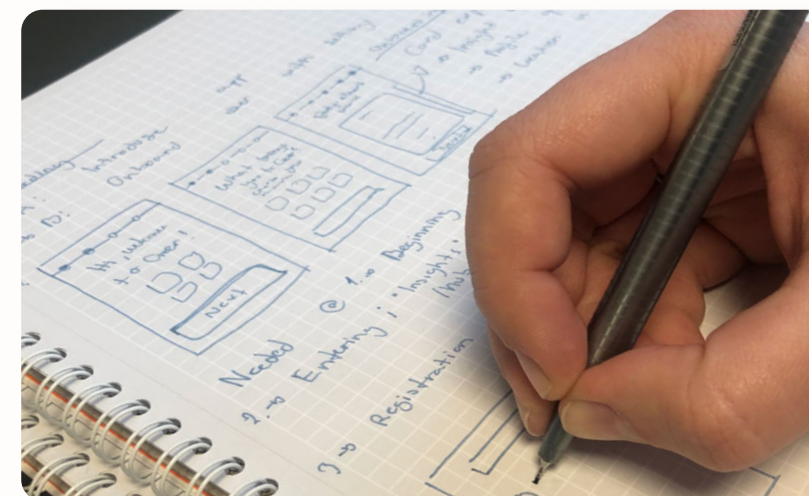
Shape

Mini-"workshop"

Used to solidify earlier concept ideas, together with another design student
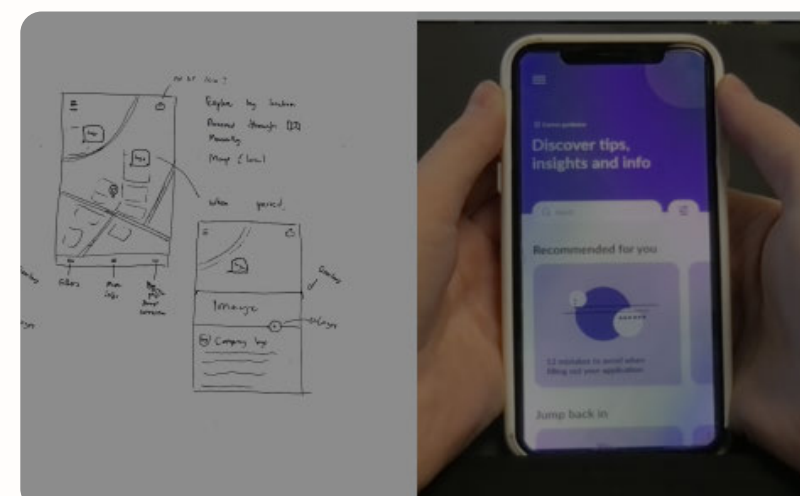
Shape

Sketches

Sketches as ideation, research and planning tools, as well as concept testing.

Explore & Shape

Iterative development

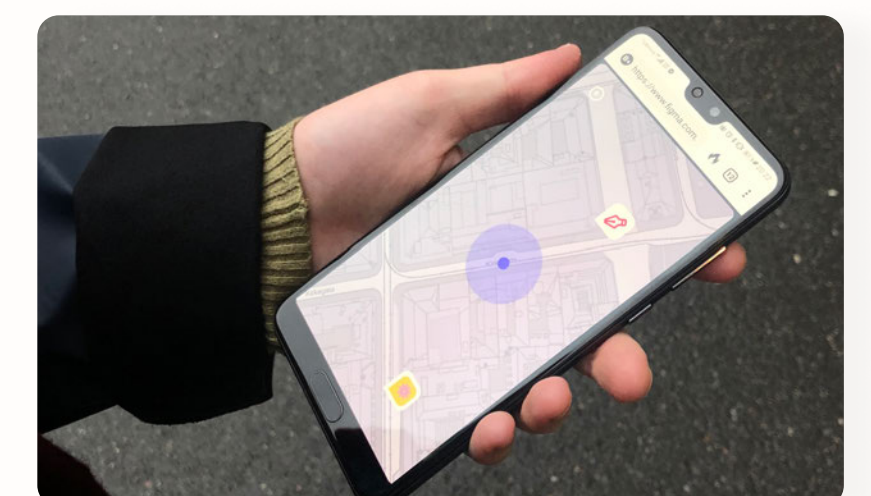Test and develop iteratively throughout concept development with user groups.

Explore, Shape & Build

Wireframes

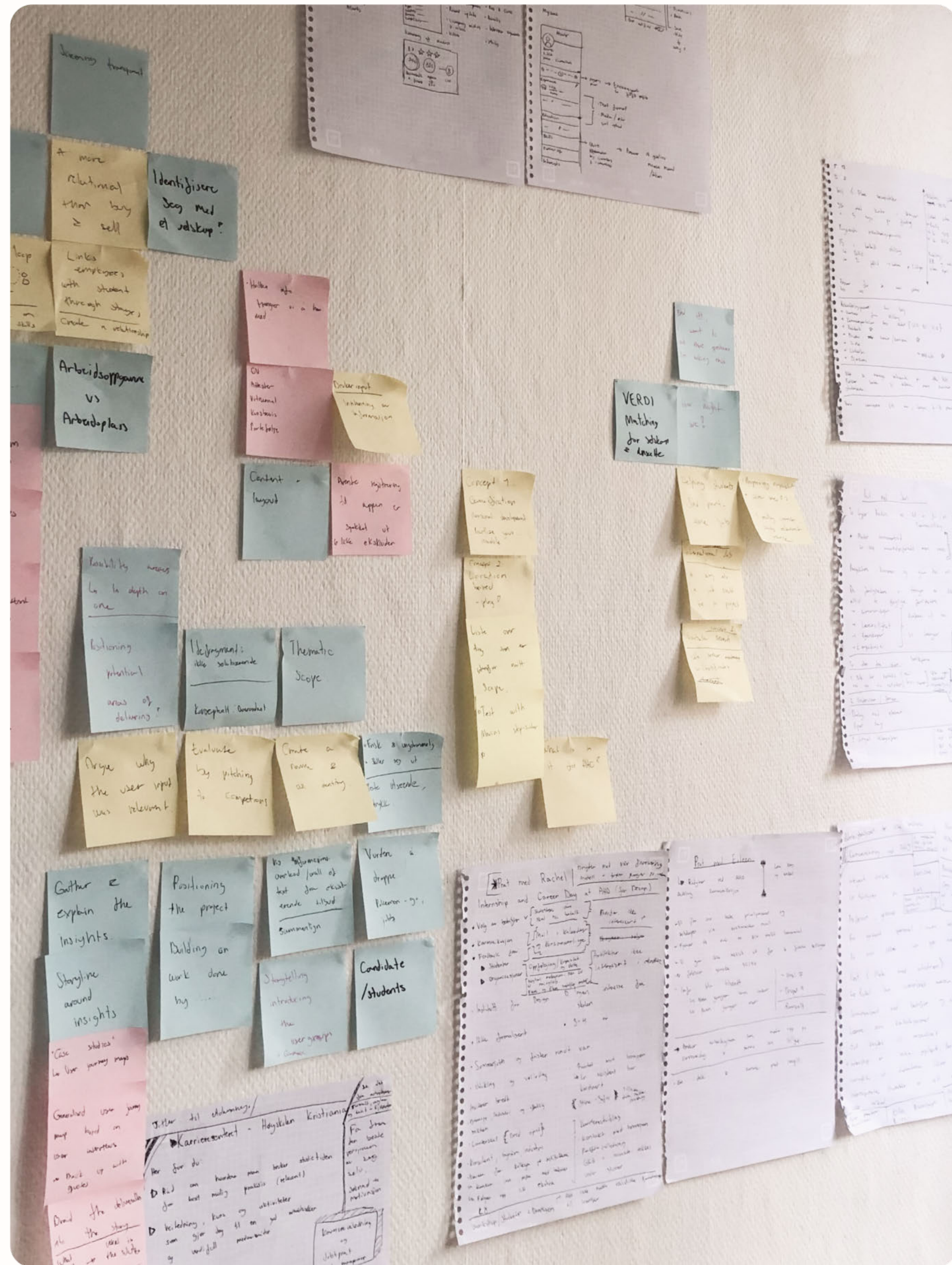Static and interactive, low-fidelity to high-fidelity screens for testing and presenting concept

Explore, Shape & Build

Prototype

High-fidelity prototypes of user flow, for testing and contextualizing

Shape & Build

Discover.

In the beginning of the project, my focus was collecting as much data, information and input as possible. I looked at online reports, articles, statistics, news. I also had interviews with actors, target groups and experts. I conducted an extensive market research, as well as a competitors analysis.

Desk research.

I began the project by conducting desk research on two main categories;

▷ **The market**

▷ **The students**

My goal was to develop a rudimental understanding of how the market functioned. This was to better understand the context in which the digital platforms are situated in. I limited the research to mainly national, as a result of the geographical restraints I have placed on the project.

In addition, I found it necessary to explore if my initial assumptions regarding the students would be validated or not. So in order to amass some preliminary knowledge on the students in relation to the job market, I looked at statistic, thematic reviews, reports and news updates. Most of these addressed Norway as a whole, or Oslo in specific. Some were continental, but included Norway in their research group.

Some examples are seen to the right.
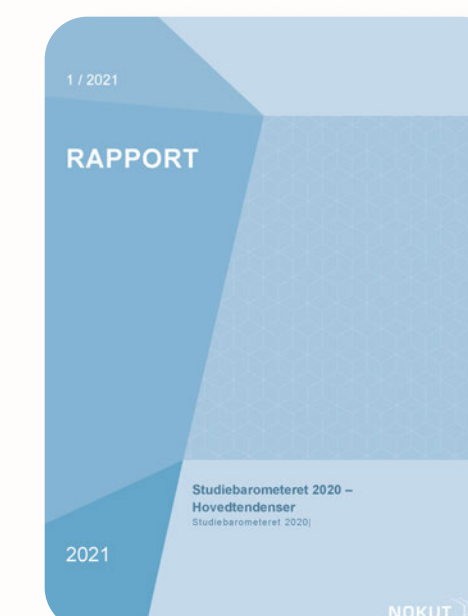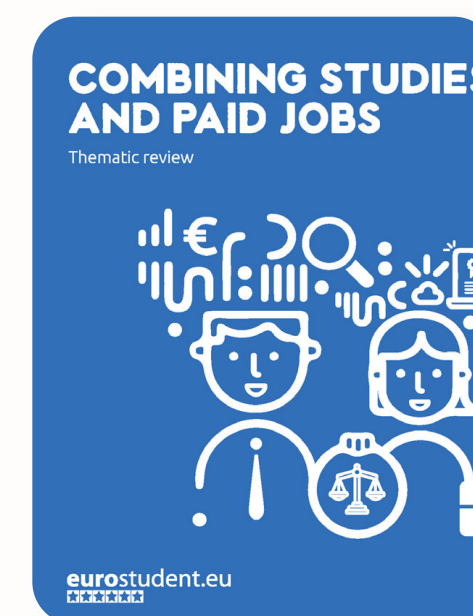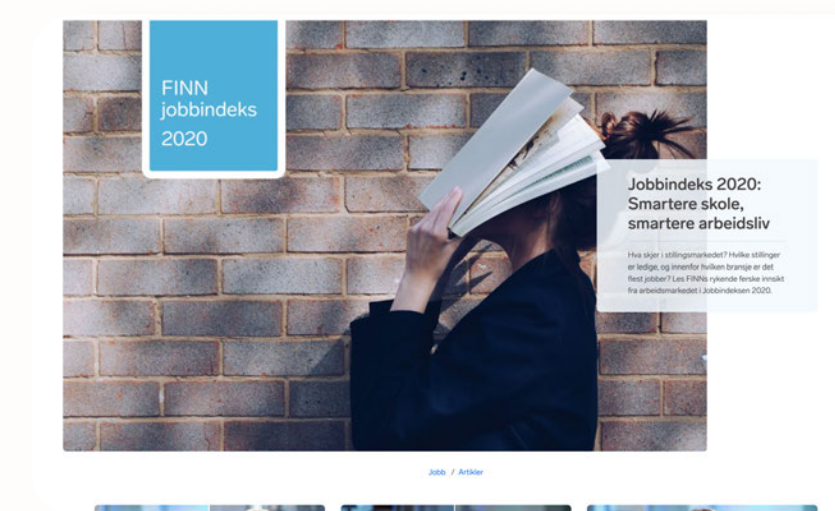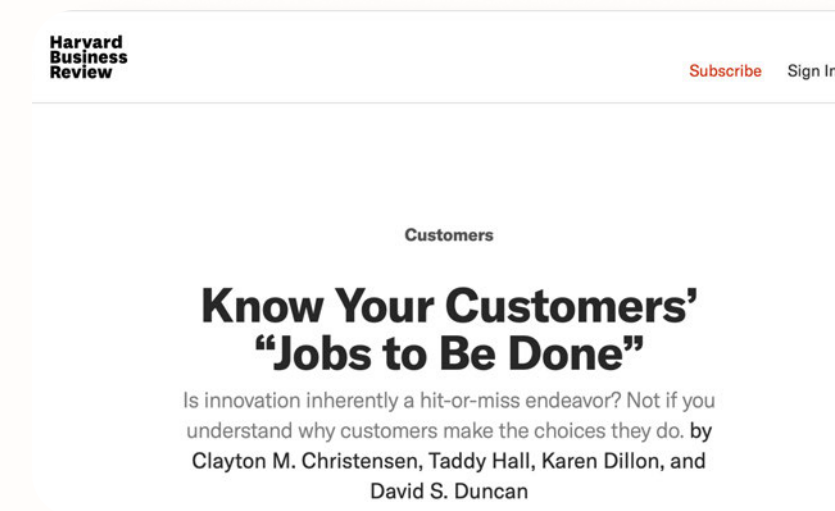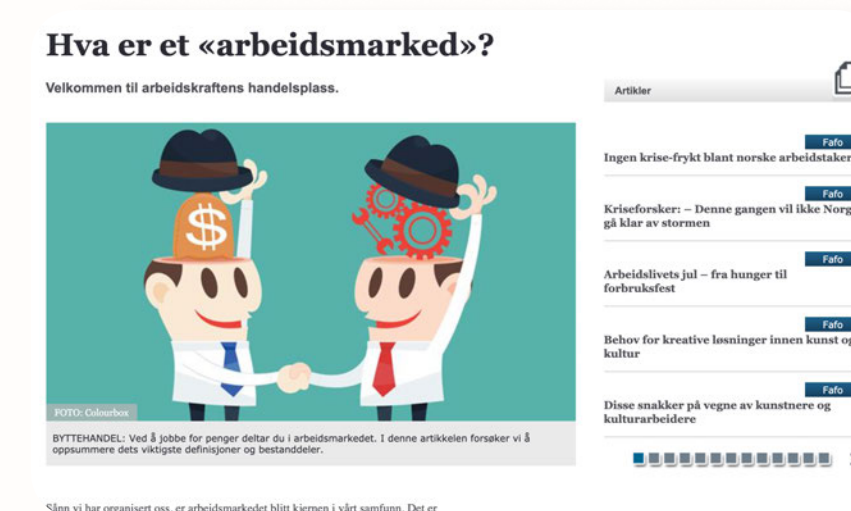
(Screenshots taken from websites or online PDFs)

The market.

This project is situated in a market overfilled with services, platforms and digital products. As a result, there is an overload of potential touch points and information.

As mentioned before, I found it was essential to develop a better understanding of the job market. It is, as a whole, a market that has evolved and developed with the times. Technology has heavily affected trends and systems within it, but at its core remains a fundamental three-core component structure on which the system as a whole is built upon [Bergsli, 2017]:

The employer

The wage/compensation

The employees

The market can be segmented in a several of ways (type of profession, business, geographical, etc...). Some* of the common umbrella categories being:

▷ **Sector**

Private & public

▷ **Profession**

Work performed and/or professional comptence

▷ **Education**

Level of education (None, low, high), vocational, specific courses

▷ **Industries**

Primary (agriculture & fishing)
Secondary (industry &crafts)
Tertiary (services)

▷ **Type of employment**

Permanent, temporary, project, freelance, full time, part time, etc...

Variations of this type of segmentation in the market is often utilized in different filtering systems on job search sites.

Modern times
As society develops, so does the job market. From the initial major shift (from "naturaløkonomi" to the modern "pay as compensation" system) that occurred as a result from the industrial revolution, to more modern influences such as globalisation, digitalisation and automation. The job market is heavily influenced by technological and societal advances [Bergsli, 2017].

Mini-Reflection
During my project, topics around these influences, especially automation, occurred in conversations with both experts and students. There are a variation of interesting areas to explore within the context of the job market. For my project, I choose to focus on student employability. To me, it represents the beginning of the student job journey. Hopefully, by prioritizing this initially, the students will be better equipped to handle the developing market.

*There are variations as to how the market is segmented, and other models might differ.

Into the jungle.

I mapped and categorized all of the platforms and services I discovered during the initial market research. The institutions own offers and SiO represented a target group and as such was not included here. From the findings I discovered I was right in my initial hypothesis regarding the plethora of job application related platforms.

In total, I visited a collection of 97 sites and application of varying relevance. They included digital platforms such as job boards, job search engines and standardized job application sites, to recruitment agencies, informational sites and talent outsourcing companies. Some of these were generalised, some were specialised, varying from nationwide to global.

In addition to these sites, the institutes also offered their own services, either in terms of social media sites, or even their own, internal jop application platform.

What become evident in light of this, was the need to scope down in order to further analysis if and where an additional product could be positioned in order to not be just another addition to the jungle.

My competitiors analysis (which could also be classified as potential collaborators) became a tool for positioning my final design delivery later on.

Mini-reflection
I reached out to a few of the sites I found either particularly interesting or relevant, (Poption, AcademyWorks, Jyb and Studentbemanning) without any luck. They were either too busy, removed or in the process of removing themselves from the market. This experience spanned across a few weeks. The lack of result, and time it demanded influenced my decision of re-scoping my initial balance of target user groups, and focus primarily towards the students.
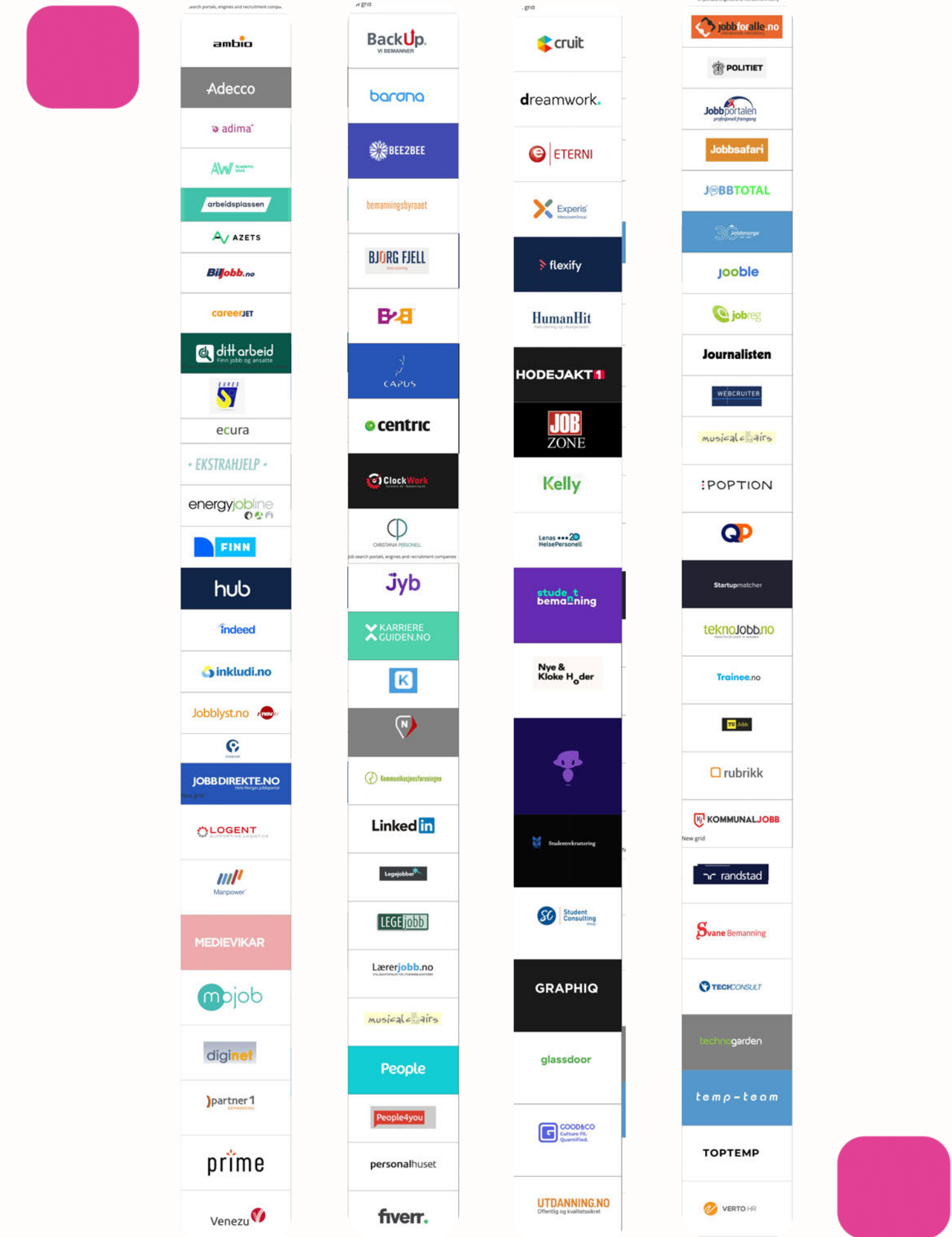
(All logos are screenshotted from the individual platforms/products websites, and belong to the respective companies)

The institutions.

The institutions, and especially their career centers, play a significant role in providing information and guiding the students in terms of approaching the marked, but also in the development of career management skills.

I conducted a digital analysis of the different offers from the four largest institutions in Oslo.

I wanted to understand how they worked to best prepare their students, as well as get an overview of what services the students had available. The institutions all offer career guidance through individual career centers. The information provided online indicates that the students can book appointments for assistance on all matter of career relevant inquieries. A lot of it is quite concrete, such as help with structuring and formulating CVs and cover letters, but there is also services such as skill and attributes mapping. Some institutions have their own careerportal, and utilities multiple communication channels in order to reach their students.

My findings helped me identify potential actors to interview, as well as provided insights for interviews with students later on.

I especially found the investment from the career center at Kristiania University College and career center collaboration between UiO / SiO of interest. Both centers showed a significant level of focus towards enabling and facilitating for student employability. I contacted individuals working with the career centers at all four institutions. Unfortunately, when contacting BI & OsloMet, there was either no response, or it arrived too late in the process. At this point, I had already made contact with the career centers of UiO/SiO and Kristiania University College, and needed to move forward with my project accordingly.

Competitors analysis.

I choose a selection of services and platforms, based on four main criteria and positioned them in an axis accordingly:

▷ **Direct competitors**

These companies, products and services have the same target user group as my project, the students, either as their primary or secondary user group.

▷ **Market giants**

Well established companies, products and services that either contains a huge mass of users, job ads and/or prominence within the market.

▷ **Challengers**

In such a mature market, there are several products and services, and even companies, that does something to differentiate themselves from the rest. This could be in terms of functionalities, focus or even brand identity and visual apperance.

▷ **Distant competitors**

These companies, products and services does not have a focus on my primary usergroup, but they are still relevant in terms of the other two criterias.
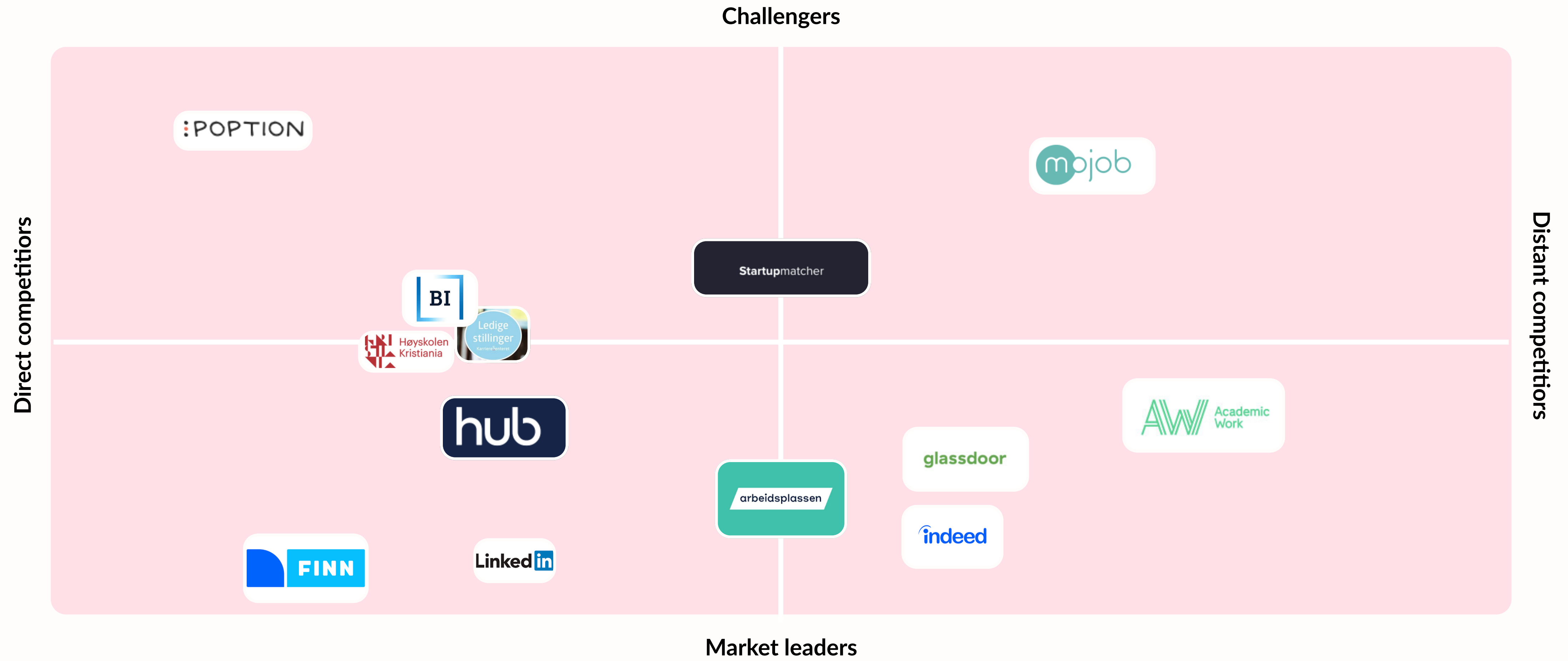
20

Challengers

Direct competitiors

Distant competitiors

Market leaders

(All logos are screenshotted from the individual
platforms/products websites, and belong to the respective companies)

Case studies.

From the competitors analysis, I marked three as main competitors within the Norwegian market and conducted a case study of their services and functionalities. The three main "competitors" where picked based on both desk research, as well as interviews with with students.

Poptions goal is making it easier for students and the industry to connect. They aim to do so with a variety of features and products, one being digital speed interviews. The majority of products Poption offers are directed towards the employers. Their main value proposal towards students are efficient registration (through Feide or ID-porten), a clean and simplistic user interface, and of course the connection to the companies. Poption is available in both Norwegian and English, but this appears to only be towards the content of the site, and not the content of the job advertisments. The portal is free for students.

Karriereportalen is Kristiania University College own career portal. It contains job for summer internships, projects and trainees. As with Poption, it is available in

English and Norwegian, but this does not apply to the job advertisements. At the moment the portal is free to use for both students and employers. The portal is run by the institution, and is quite low threshold. I was able to test the employers side through my part-time job. All I had to do was send over a logo, organisation number and the text for the ad in a Word-document to a specific email.

Finn.no/jobb is a well known job search platform in Norway. It has a large amount of job advertisements listed. The main focus and income source are the companies and employers. Finn does not have a direct focus on student, however the sheer amount of available jobs and an efficent search and filter system makes it one of the most popular job search platforms amongst the students I spoke with.

Mini-reflection
I found the case studies to be moderately useful. The marketing positioning and the revenue streams was what interested me the most. The employers were the focus of 2/3, possibly because that's where the money comes from.
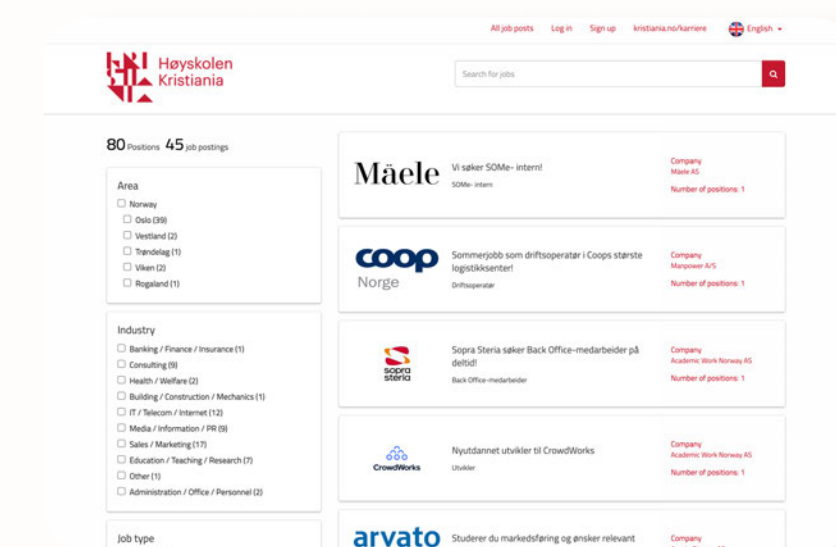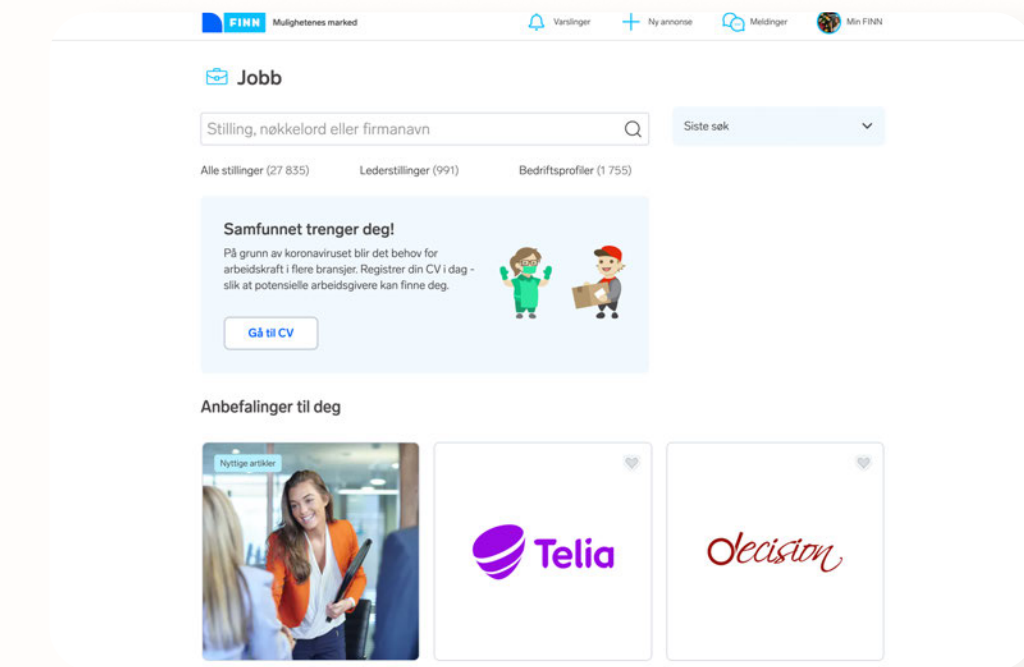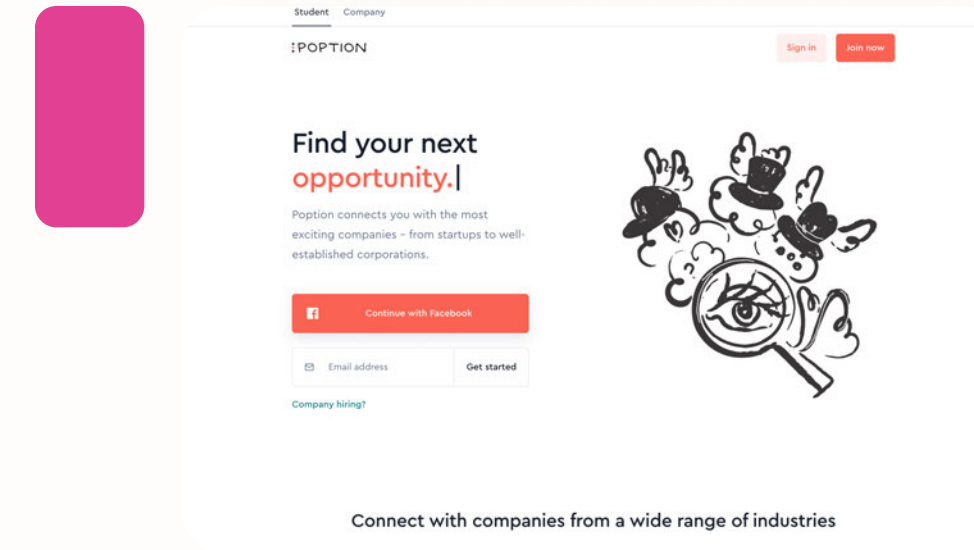
(Screenshots taken directly from websites)

A talk with the actors.

I reached out to actors within the market, in order to test assumptions, hear their stories and obtain more information. This both to understand the market better, but also the secondary and tertiary users. In total I spoke with 9 different individuals with different roles:

▷ **Three career guidance councellors**

▷ **Three HR-managers**

▷ **A daily manager**

▷ **A communication advisor**

▷ **A institute leader**

I met most of the actors as individuals. Therefore their opinions and input represent them and not their respective companies. This resulted in the majority of the interviewees wanting to remain anonymous. I have chosen to illustrate the individuals, but any resemblance will be purely coincidental.
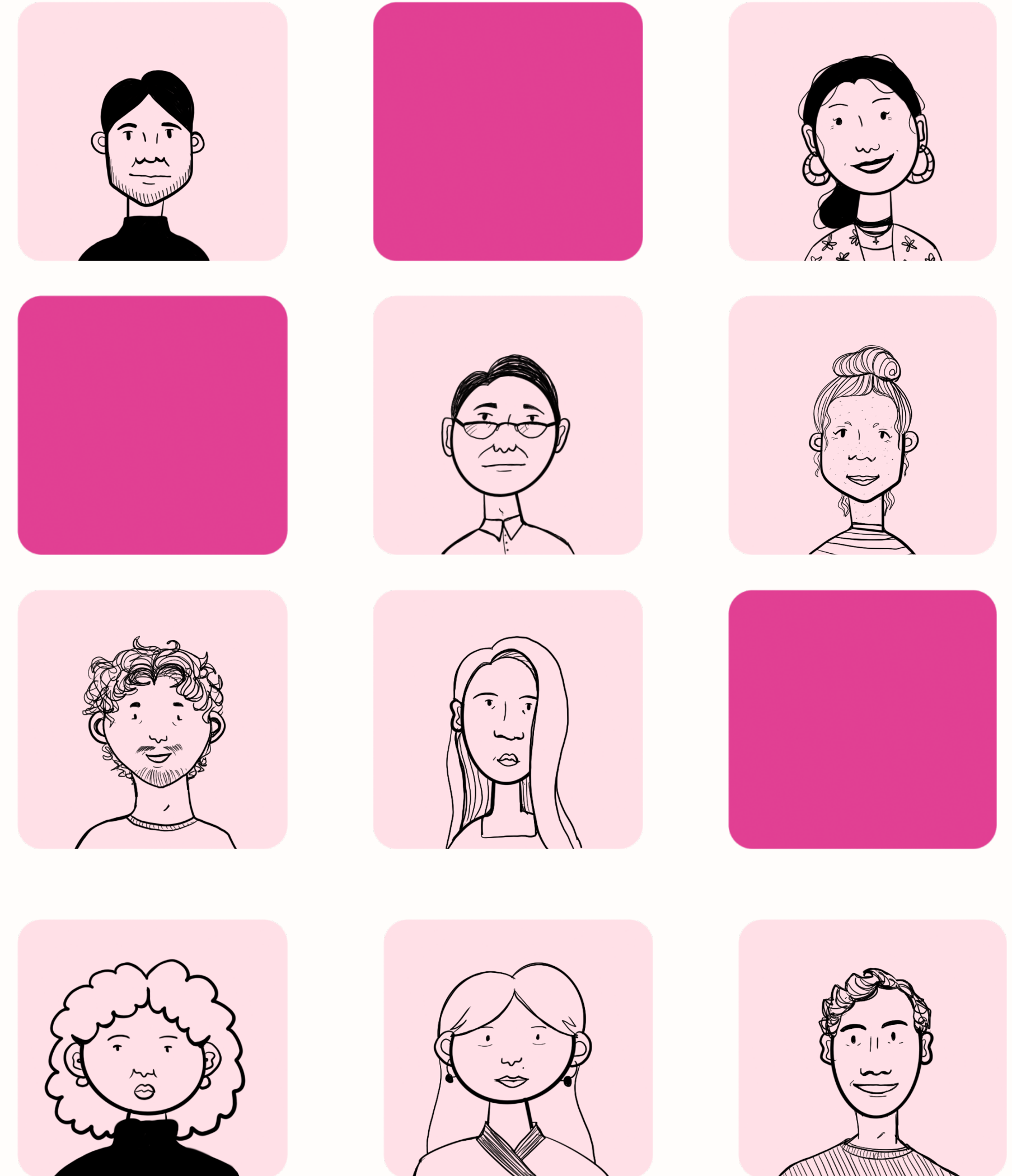
Some findings:

Smaller companies seek low threshold platforms and services in terms of student recruitment. Same goes for institutions job boards and platforms.

"In the beginning we had to find ads - now they pile up: It says a bit about how attractive the students are in the job market." - Career guidance councellor, Kristiania University College

Larger companies has more capacity and systematizes everything.

Internships and summer jobs are the most popular job format for employers to offer students. This way they get to know and understand the candidate better. There is however a shift in the market, and the institute lead I spoke to mentioned a higher interest in 20% job formats from the industry.

A collaboration between the individual instituitions is unlikely. The instituitions ability to get their students into work increases the schools reputations, and it is a hard competition.

There is a need for clarification of expectations from both sides, but especially in terms of skills and attributes

There is a need for clarification of expectations from both sides, but especially in terms of skills and attributes

"The skillset we need, isnt always tied to academic skills" - Daily manager

Students dont prioritize developing soft skills, and are in general bad at self reflecting on their own capabilities. This according to guidance counsellors.

"We know that this with Career Planning is something many students take seriously three weeks before they submit a diploma / master, and also after they have submitted. And then our message is, it is far too late." - Career uidance councellor, SiO

"Students struggle a lot to brag about themselves, and are not very good at reflecting on their own values. They are more used to fulfilling expectations and roles, as opposed to being themselves." - Career guidance councellor, Kristiania University College

The Career guidance counsellors brought to my attention that job portals are only a small part of the user journey. One of the them made the metaphor of the job portal as a "dessert", and the CMS (career management skills) representing the "starters" and "dinner".

"Going into a portal, applying for the position, it's in a way the dessert. You know what you're doing. And if you've eaten the main course first, then you know how to do it and how to communicate it." - Career guidance councellor, SiO

The primary target group.

According to a thematic review conducted by Eurostudent, the main categories for dividing students motivations for seeking part-time paid jobs during studies are the following:

▷ **Financial motive**

"I work to cover my living costs"
"I work because I have to support others"
"Without my salary, I could not afford to be a student"

▷ **Experience gaining**

"I work to gain experience on the labour market"

In approximately two thirds of the countries included in the study, including Norway, at least 45% of the student working had a job that was connected to their field of study. (Eurostudent, 2018)

COMBINING STUDIES AND PAID JOBS

Thematic review

eurostudent.eu

2018

(Eurostudent, 2018)

In a press release earlier this spring, the Government presented a suggestion for a plan for better facilitation between the students and the job market. Albeit the focus is more towards interventions in terms of curriculum changes, the document underline the necessity for students to have more hands-on experience. (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021)

As the focus on industry involvement, and student employability increases on a macro level, one can hypothesis that an increasing amount of employees will begin to see the benefits as well as the social responsibility of hiring students, even in a smaller percentage position. After all, as minister of Research and Higher Education Henrik Asheim (H) accurately stated:

"Today's students are tomorrow's colleagues, employers and creators of new jobs."
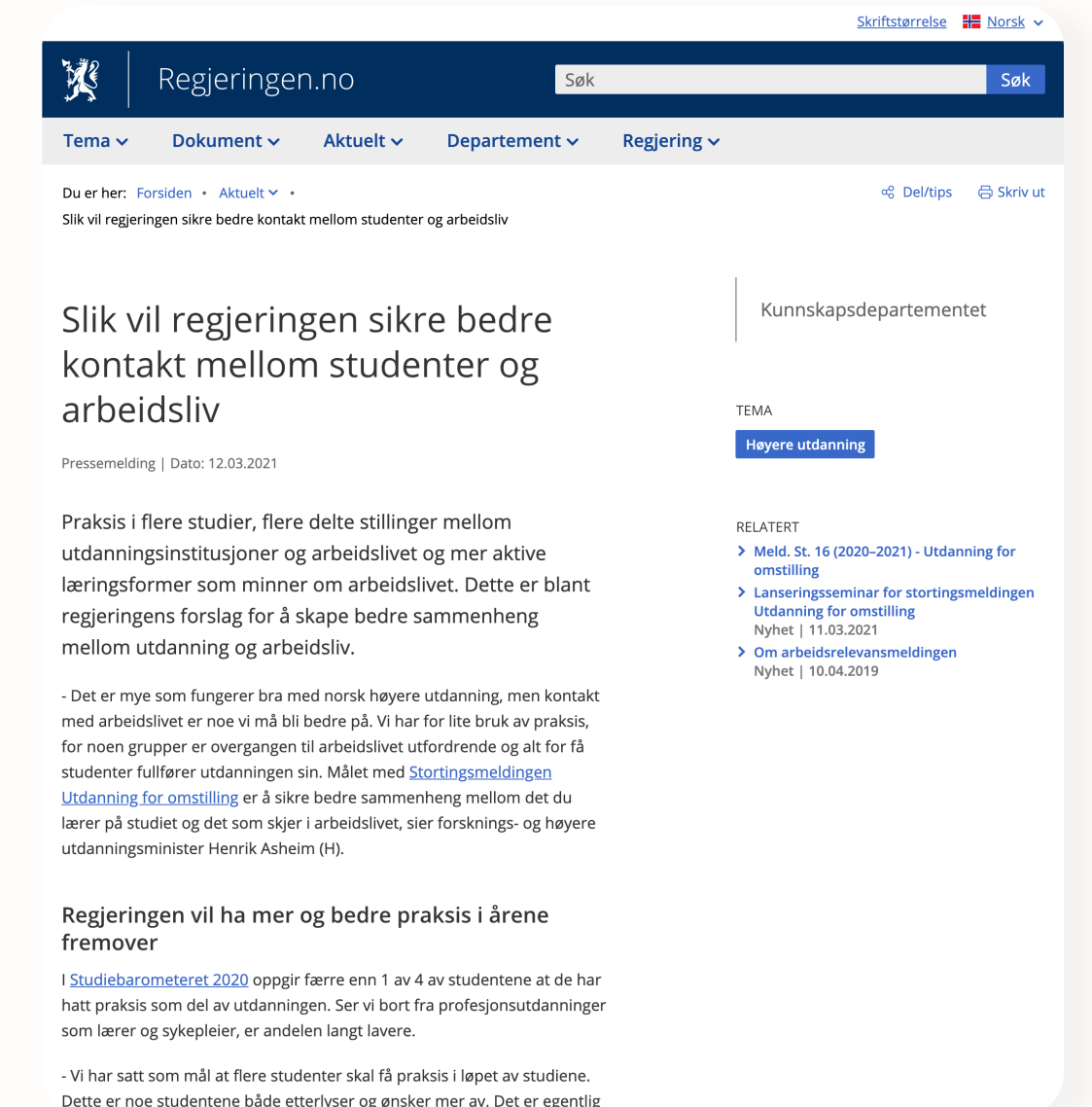
(Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021)
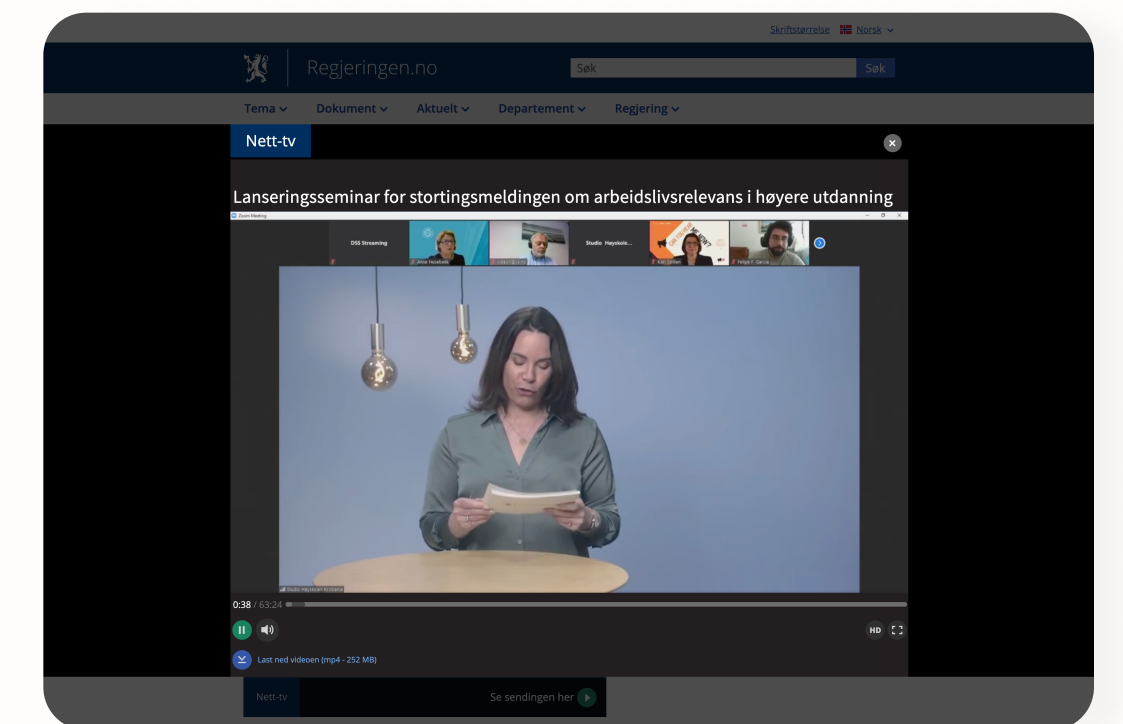
(Digitalt fra Høyskolen Kristiania/regeringen.no, 2021)

Interviews with students.

I contacted and interviewed eight students in total during my research phase. They were all in different stages of their education. It varied from first year of bachelors, to post-grads. As a group they represented four universitites, five different nationalities and six types of study tracks.

By creating an semi-structured interview guide, I was able to gather categorized information for easy comparison, while still allowing for organic input to occure.

We discussed the individuals attitude towards job application, their drivers/motivations and barriers. Most of the students attended an institute with a career guidance service available. The others where a part of SiO, and had access to their offers. We spoke about whether or not they make use of the services, and why they choose to use them or not.

We talked about motivation, what type of work they ideally would like, and as a closing discussion we looked into their experience and the outcome of their recent job application process.

The students brought up similar pain points in terms of the variating stages of the process. The students I spoke to had either found job through their network, taken a break from job hunting or was still looking.
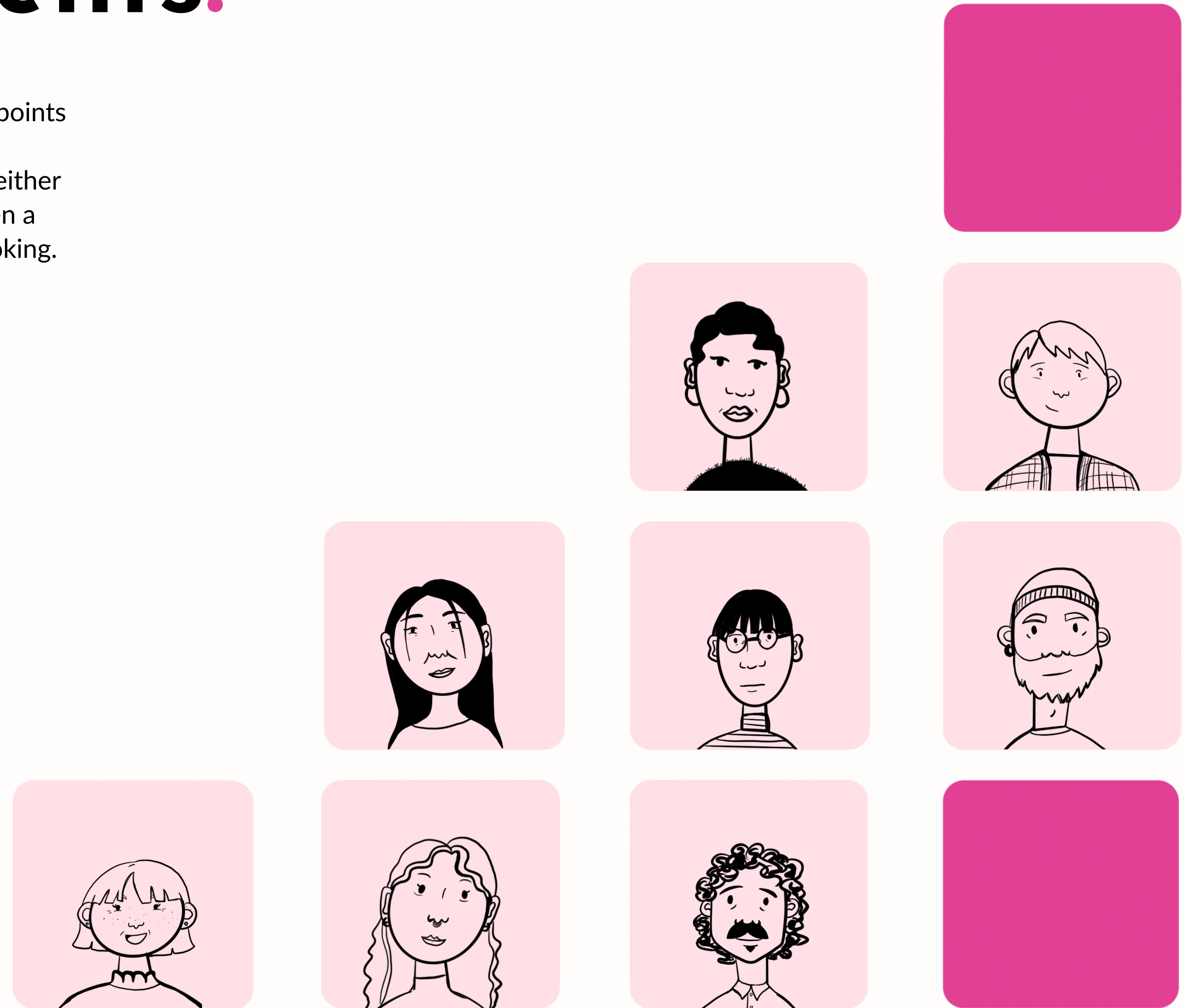
Processing information.

In order to analyse and synthesise the information and conversations from the student interviews, I used methods from interaction and service design.

Thematic analysis
I categorized my findings into quotes of interest, bigger picture, tools, emotions and potential concepts. The thematic analysis together with the results from the research phase resulted in three key findings. I brought these key findings with me in an ideation "workshop" with another design student, in order to kick off the ideation phase.

Journey maps
I created two generalised journeys maps representing the characteristics of the individual students experiences, one focused on applying for work physically, and one digitally. These journeys are primarily based on experiences from before COVID. I did so in order to get an overview of where in the process the problems occure. It is also my intention to use these maps later to find potential touch point for my concept.
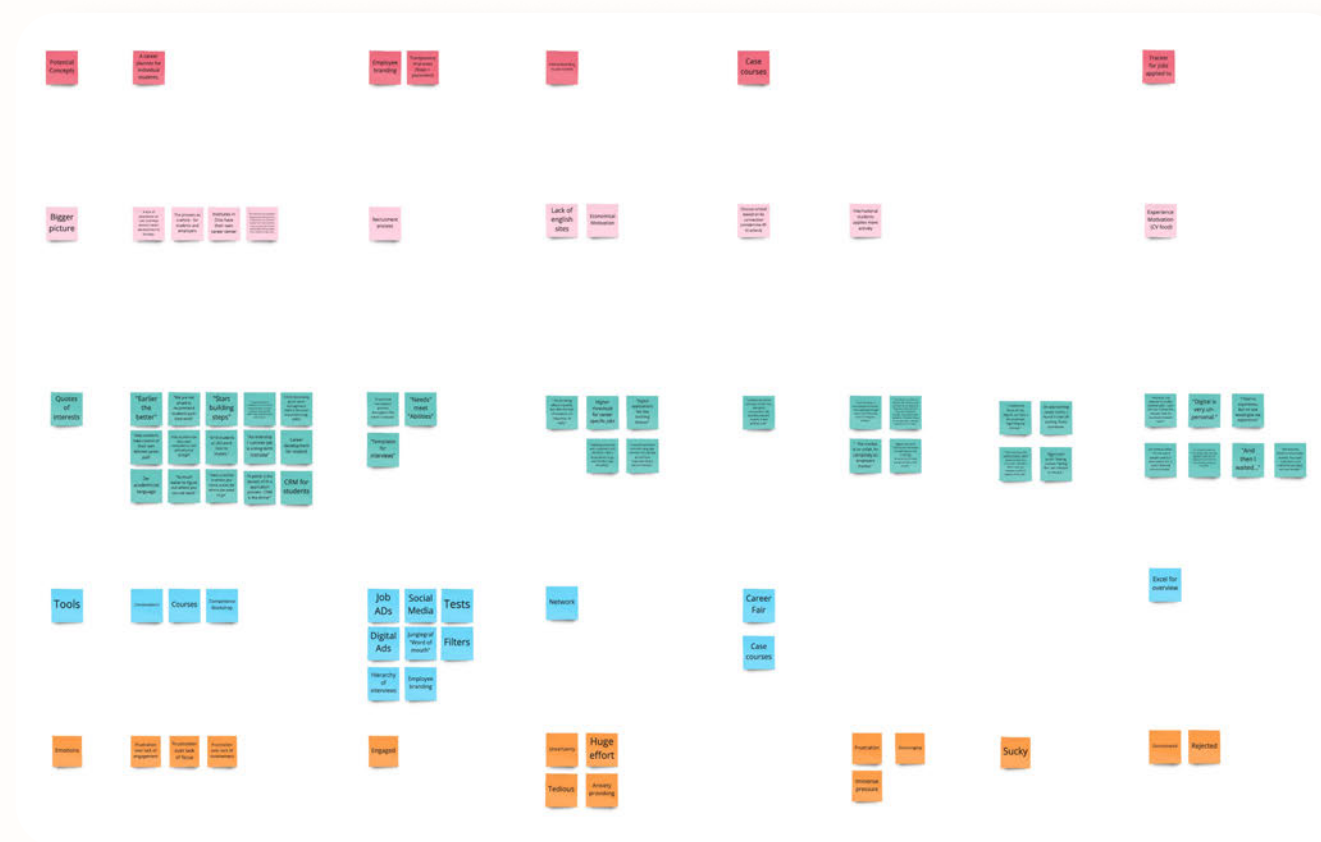
Thematic analysis
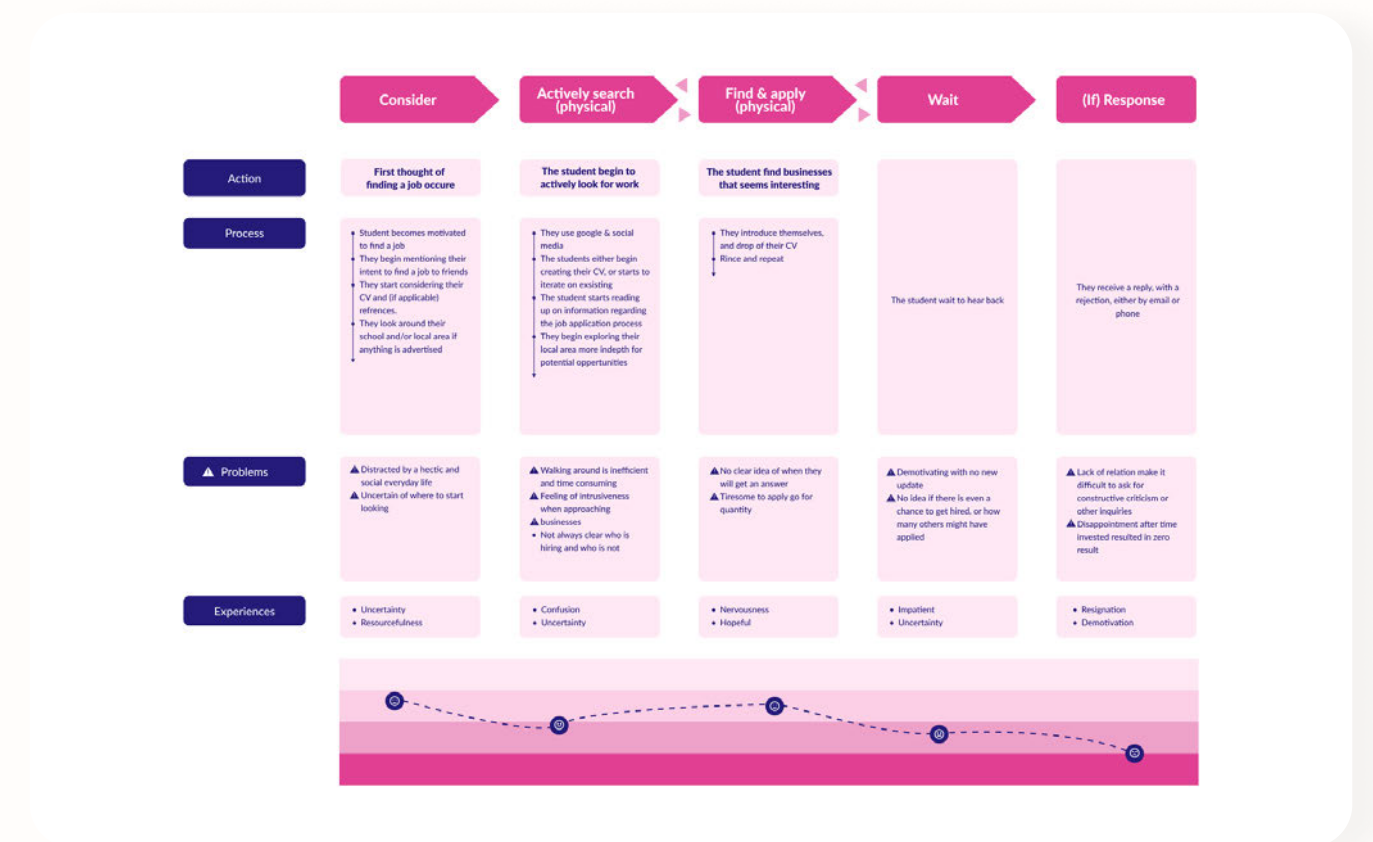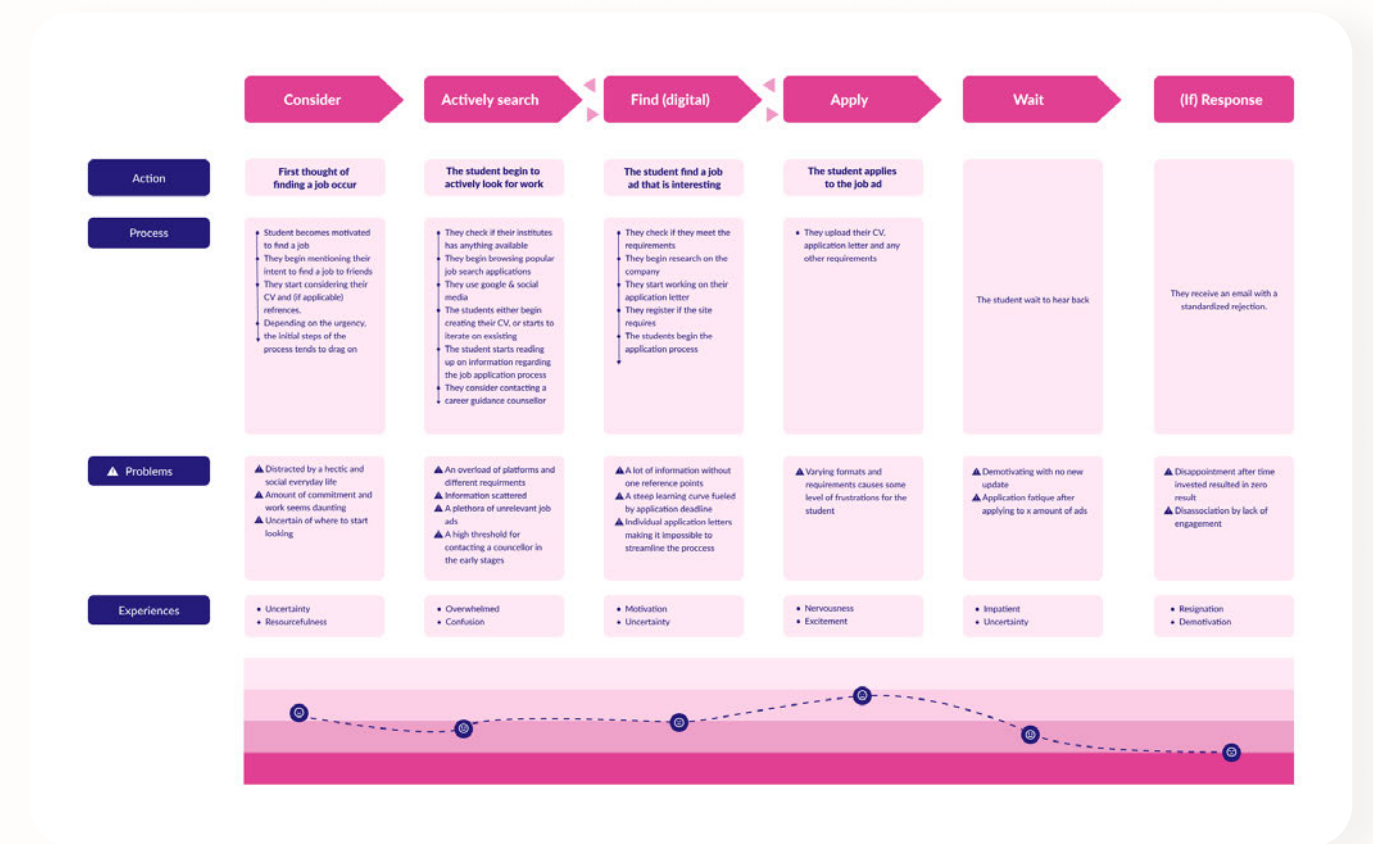
Journey maps
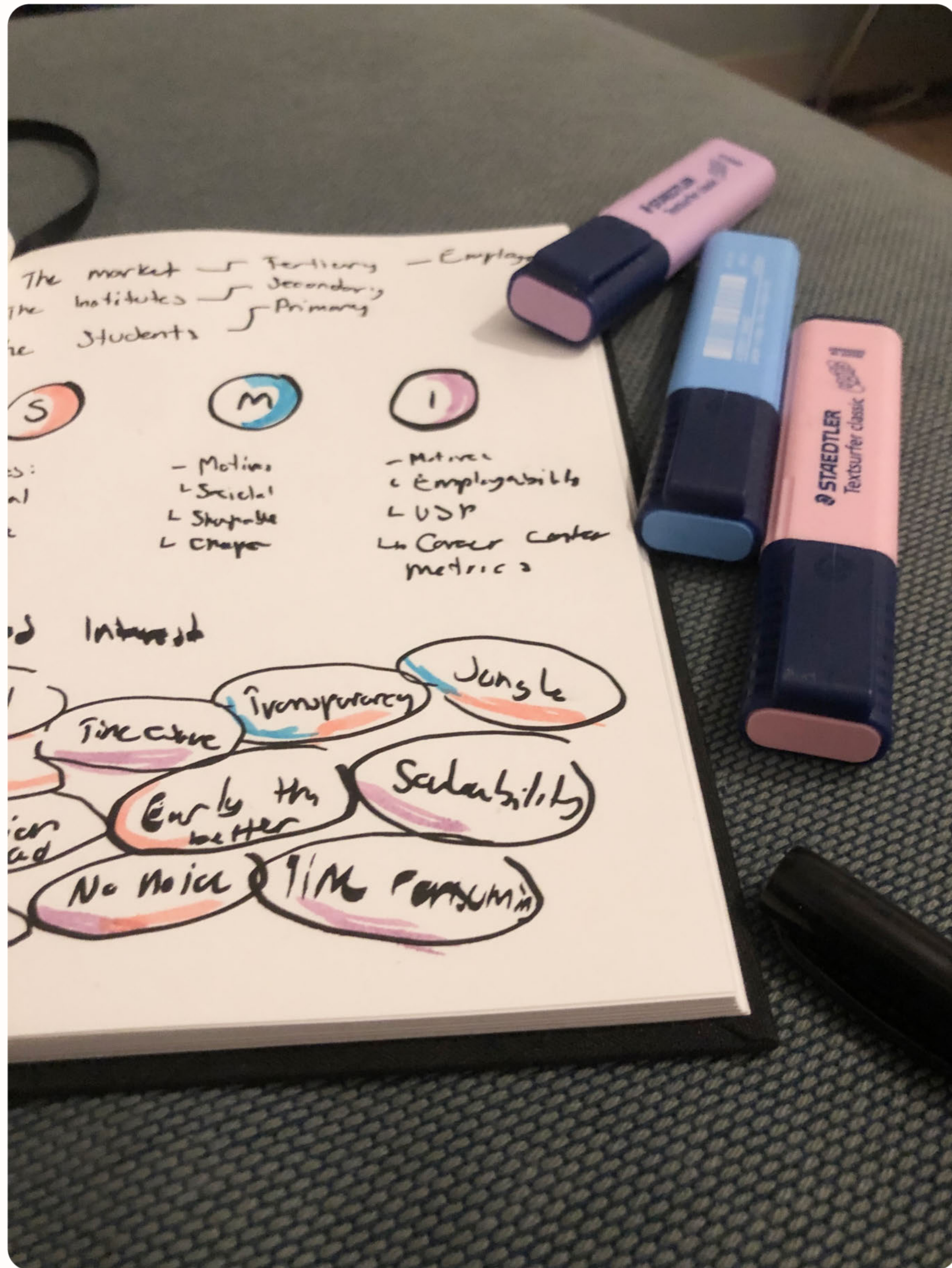
Define.

In this short chapter, I share with you my main findings from the research phase. I have analysed and synthesized the information and data gathered into five key findings, that I then translated into how might we - (HMW). At the very end I reflect around a neccessary redefinition of my scope that occured as a result from these findings, and conduct a prioritization exercise to guide me in the next phase.

Findings.

Institution role is key

Every institution is Oslo either has a career center, guidance counsellors or access to these services through SiO. Depending on the focus of the institution, there are different approaches to enabling growth in terms of student employability. During conversations, some councillors expressed frustrations around the lack of focus on developing career management skill within the curriculum. News and government statements are pushing for a change in accordance to this (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021). Career experience is slowly being highlighted as an essential skill for student to have, and the government is expressing an understanding that this has to happen within the curriculum in order to be feasible.

"I picked my school because I knew they had good connections. My priorities weren't studies, it was getting a job." - Student 4

"We try to be a kind of bridge-builder between working life and students." - - Career counsellor, Kristiania University College

A generalised market

My initial hypothesis regarding an overload of platforms was confirmed throughout the market research and interviews. There is no clear market lead focusing on students, although there are a multitude of interesting and good offers available. The job market can be classified as a global, national and/or local market. This makes it difficult, especially for international students, to know which platform to utilize. This results in the student using multiple sites, products and channel, making the process more time consuming and disorganized. The students must filter away unrelevant work, in terms of experience, requirements and time-limitations. In the case of those with low Norwegian language skills, it adds an addition level of frustration as many of the nation focused platforms does not filter by language, in the job ads or even the site themselves.

"The advantage of a career portal directly connected to a school is that the employers who place ads there look for students specifically." - - Careers counsellor, Kristiania University College

"Digital applications felt like scrolling forever. I found it tedious and anxiety provoking" - Student 1

Lack of communication

Digitalization makes it difficult to see the individual behind both the organisations and applicant letters. There appears to be an imbalance in the market in terms of power dynamics. The optimization of the applications process through automated tests and algorithms is a direct source of frustrations and alienation toward the employers.

The majority of students I spoke to felt incredibly putt-off by these experiences. The lack of transparancy in the process also leaves the students in a "waiting-game", where they have no communication or dates set for feedback regarding where they are in the application process.

"There was very little communication, and it made me feel very uncertain. People just don't reply. Its fine if it is a no, but I want an answers." - Student 8

"The market is so unfair, its completely an employers market. I'm sure my CV must just go directly in the thrash. I can't even get an interview, I probably don't even getting past the screening!" - Student 4

Different jobs - different types of discovery

There are different arenas for discovering jobs as a student, besides the digital platform. Network is an obvious one, but students approaching the job market for the first time might not have one to rely or consult with. The institutions becomes the students network in a sense, and there are multiple opportunities through career days, guest lectures, projects...etc to meet potential employers.

Outside of the institutions, there are also local, small scale businesses that often look to hire students. Cafes, small shops and restaurants to mention a few. These often use advertisement on social media or posters on location to announce job opportunities. These are viable options for students looking for something other than study-relevant work experience.

"Applying physically was unpleasant and stressful. I didn't know where to go, and felt like I was intruding." - Student 1

"I like the filters, with area and relevance. I live outside of the city, so finding something close at home to school would be best." - Student 6

Information overload

During multiple interviews, the topic of information overload surfaced. In addition to finding relevant work, another major time-consumer for the students was finding information regarding topics such as structuring a CV, how to network, what to add in a cover letter etc. There are as many sources online as there are platforms, with just enough variations to create uncertainty. Most student expressed a feeling similar to fatigue when it came to the topic of utilizing these information points. This is a great hindrance when it comes to student developing their career management skills (CRM). Experts spoken to throughout the project could not underline enough the importance of developing these skills in terms of employability. Information regarding these topics should be digestible, validated and easily accessible, to reduce the fatigue.

"It's a lot of work, with a profile here and a profile there - it's time consuming. Not always an effective channel for students or employers, but it's now a matching hub then. I would encourage students to be just as concerned about what they do. What they will use these portals for, how to communicate, how to get their candidacy" - Guidance councellor, SiO

"For me, its difficult to know what to write on the application, and also updating the CV. And also checking these "have you done this, have you tried this". " - Student 6

HMW-questions.

▷ Be accessible to students of all background

▷ Provide value for the projects secondary target group

▷ Cater for transparency within the process

▷ Provide information in an accessible way

▷ Cater for only student-relevant job advertisment

▷ Assist the student on different levels of the application process

▷ Avoid creating another barrier between students and employers

▷ Enable for a more autonomy throughout the process

▷ Avoid creating a digital solution that simply "adds to the noise"

▷ Design for a scalable solution, addressing the future while focusing on the present

▷ Enable different segments of work-types, study relevant and other

▷ Streamline the process for primary and tertiary users

▷ Ensure that employers find relevant resources in terms of employees

▷ Define the standard for relevant information communicated through job applications

▷ Ensure flexibility and personalization in terms of application artifacts for the student

Scope.

I could now see multiple directions to take the project. There are many focus areas that would have been interesting to explore. Ideally I would incorporate everything into my final delivery. However, in order to produce and iterate around something concrete and realistic, I had to create some framework for the remainder of the project.

The interviews with the career counsellors had brought up the analogy of the "dinner-then-dessert" in terms of CRM and the actual action of job searching/applying. The preparation and practise prior to an event, test or project is often crucial for the result. The same could be said for the job application process. Reflecting back on this reminded me of a quote from an article I had read early on in my project. (Christensen et al., 2020)

"Some jobs are little (pass the time); some are big (find a more fulfilling career). When we buy a product, we essentially "hire" it to help us do a job. If it does the job well, we'll hire it again. If it does a crummy job, we "fire" it and look for something else to solve the problem.

The key to successful innovation is identifying jobs that are poorly performed in customers' lives and then designing products, experiences, and processes around those jobs"

In my personal motivation, I compare the job application and search process as a full-time job. What part of this "job" could I assist the students with solving, given insight I had gathered? From the HMW-questions, I formulated three themes. They represent the fundamental features in my concept.

Mini-reflection
Picking these themes meant prioritizing some HMW over others. I would like to mention two major area of interest to explore further; relations & transparancy. The power imbalance, and lack of communication, is a major pain point for students, and probably also for employers. In further iteration of the concept, I would choose this as a priority.

▷ **Learn**

Equip the student with information needed for a more autonomous application process

▷ **Discover**

Enabling discovery of different segmentation of work, per students requests (study relevant & otherwise)

▷ **Manage**

Additional features and tools for managing individual process
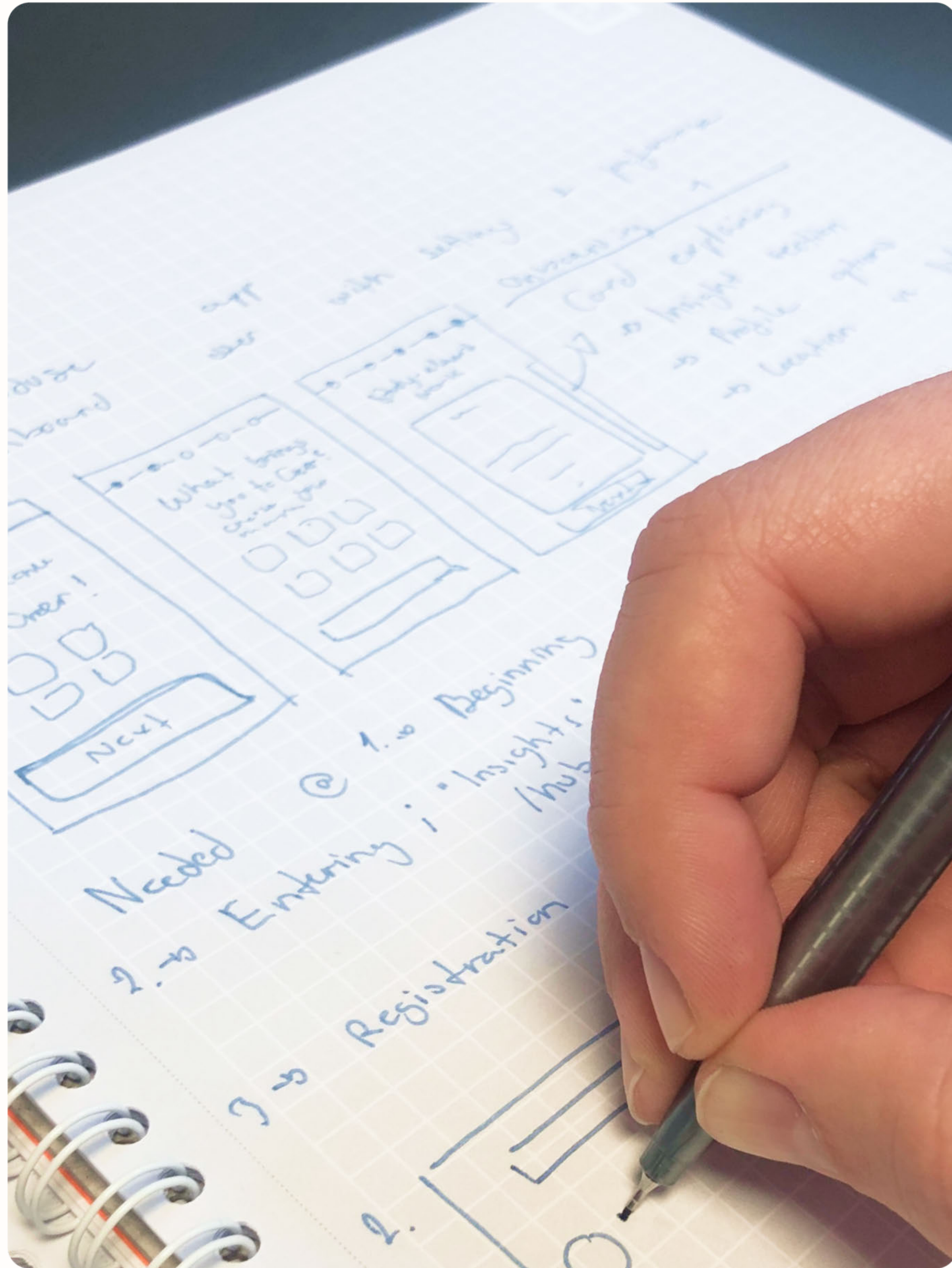
Development.

In the development phase, I work iteratively to solidify my concept. I test and validate it with target groups before moving on to developing an identity. I develop the user interface, and test continuously with students.

Mini-workshop.

Throughout the whole project, vague ideas and concepts has surfaced during the research. I noted down a variation of them during my process, and brought them with me to an ideation mini-"workshop" together with a fellow design student.

During the workshop I iterated on these earlier ideas, all while keeping the key findings and HMW questions in focus. My goal was to concretize the ideas into concepts that I could bring with me in discussions with the different target groups.
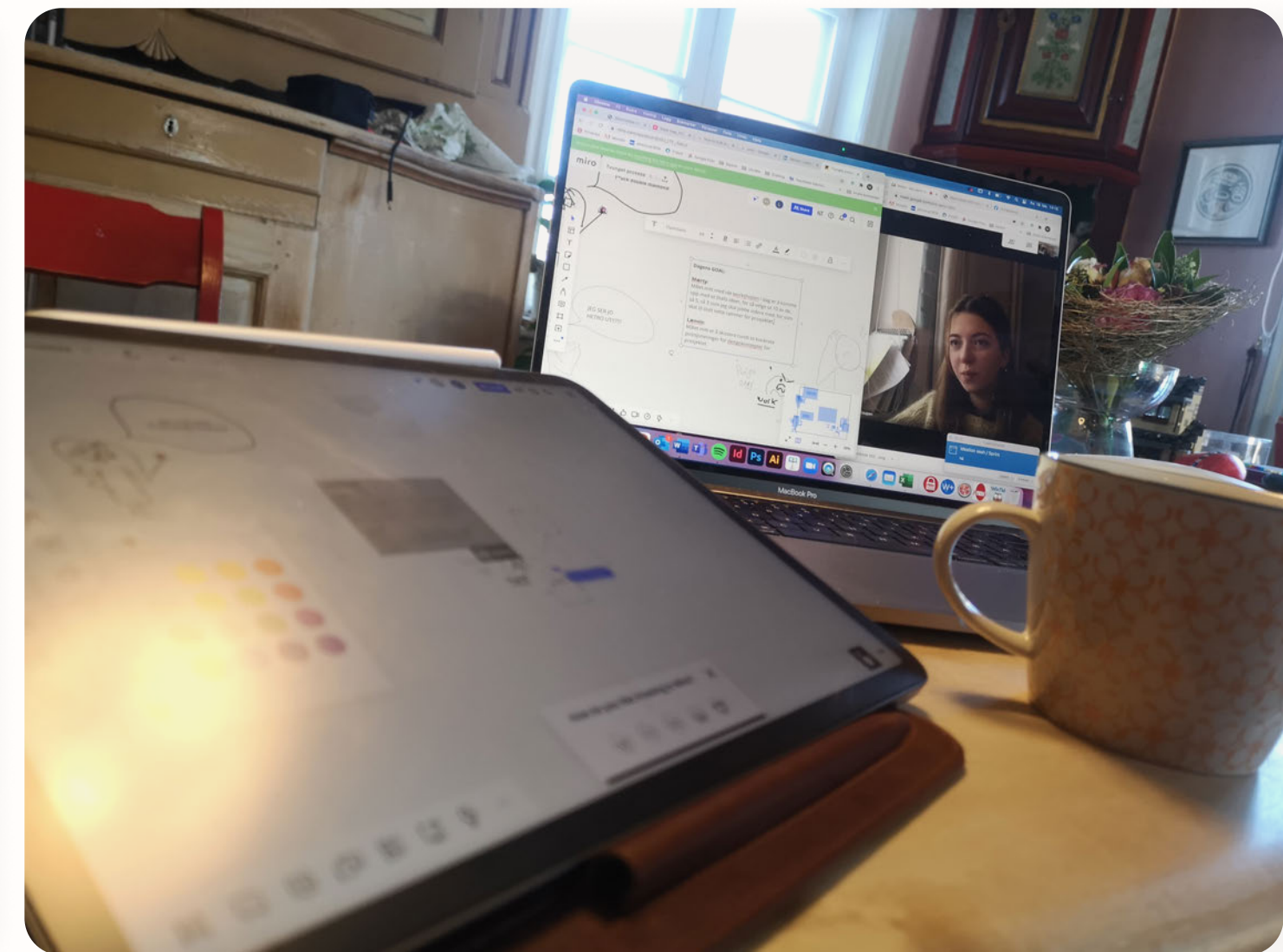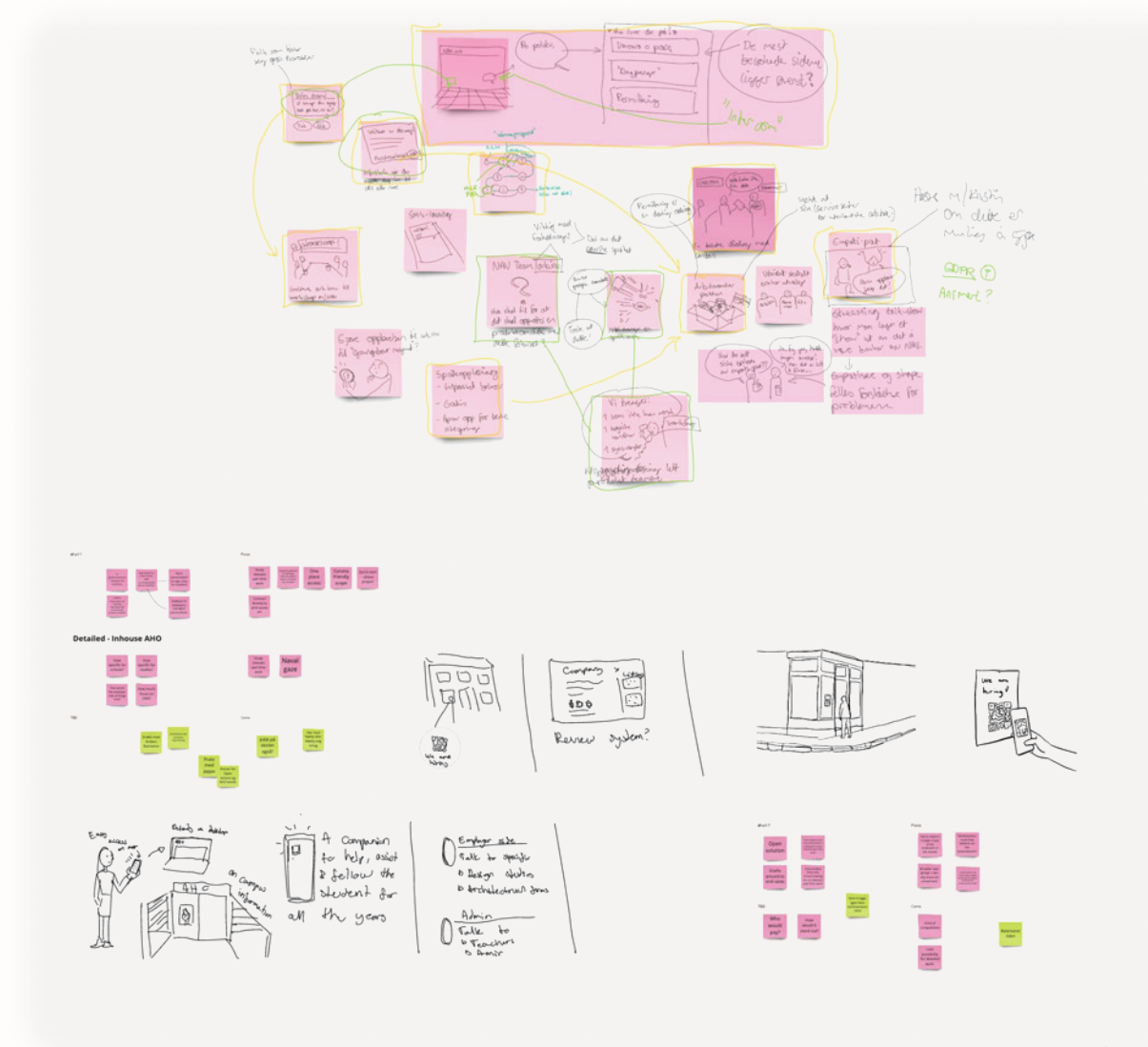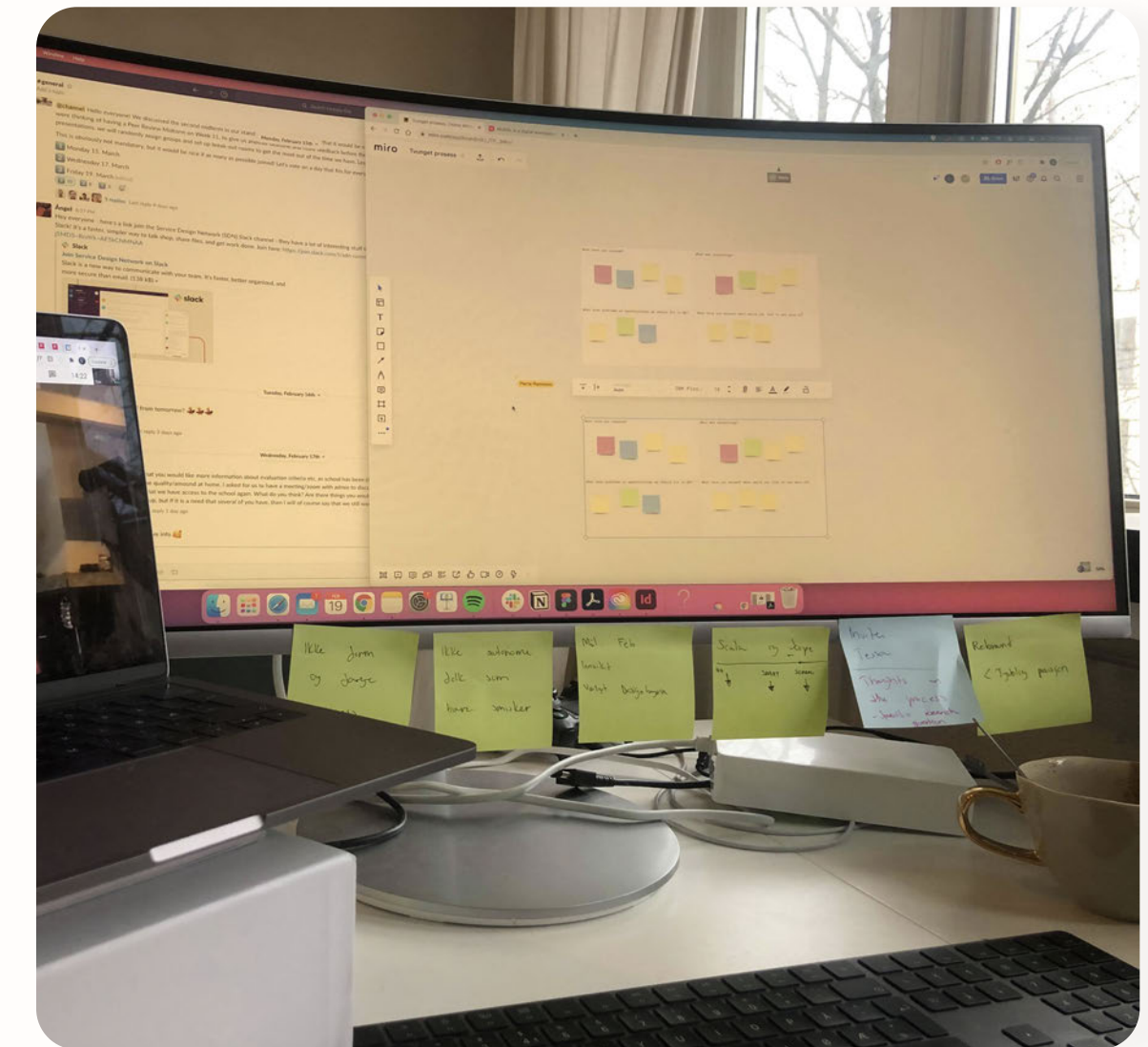
Planning.

The results of the workshop was more of a positioning of a concept, than anything solidified. I know now, that there was potential in creating a sort of hybrid solution of the traditional job search platform, and a service such as the career guidance offices provide.

I knew realistically that any product would have to be a multi-platform solution, but TWIMCs focus will be the main touch point for students. The market research had showed an overload of desktop solutions, and conversations with students had indicated a slightly higher threshold for utilizing a computer over an application. As such, I made the early decision of my concept (for students) being app-based. This would hopefully provide a lower threshold for usage, and also create a stronger position within the market as there would be less direct competitors.

I created a diagram to test in dialouge with my secondary users. In my concept, they represent the administrative side, and therefore a central role.

Screening of job application, general management as well as updates on relevant articles and content would most likely be a task delegated to someone in their role.

Before introducing a career counselor to my concept as a target group, I wanted to hear their opinion as experts. Did they, with their direct experience with the primary user group, see a value in this?
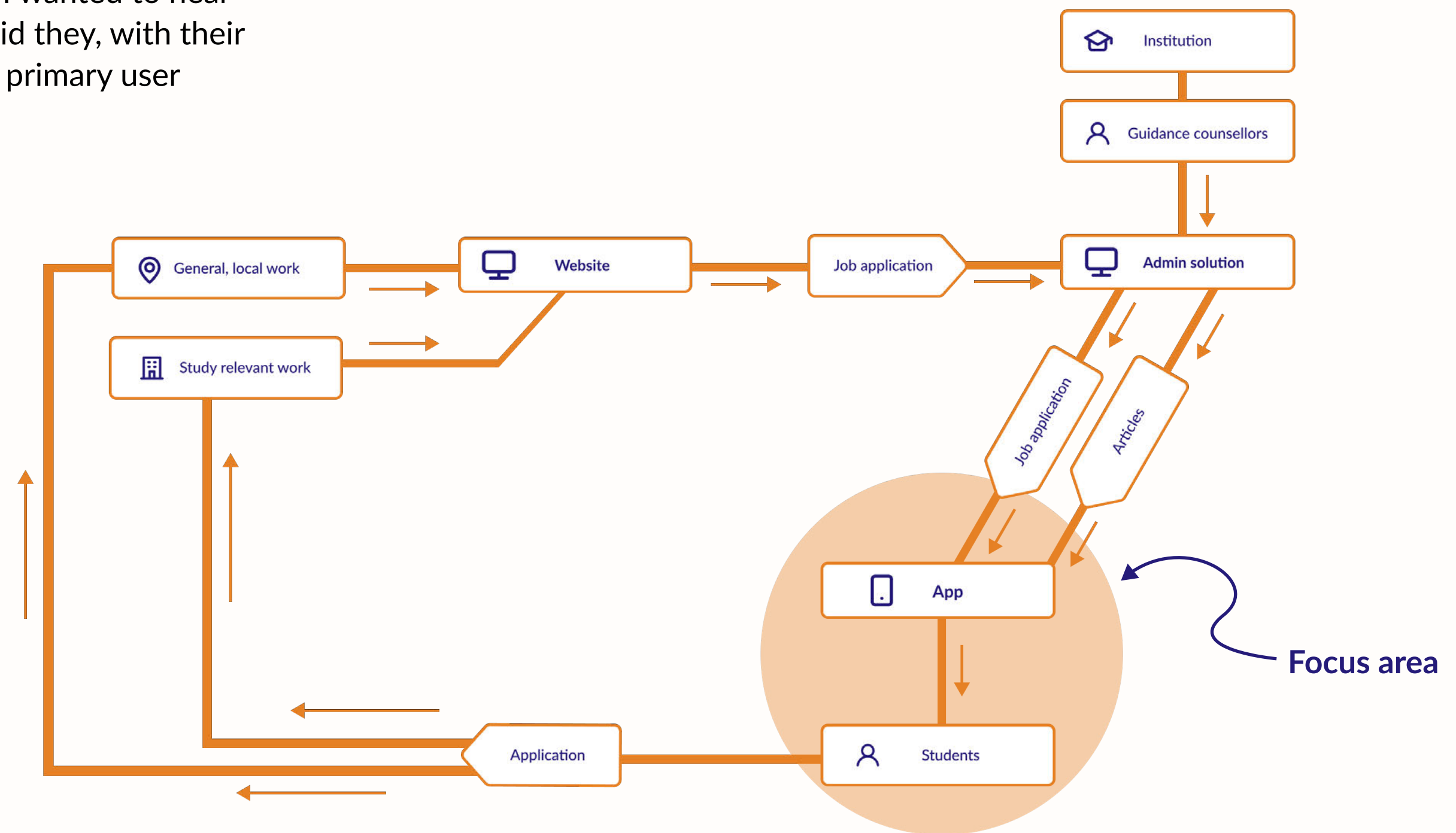
Sketching.

To test the concept (the app) properly, I needed some design artifacts to bring to the conversations.

I took inspiration from other applications situated within the job market and drew some sketches for the main features. My intention behind using conventions from the other apps was both to familiarize myself with the competitors, and to introduce the concept on familiar ground. I then cleaned up the initial sketches, and brought them with me in separate conversations with a career counsellor and two students.
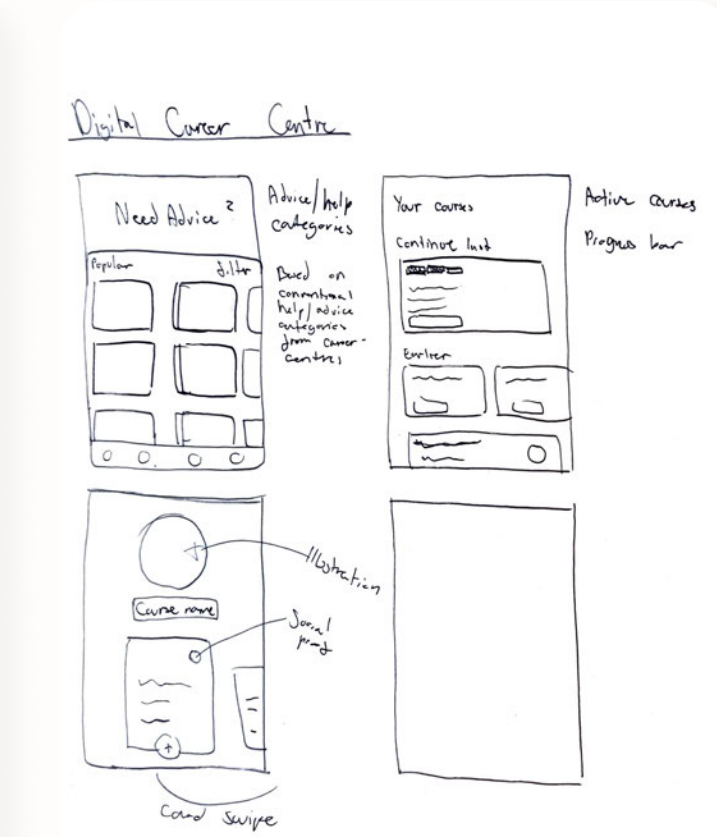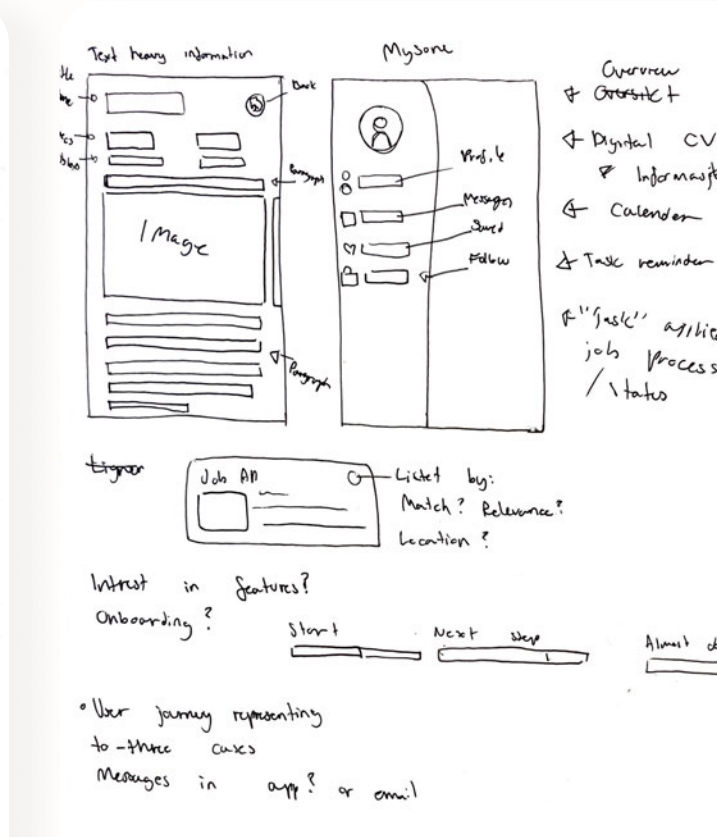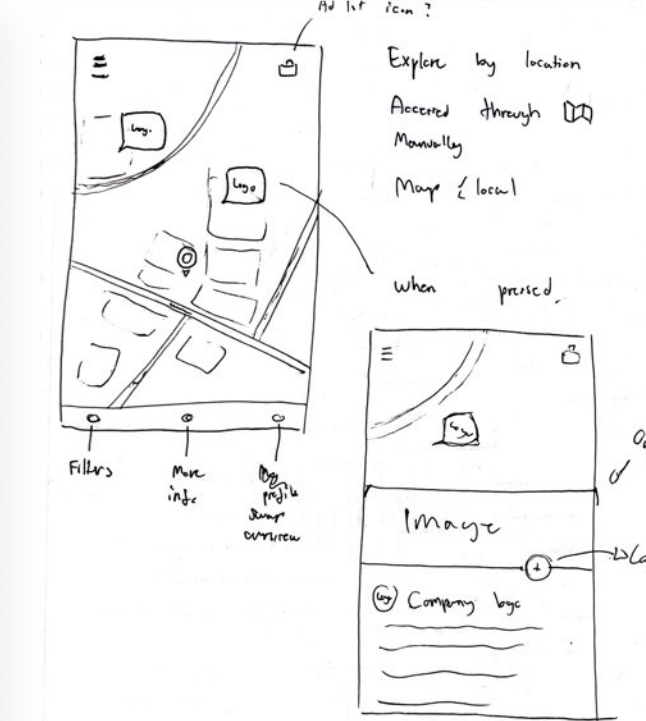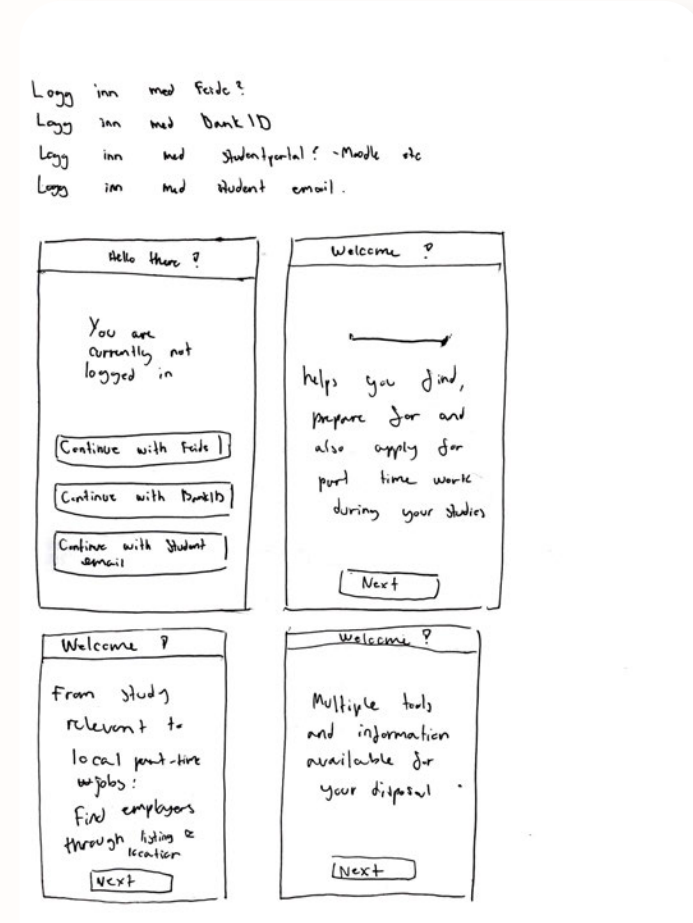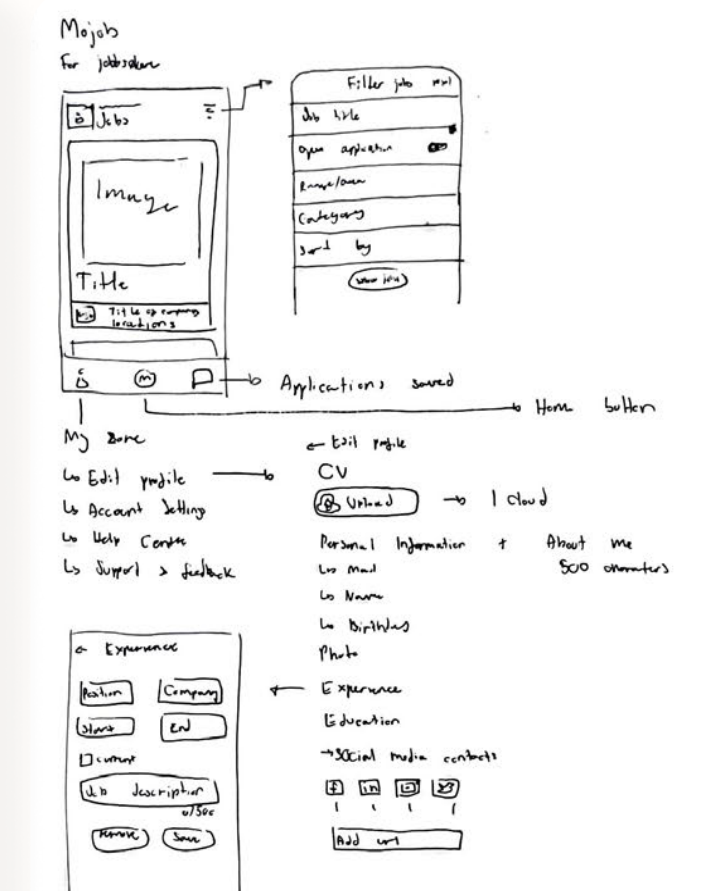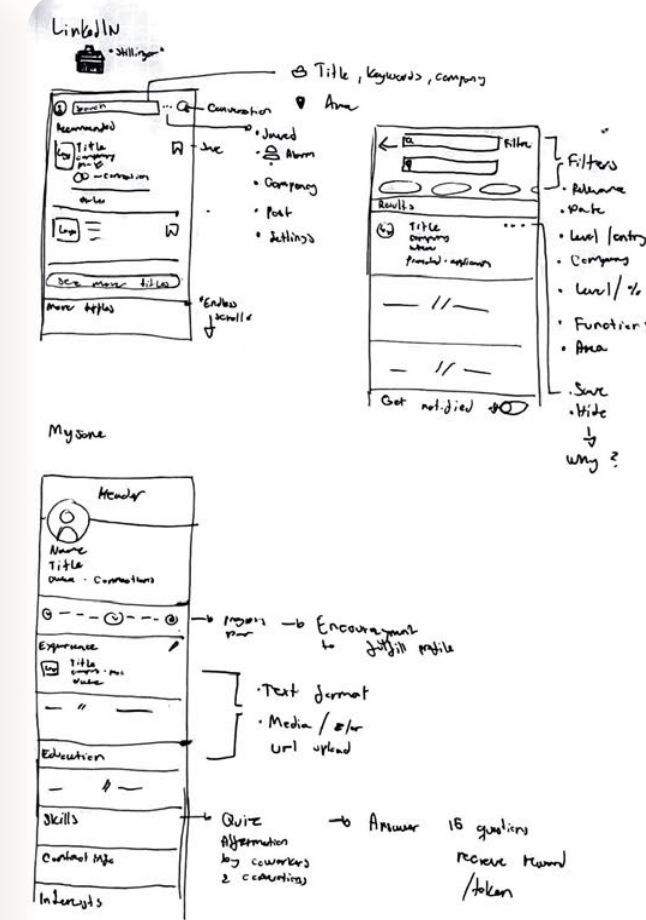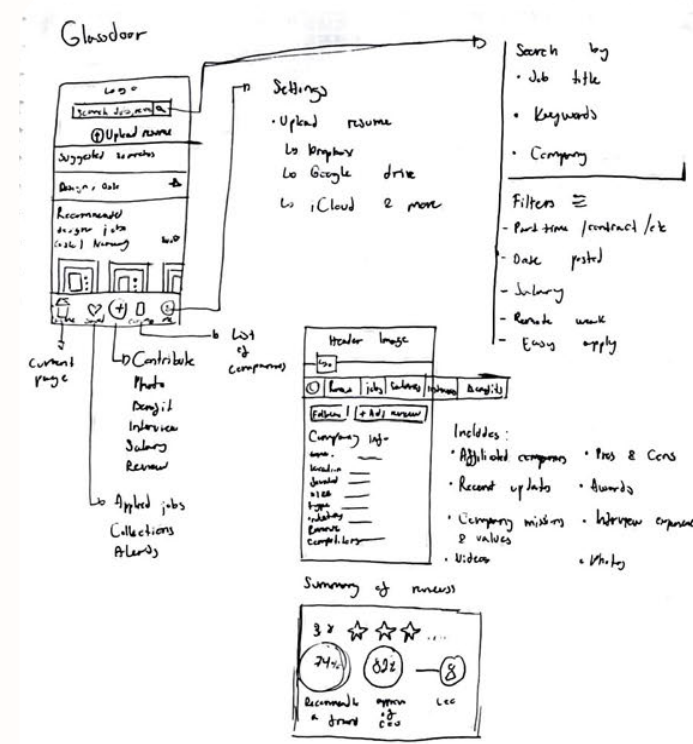
Testing and ideation.

Students

The students were mostly positive towards the concept as a whole, especially the switch between location and listing.

"Oooh thats cool! That way I can get notified when I'm close to somewhere that has a job? Nice. Does it notify you whenever, or would it be filtered somehow? What if they only hire Norwegian speakers?" - Student 2

Even with the low-fidelity sketches, I was able to get some concrete feedback on the content in general as well.

"I don't see the point in the myzone. Personally I would not want to use this for CV storage. An app is to small. But many apps have nice desktop alternative, like with Foodora! Could be a solution" - Student 1

"Hmm, I'm just curious. Why is the manage-section not under myzone? Myzone is my profile right? Why not gather it. A bit annoying to have them seperate. " - Student 1

Guidance councellor

I invited Nina from Kristiania University College to a meeting to talk losely around the concept. According to her, this was absolutely relevant for them, both in terms of the information section, and the listing/location feature. She encouraged me to continue in this direction. After our discussion, she invited me to present for two of her coworkers the following week.
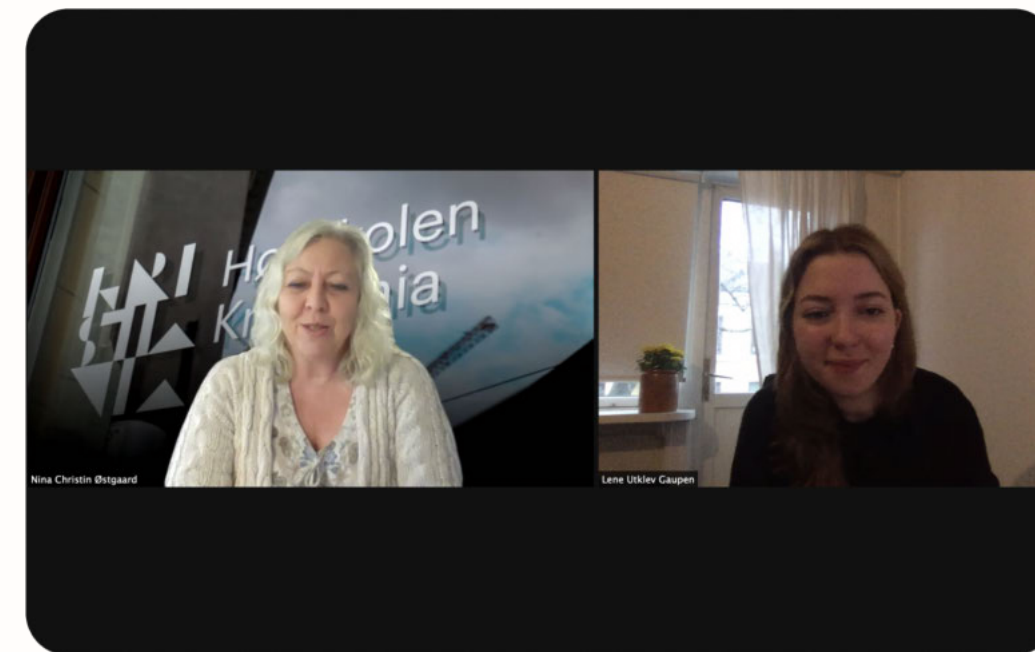
Reflection

There was a lot left to do in order to solidify the concept more, but these initial testes showed me that I was creating something of relevance.

42
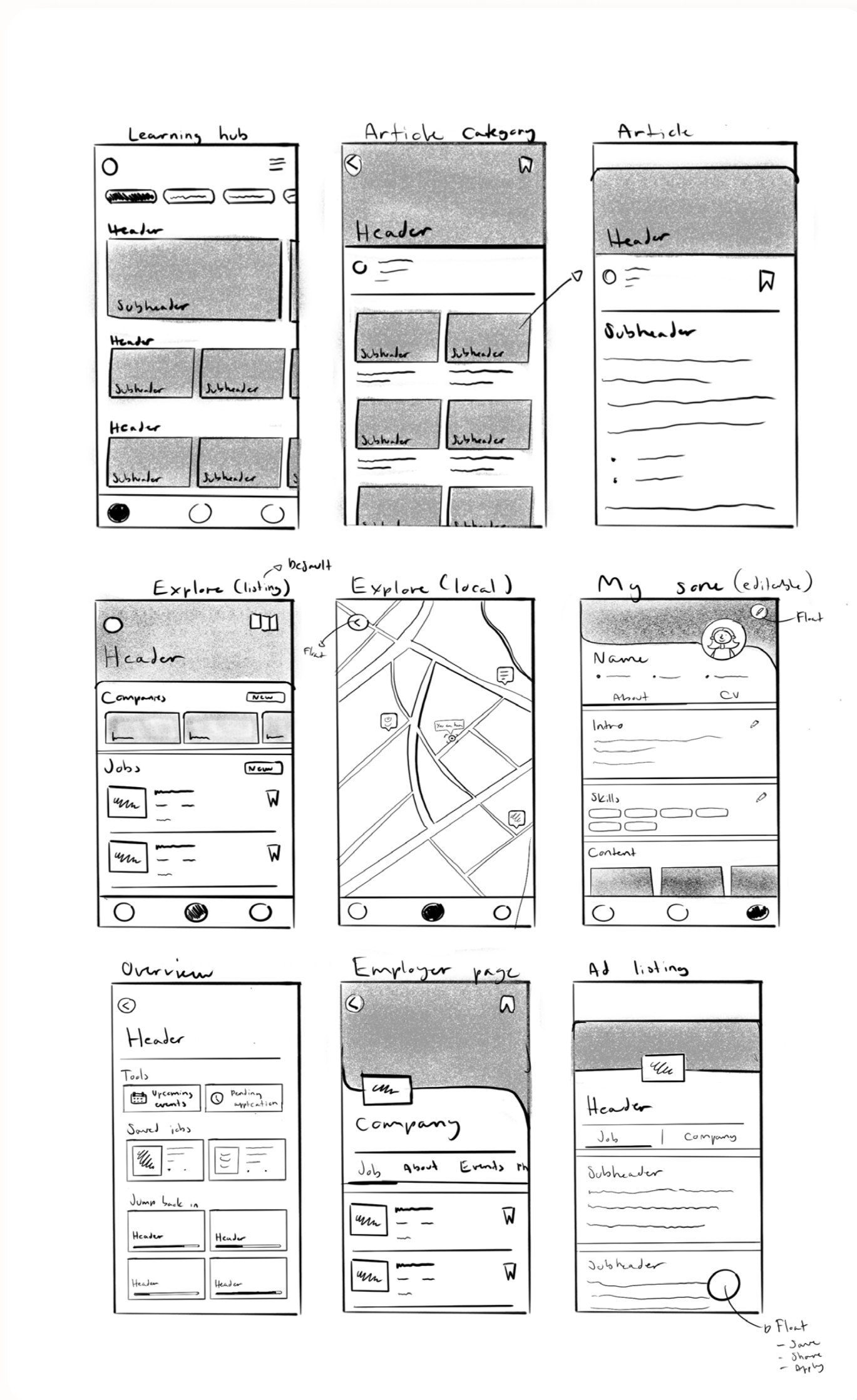
Iterative development.

In alignment with the design principles I have mentioned before, I decided to develop my concept through iterative ideation together with students. I also held close contact with the guidance counsellors from Kristiania University College, and recieved feedback from them.

From my low fidelity sketches, I moved on to wireframes in order to test the user flow and primary navigation properly. Using both zoom and google meet, I shared a figma prototype link with students to get their initial feedback.

Wireframe Feedback
I tested the wireframes on two students. The navigation seemed to make sense, as well as the icons except from some minor areas. The main critique was towards the segmentation of content. Why did they see this (Companies) content on top straight away? I also got feedback in regards to the naming of the different features. The student kept referring to "myzone" as "profile", and raised confusion around the name "learning hub".

The "design" of the wireframes also got mixed feedback. The students mentioned adjectives such as "crowded", "bland" and "predictable". This was expected, as I had mostly used conventions from other job related apps. My intention in this was to present the concept in familiar settings, so that the navigation and flow could be the main focus.

Initial screens
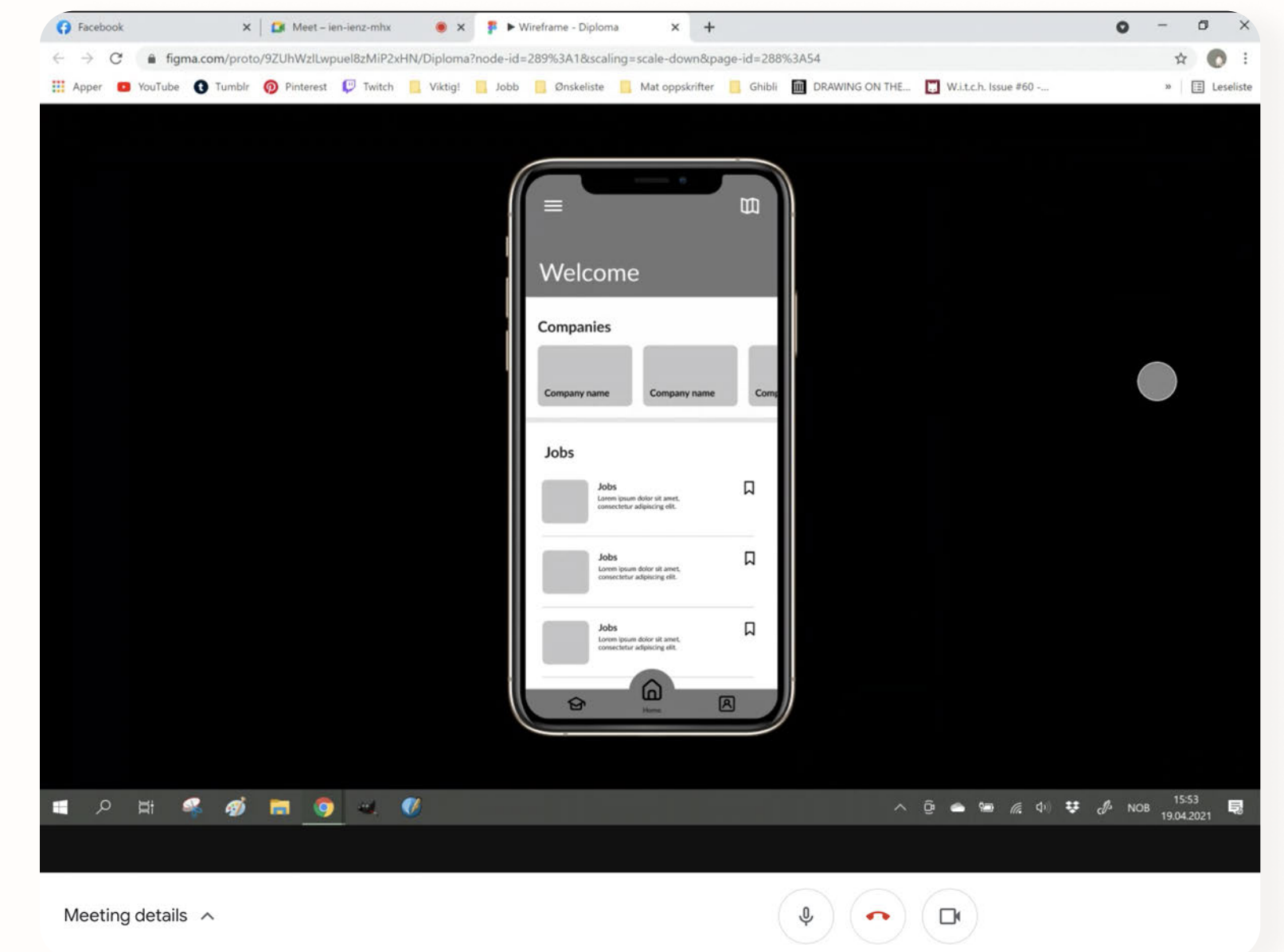
Screengrab from wireframe test

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Concept Presentation.

My presentation for the career centre at Kristiania University College got pushed ahead, and I was not as far in the development process as I had hoped to be. I met with Nina and two of her coworkers on Zoom, and showed them my findings, as well as the wireframe and some further sketches. At this point, I was trying to explore and iterate on potential layout as well as test some potential ideas regarding personalization. If the concept was to be situated within the school, could colour customisation be a way to create ownership?

Nina's coworkers were as entusiastic as her. The feedback was overall good. They validated the concept both in terms of primary and secondary user needs. They had a lot of suggestions in terms of additional features, and all of them agreed that the personalization was something they absolutely wanted. We agreed that I would have one more presentation in the following week. They also suggested a potential collaboration post-delivery. With the deadline approaching, the discussion was postponed until the next meeting.
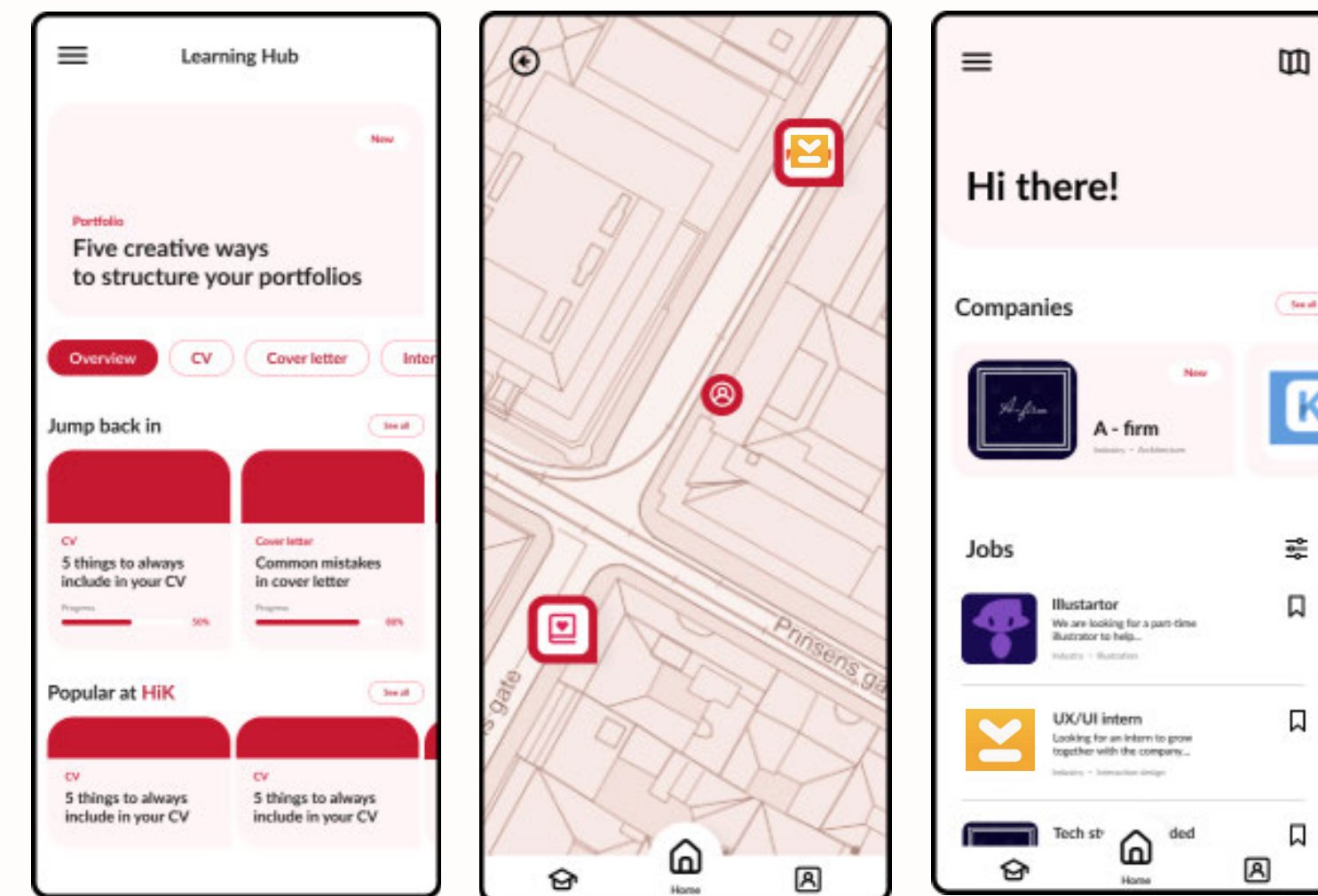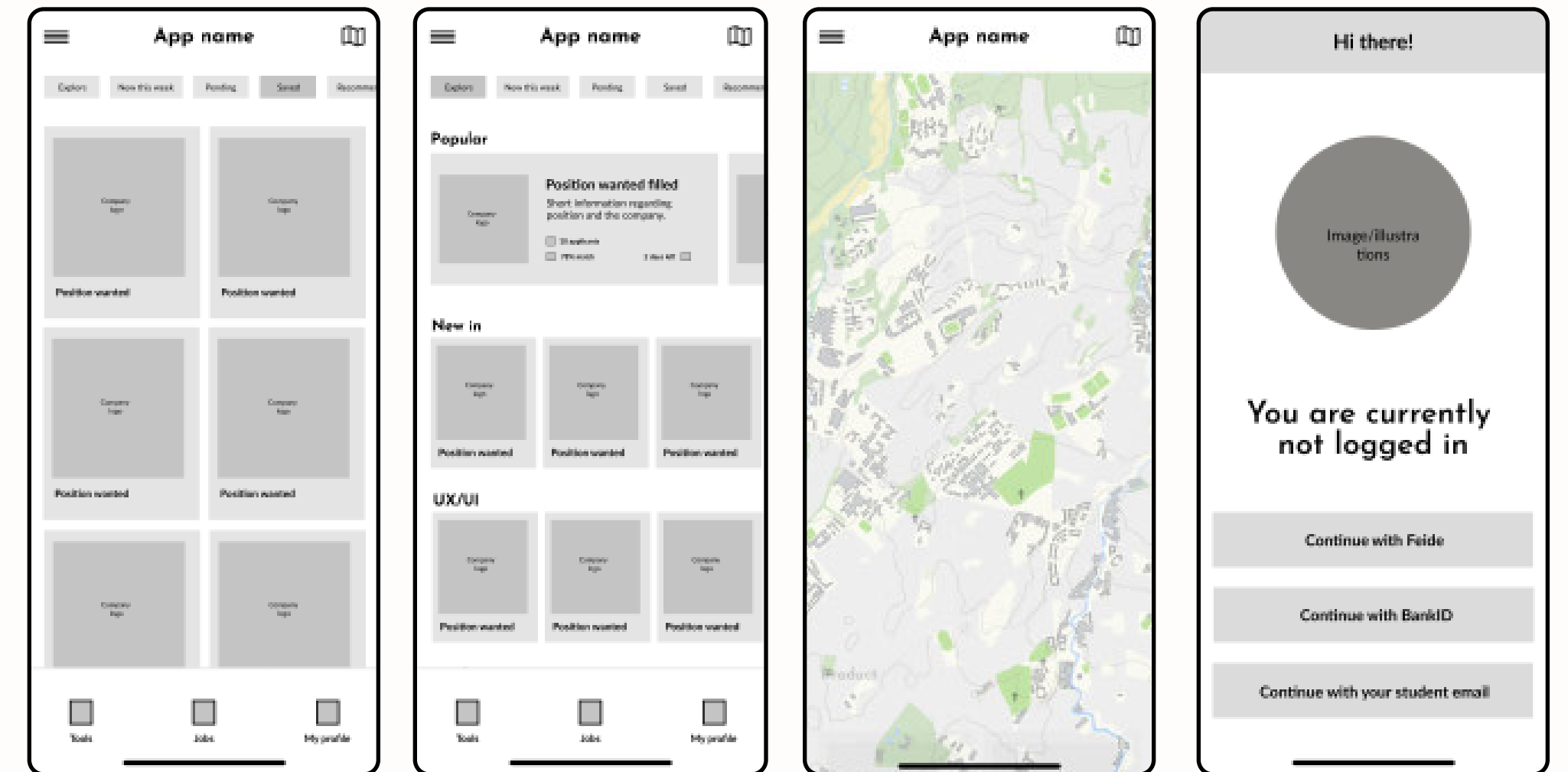
Earlier explorations of user interface

Further development.

At this phase, I also started to develop the brand identity of my project. As seen in the market research, there are no clear trends in the market in terms of branding. The exception being perhaps the tendency to include variation of "job" in the name, and a tendency to use text-based logoes.
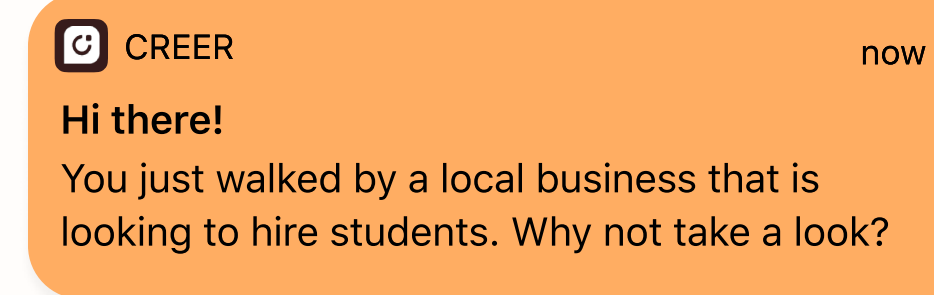
I named my concept Creer, as a merge between the words "Create" and "Career". After some initial logo exploration, I went with an icon based logo. I re-used the shape in certain areas of the application, as a means of building consistency. My intention with the logo was a modern, simplistic logo representing the search and discover aspect of Creer. Search and discover both in terms of jobs and information.

I also tested some variation of tone of voice with two students to try and solidify a personality for the app. I tested three types of "voices" with the students: Formal, Friendly and Energetic. There was not a clear preference from the students, but the input was still valuable. A mix between formal and friendly seemed to be the best option.

CREER

CREER   now

Local businesses are hiring!
There is a new job advertisement nearby. Visit the app for more information.
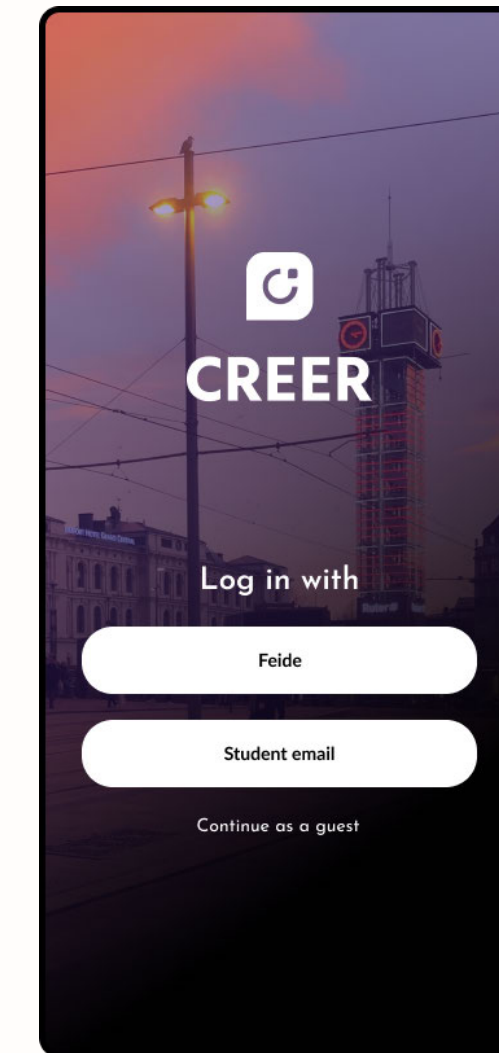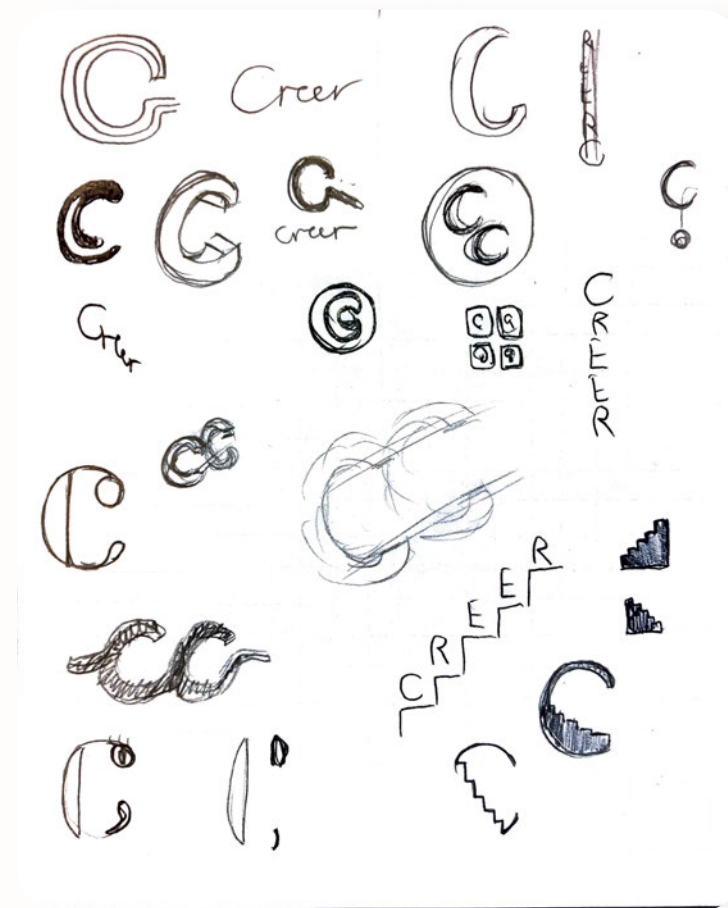
"This one feels a bit more dry and sterile. Maybe combining this with the middle tone can help?"

"More formal and to the point can be good. Brings credibility. And seriousness. Makes me think that this is "the real deal""

CREER   now

Hi there!
You just walked by a local business that is looking to hire students. Why not take a look?

"This is a good tone - it's both casual yet motivational!"

"This is not soo inviting. To passive"

CREER   now

Your next job might be nearby 👀
Local businesses are hiring near you! Go to the app and find your next job opportunity today 🙌
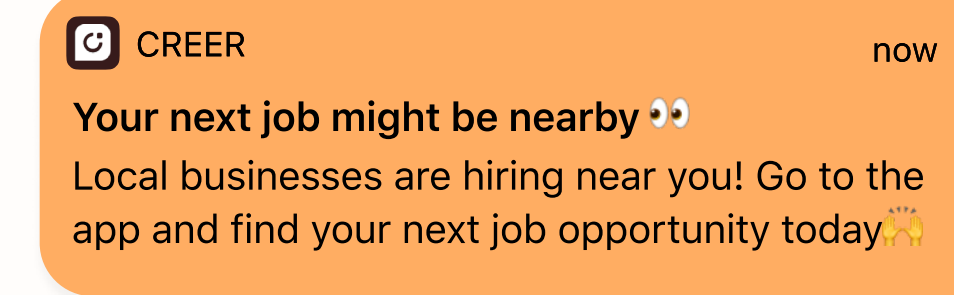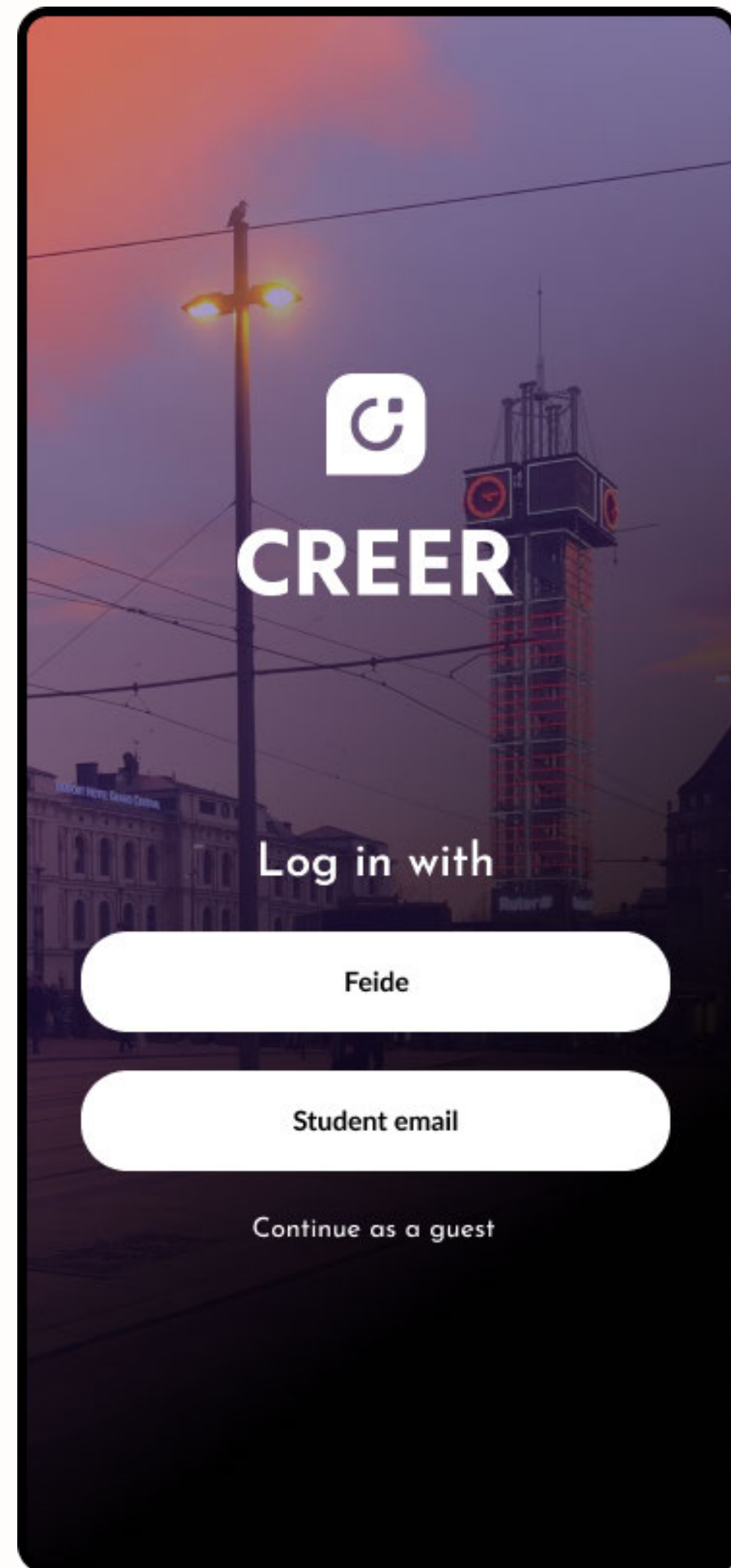
"Like the last sentence - today. It sounds a bit cheesy advertisementy. I think I could like an emoji, but just one per notification hehe"

"For some reason this reminds me of dating apps."

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Branding.

Purpose

Creer aims to assist the student on their journey in creating their own career path providing needed and relevant content as well as job oppertunities - easily accesible.

Vision

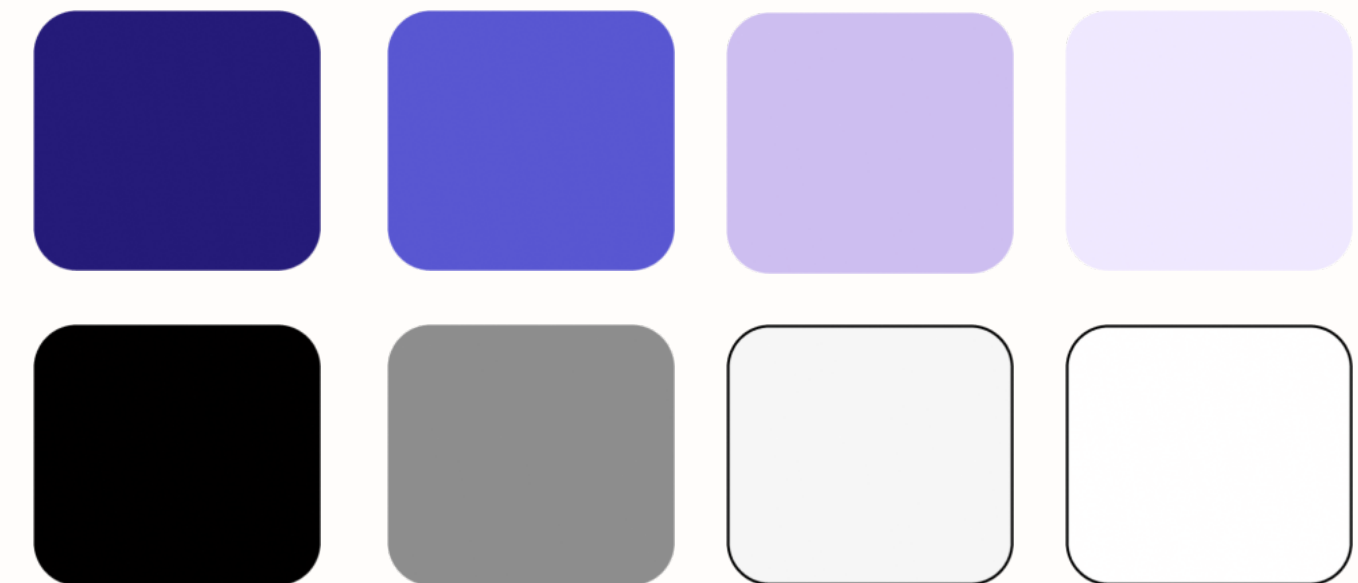Decrease time spent on preparing for, and participating in the job application process for students.

Mission

Creer seeks to be the go-to job journey assistant for students and institutions.

Font	Lato Family

Logo	Hind Madurai

CREER

CREER

Unicons Icon

Unicons are Open Source icons and licensed under Apache 2.0. They are free to use in personal and commercial projects.

iconscout.com/unicons

Iteration & testing.

From here on, I moved quickly onto a more detailed design, in order to test visuals as well as the general user experience. The (still) developing visuals helped contextualise the app further. I also received more concrete feedback with higher fidelity screens.

I used three methods of testing.

Hugging
A digital usertest where the user "hugs" the computer from behind. This way, I as the tester was able to see where they clicked, dragged and scrolled through the app.

Figma link + Google meet
The tester had issues with the link, and we had to improvise with them telling me the steps they wanted to take and me navigating the app. The user seemed more inclined to critique from a sort of spectator role.

Walk & talk
Keeping the required distance with a face mask, I went for a walk with a tester. I shared the figma link, and they tested on their own phone.
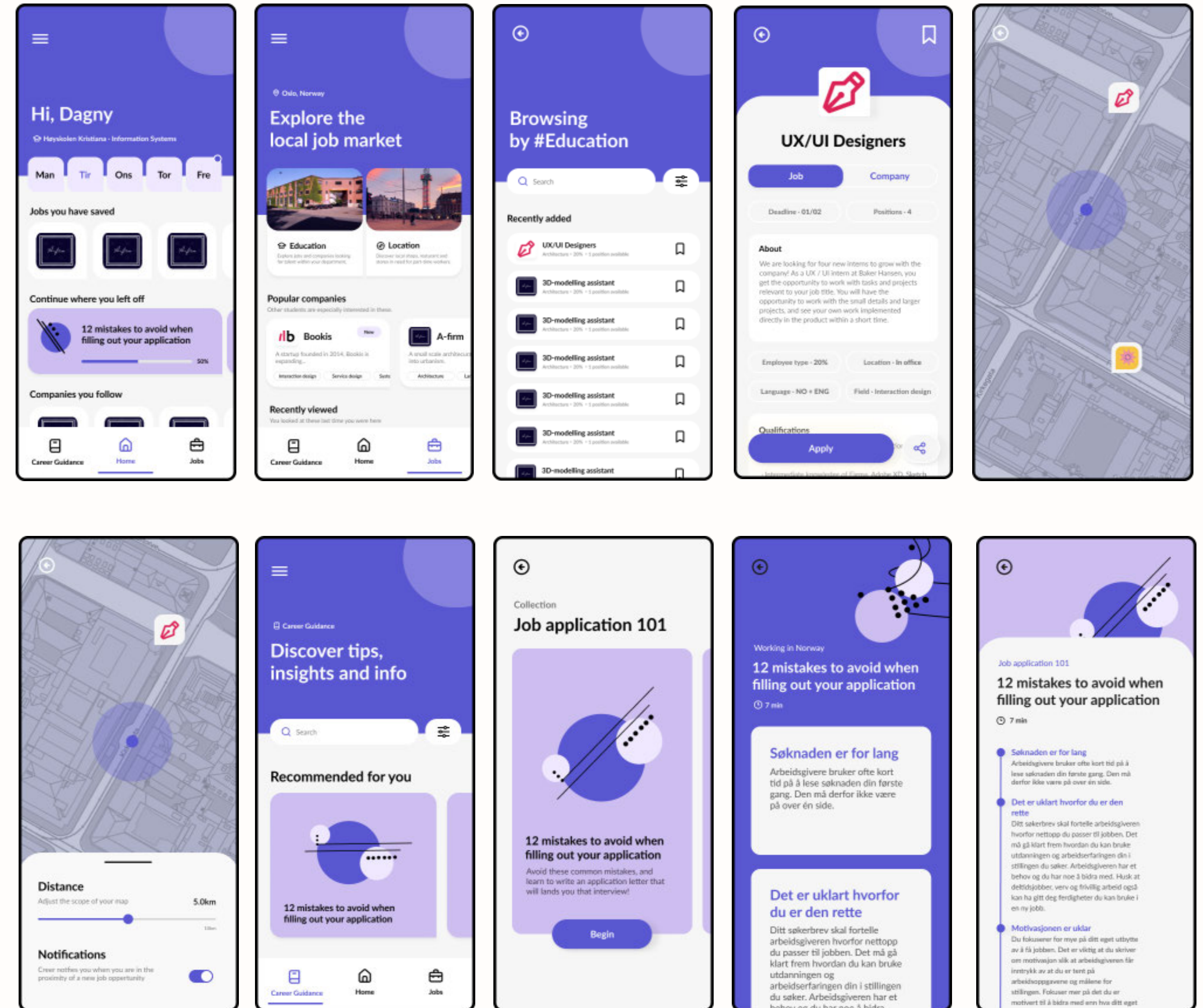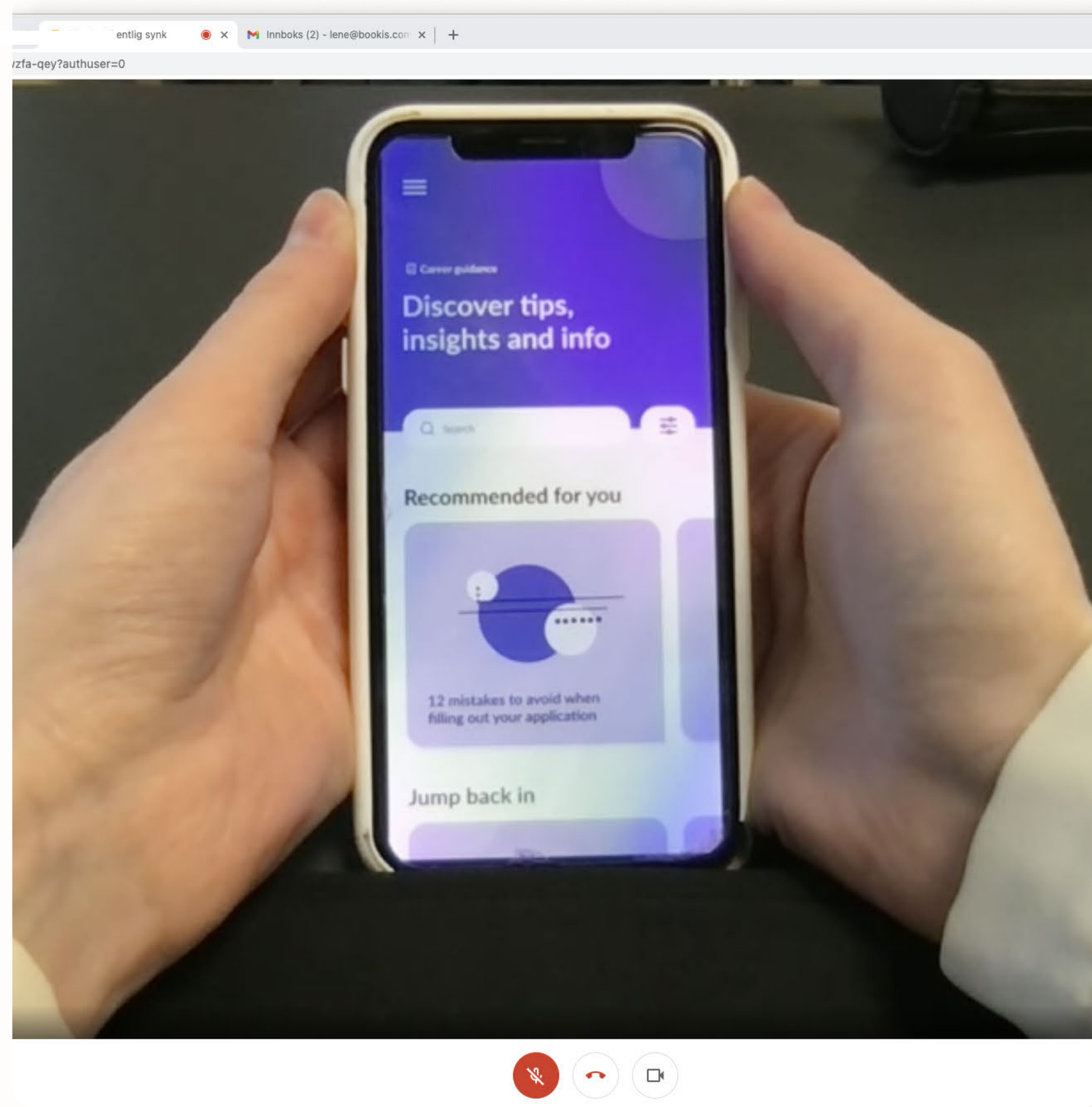
"Hugging" test
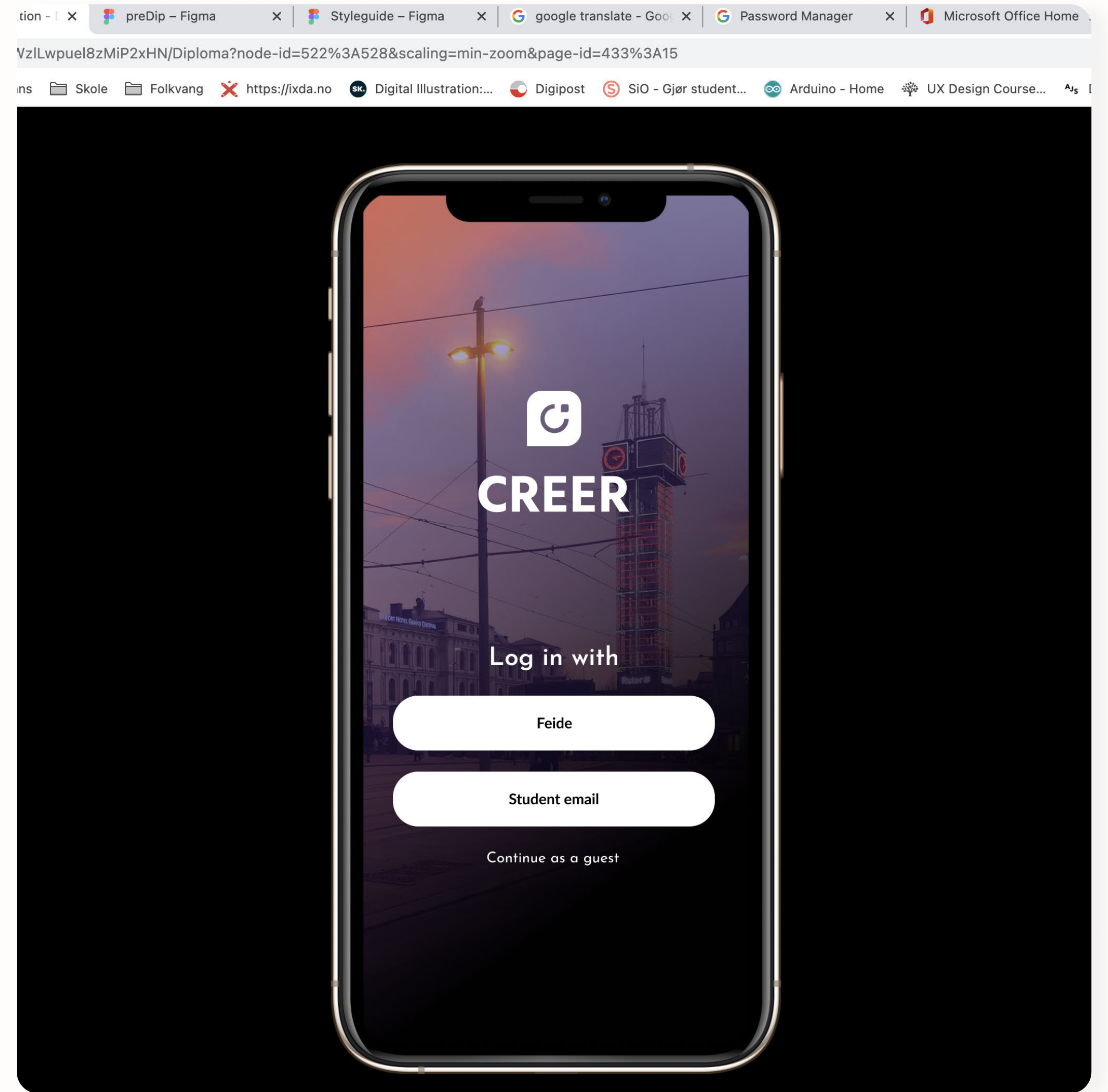
Figma link + google meet test

Summary.

In totality, I manage to test my close-to-finished prototype with four students.

In the three first tests I had three questions/tests for the testers to go through. First, I tested navigation by making them localise different main areas of the app. Secondly, I wanted them to find key information on a job advertisement. And finally, I asked for general feedback.

All three testers managed the two first tasks easily. I got good feedback on the information given in terms of the job advertisement as well. For general feedback, there was some comments regarding the colour choice, and the general contrast. There was some discussion around naming conventions of the different areas, especially Career Guidance. They mentioned it sounded like consultancy, and it gave an expectancy for something else than articles and insight.

For the final tester, I choose to A/B test to formats of an exemplary articlepage. I got clear feedback on preference, as well as some suggestions in regards to the taxonomy of the article section as a whole. They also mentioned some confusion in terms of the "front page" and the content prioritized there", especially the calender.
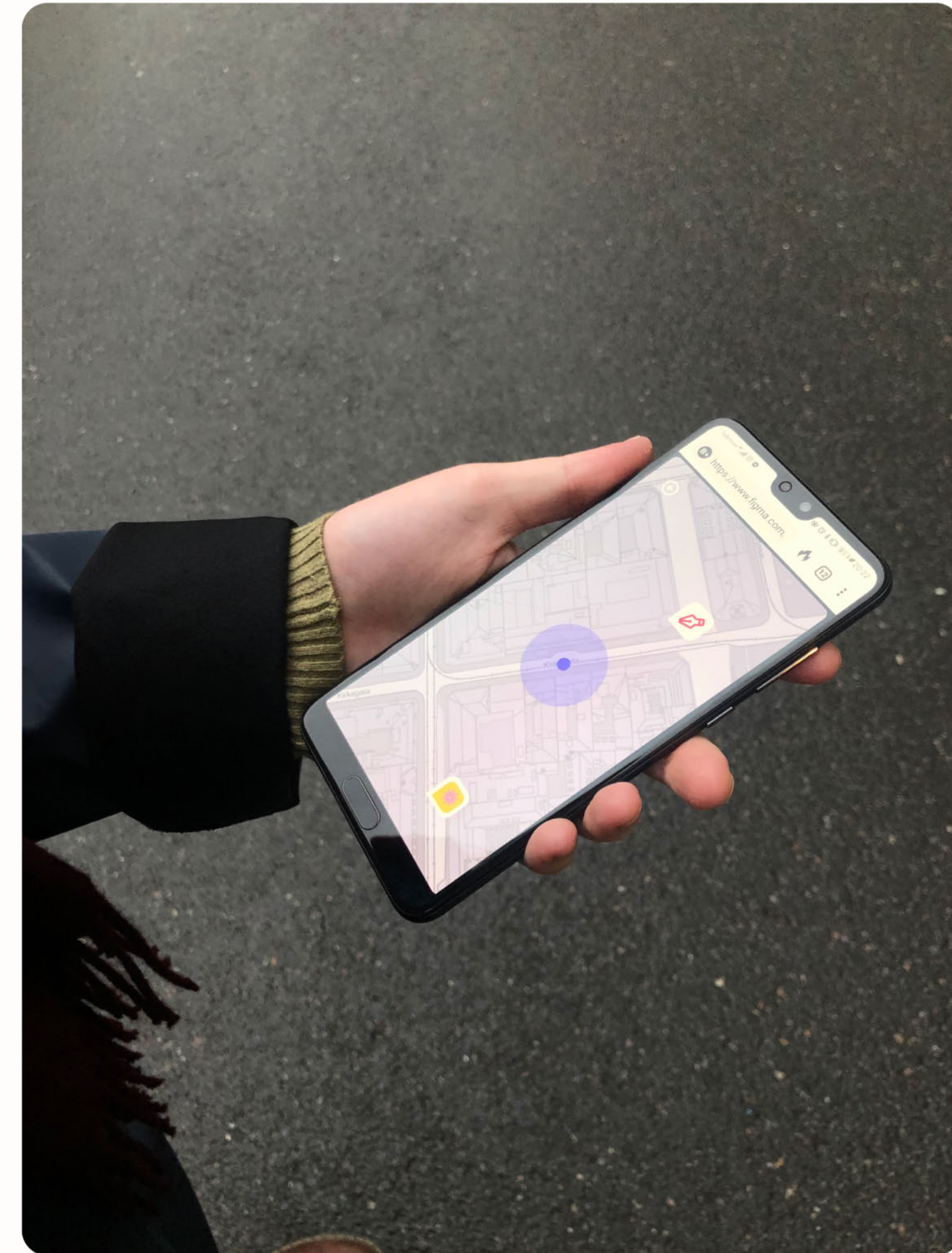
Walk & talk test
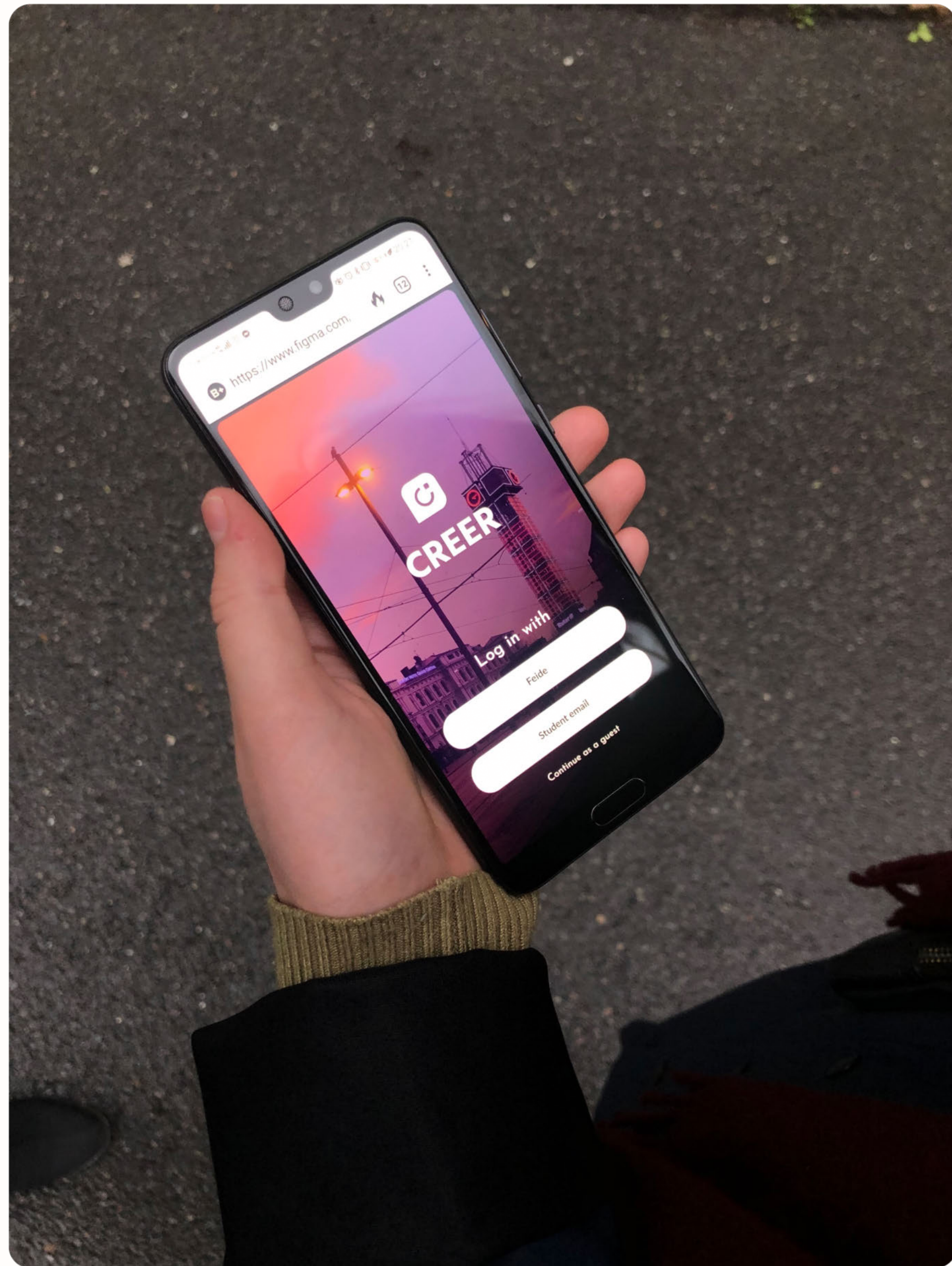
Result.

Creer is an example of how one might combine the traditional job search platform, with the insight from institutions career guidance center into a student centric app. Its main goals is help student prepare for the job application process through relevant information, discovering relevant job offers and make the process as a whole less time consuming.
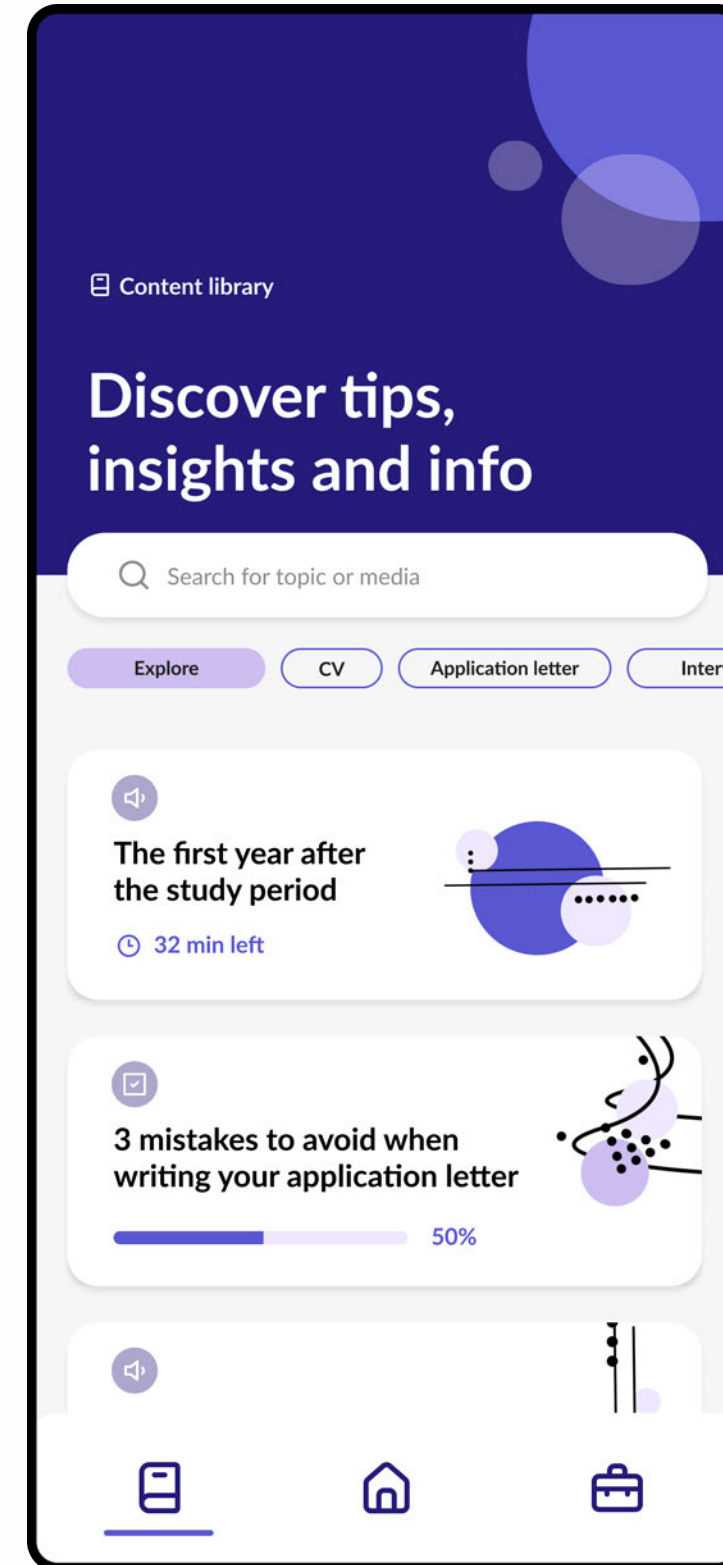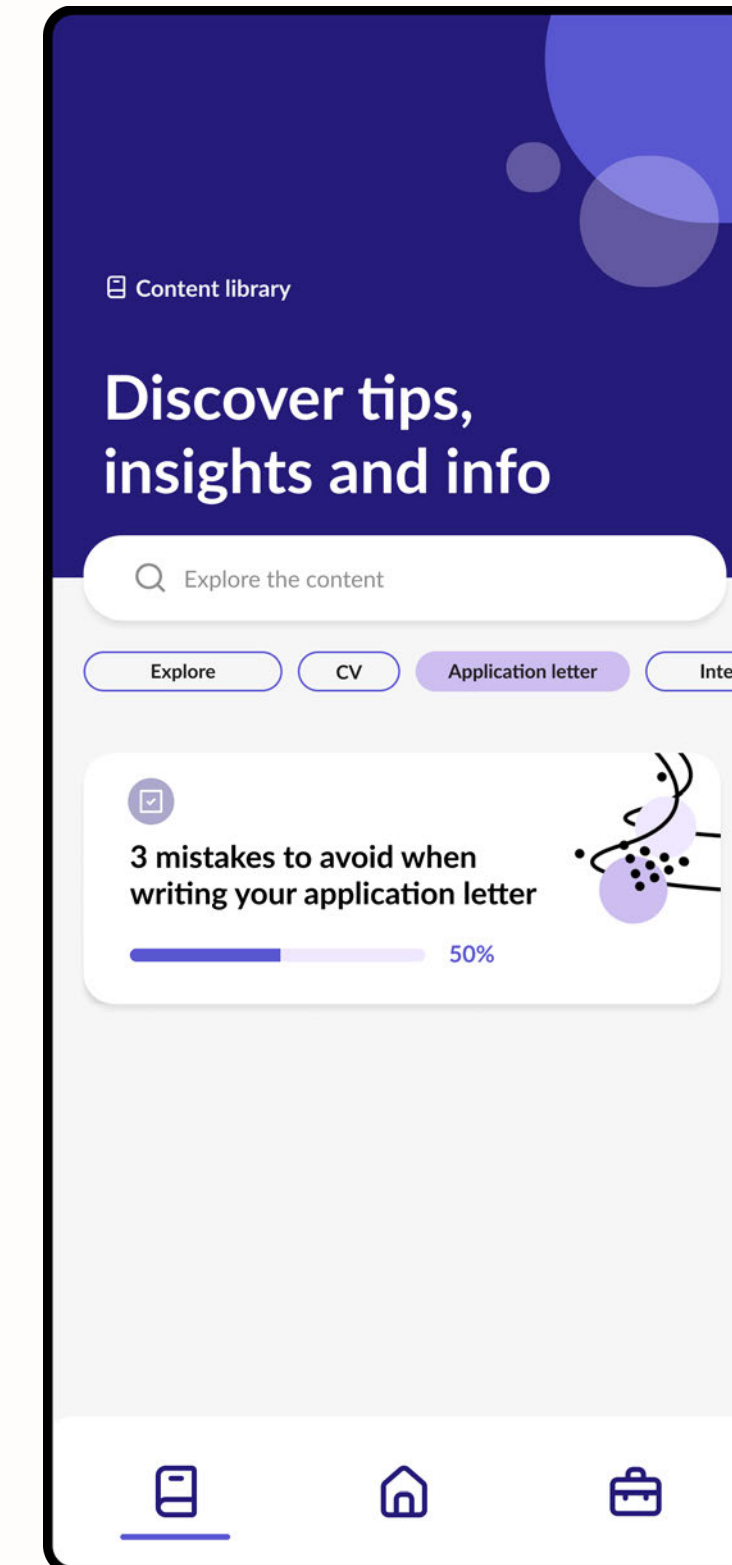
Learn.
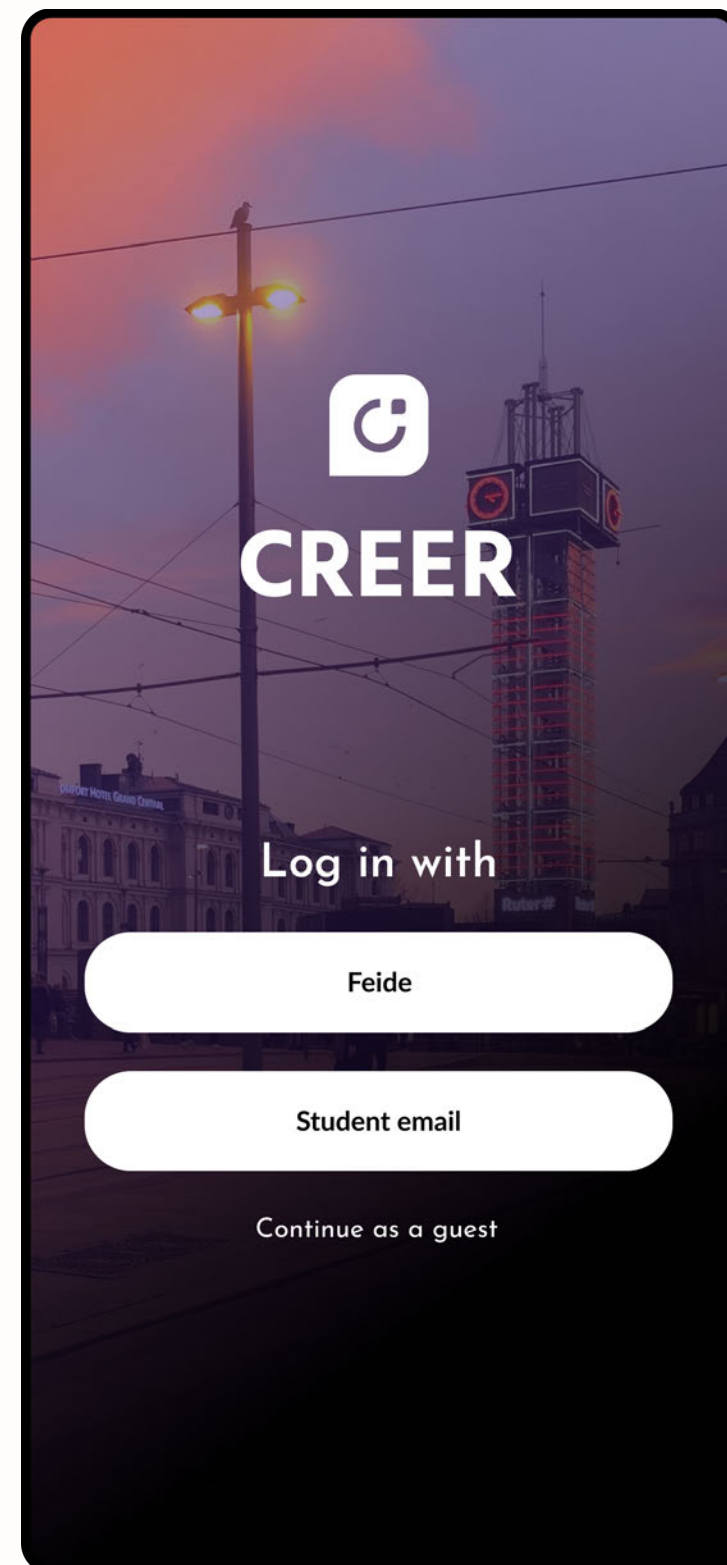
Login by Feide or student email connects the student to respective institution and study course.
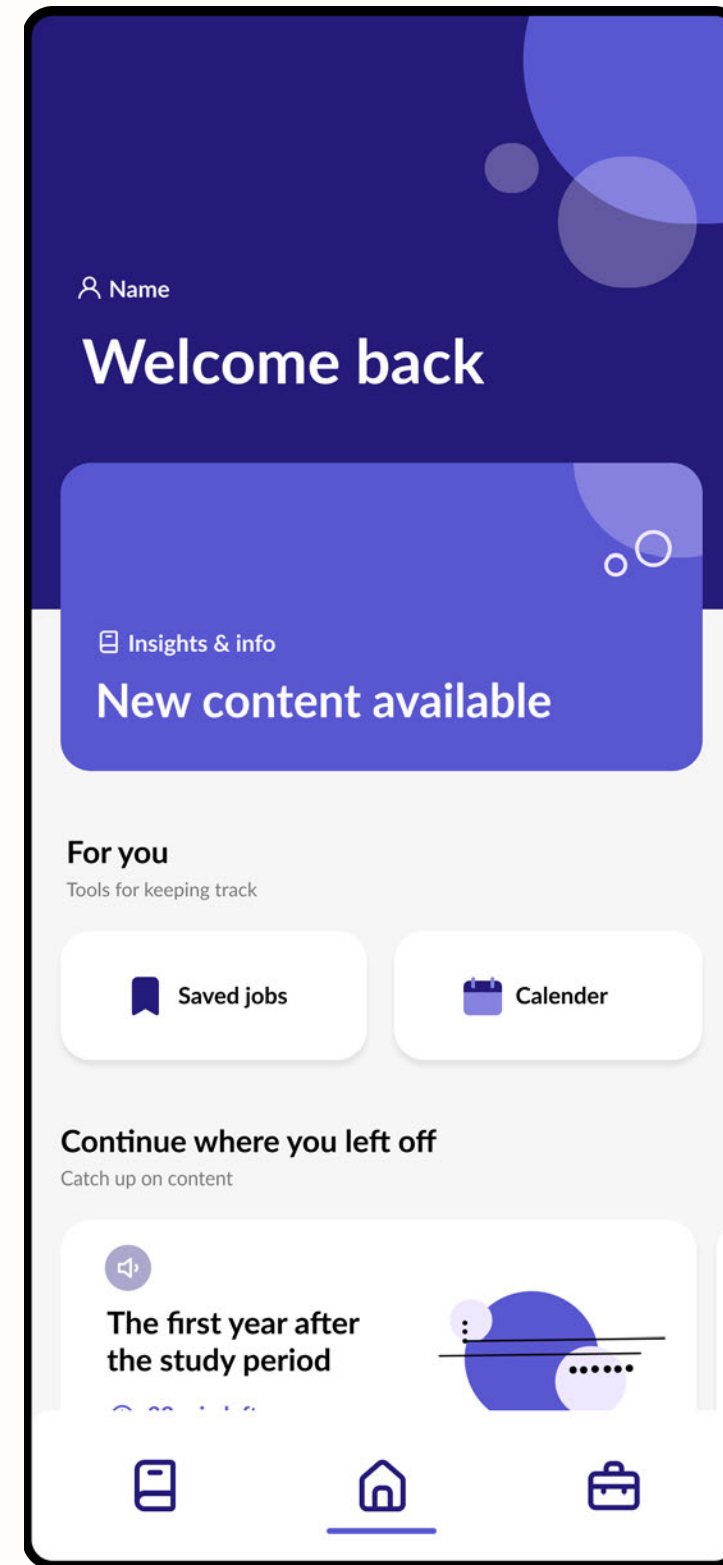
Front page provides an overview of main tools, main navigation and articles and content from the content library the user is currently reading, listening to etc.

The Content Library provides different type of relevant content, in various media format.

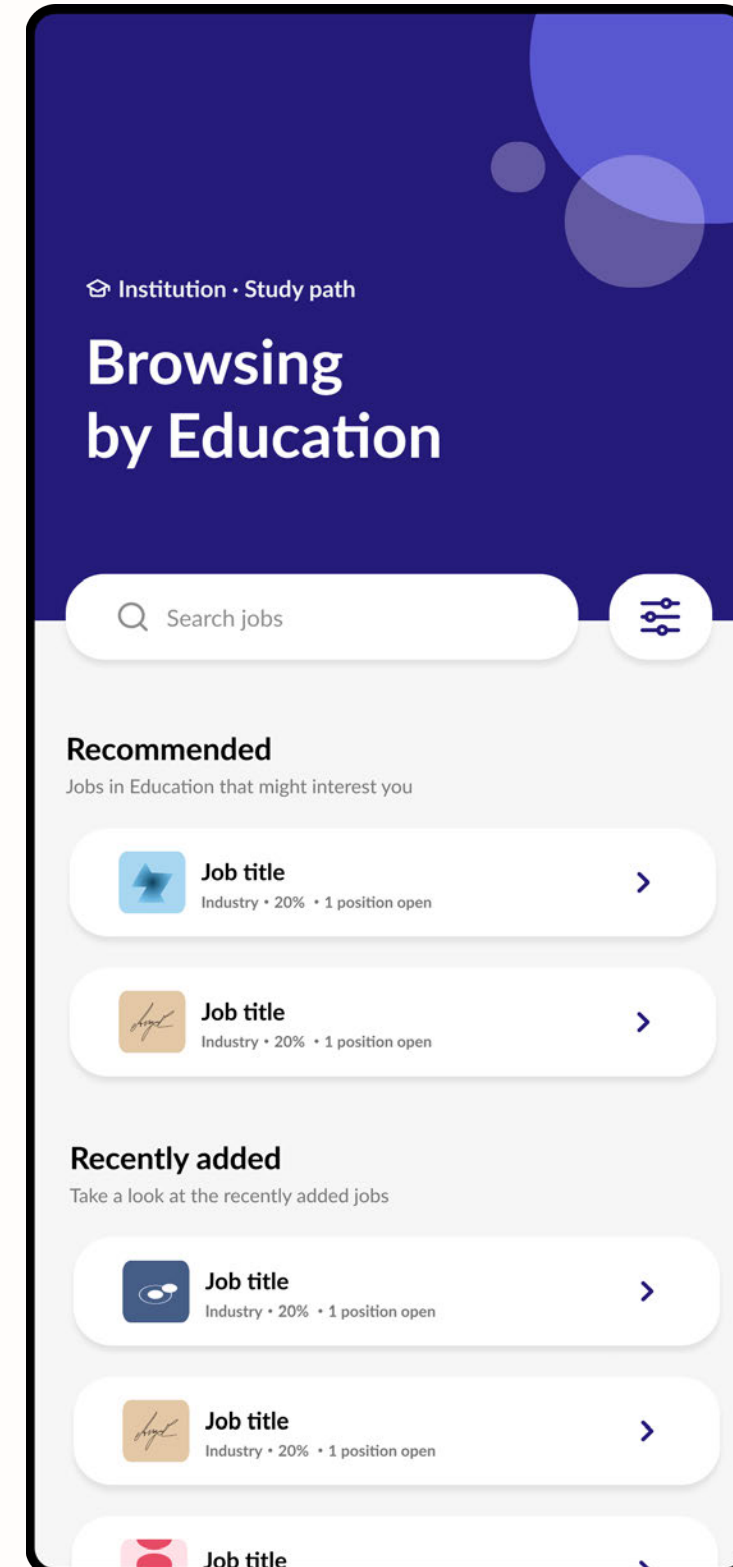Filter by category, or utilise the search bar.
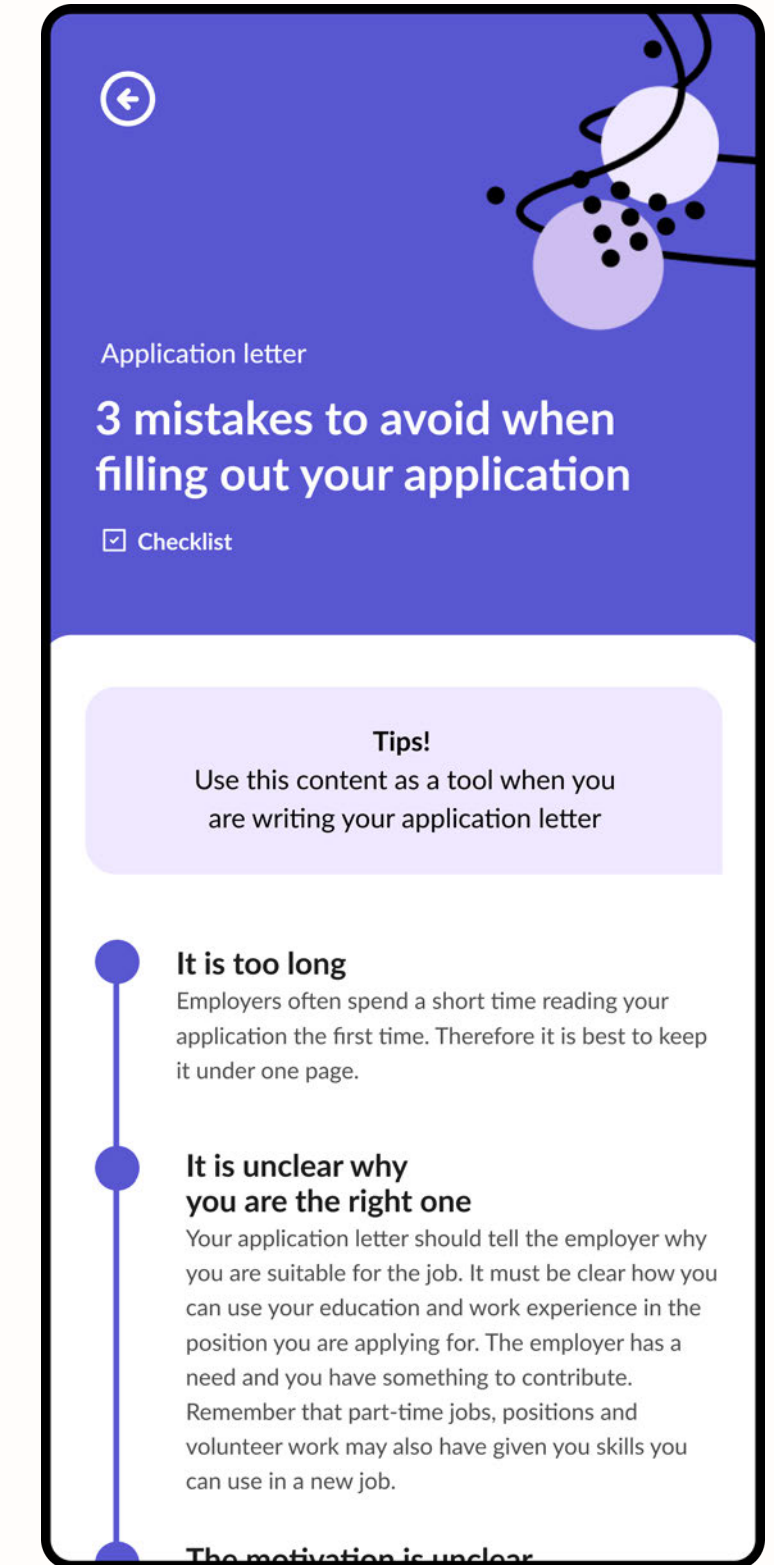
Example of a "checklist" article. Helpful tips can be added through a "Tips" component.
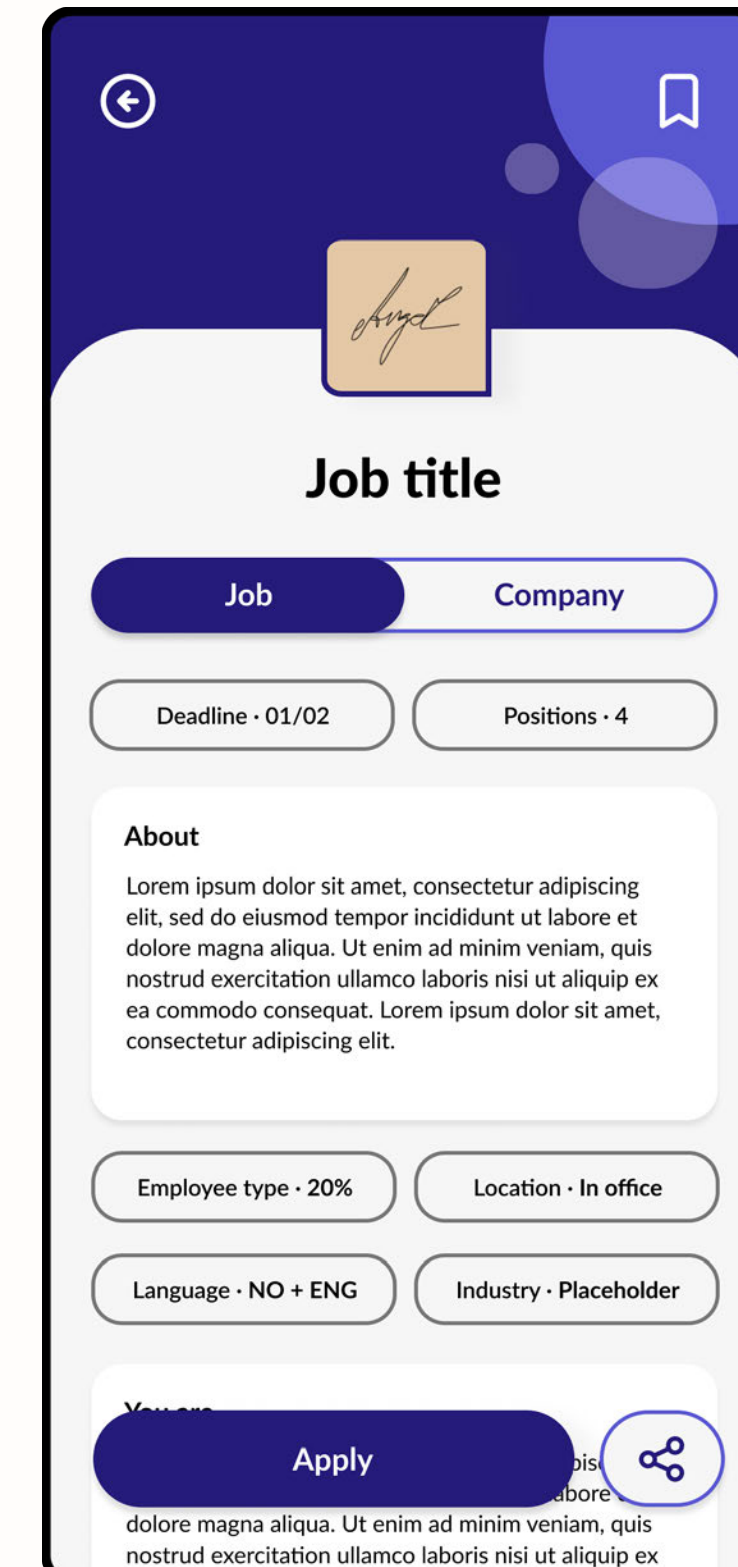
Discover by Education.
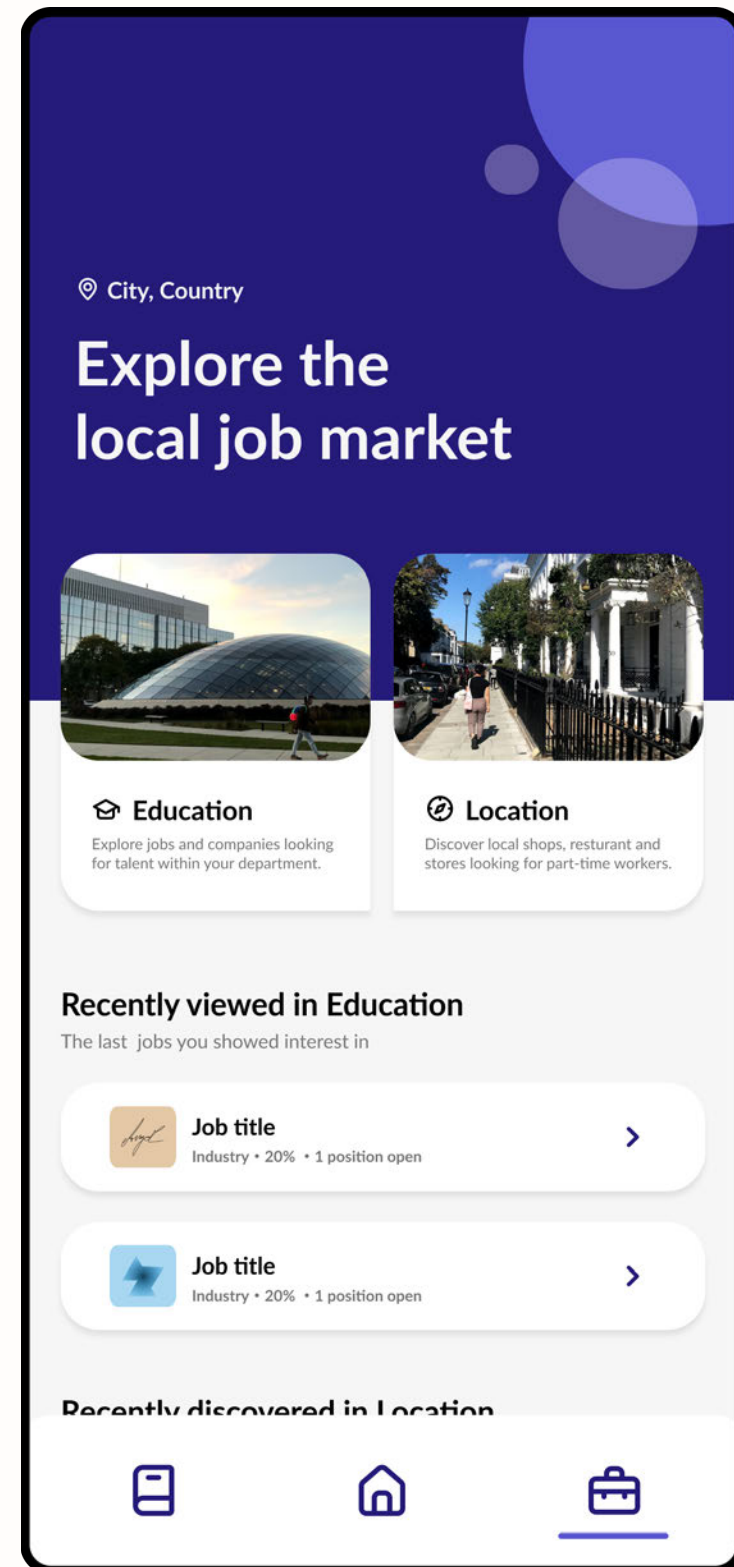
Explore the local job market through personalised categories, or the two main discovery features: Education & Location.
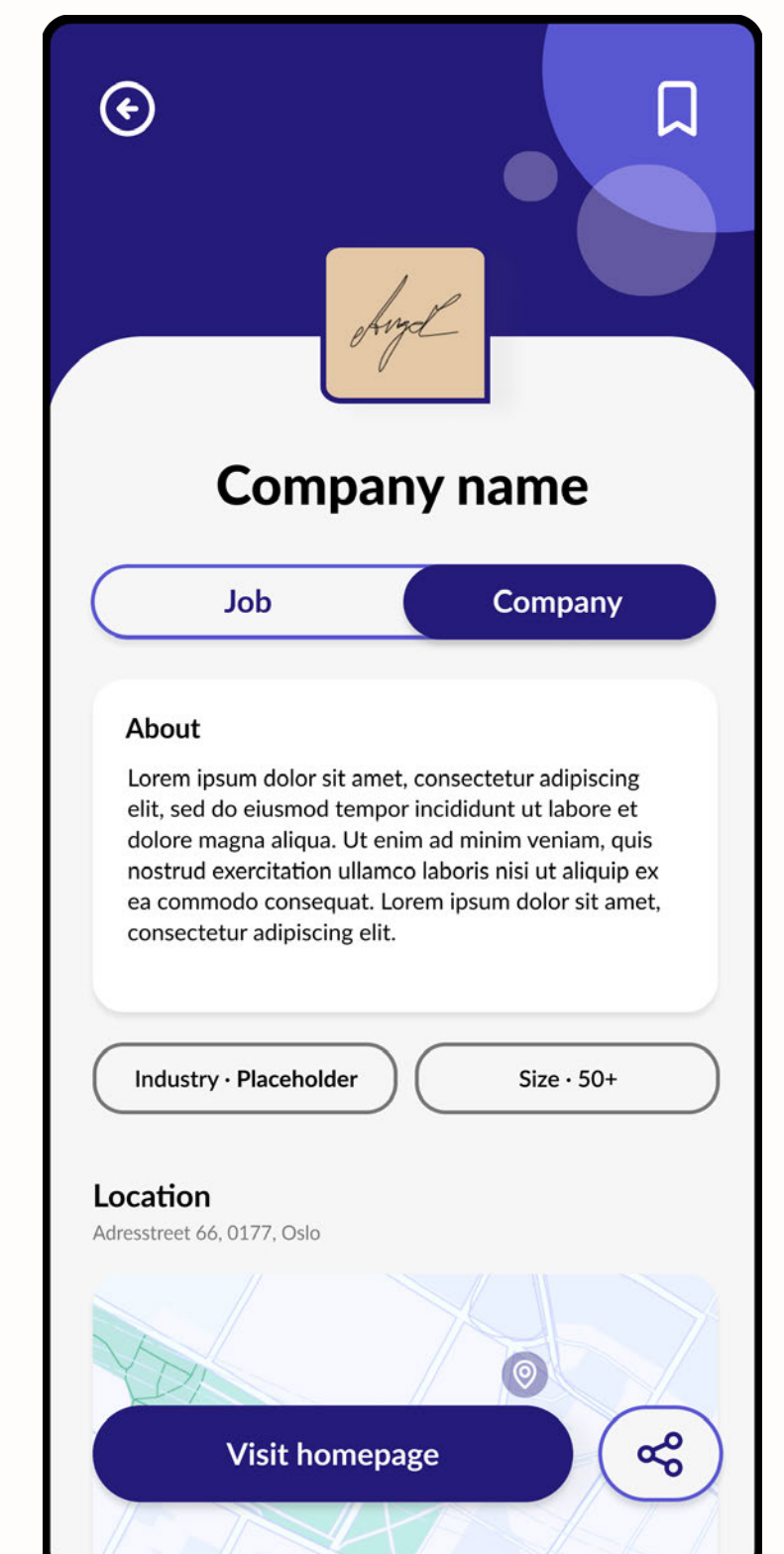
Provides an overview of job advertisment that matches with your study course. For students wanting study-relevant work.
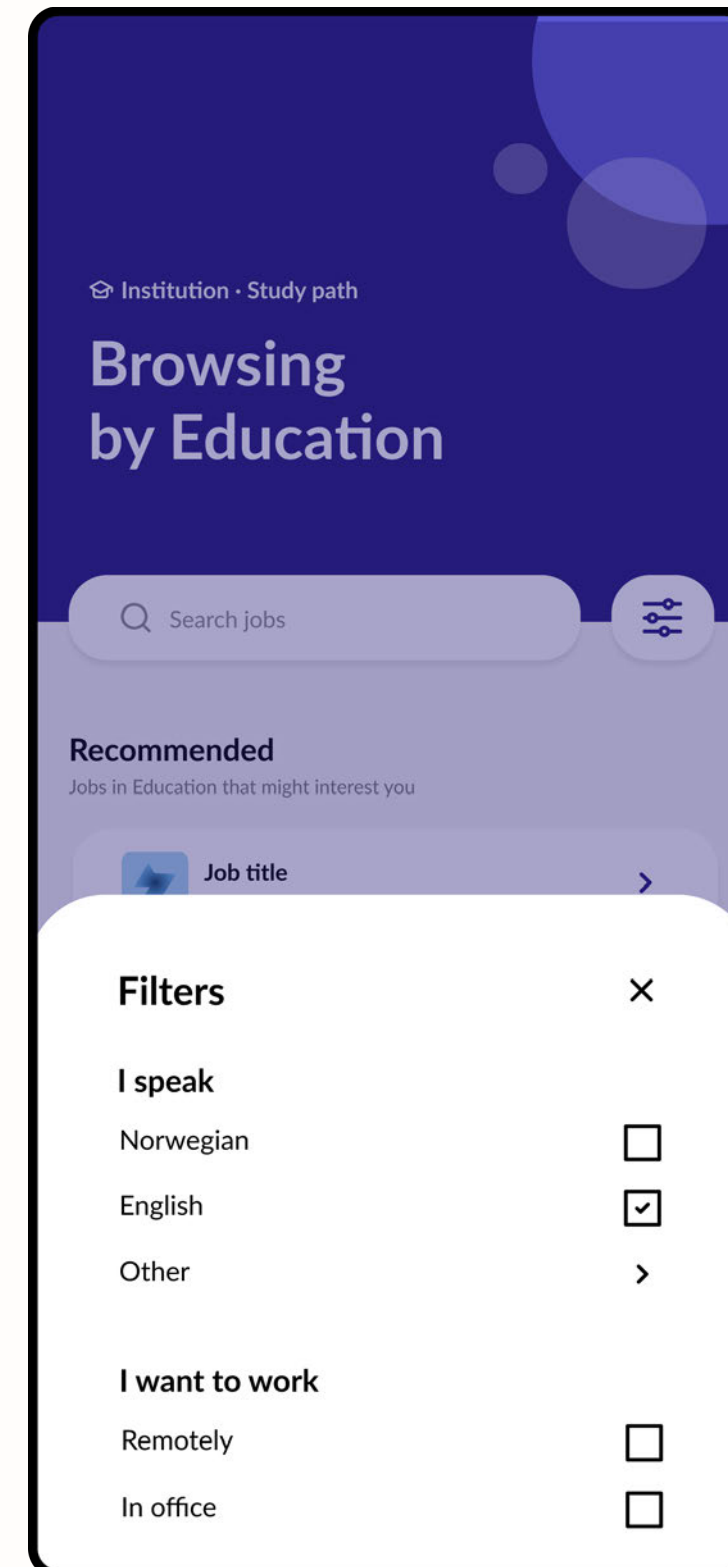
Filter by language, a neccessity for International students not talking Norwegian. Also filter to remotely or in office work.
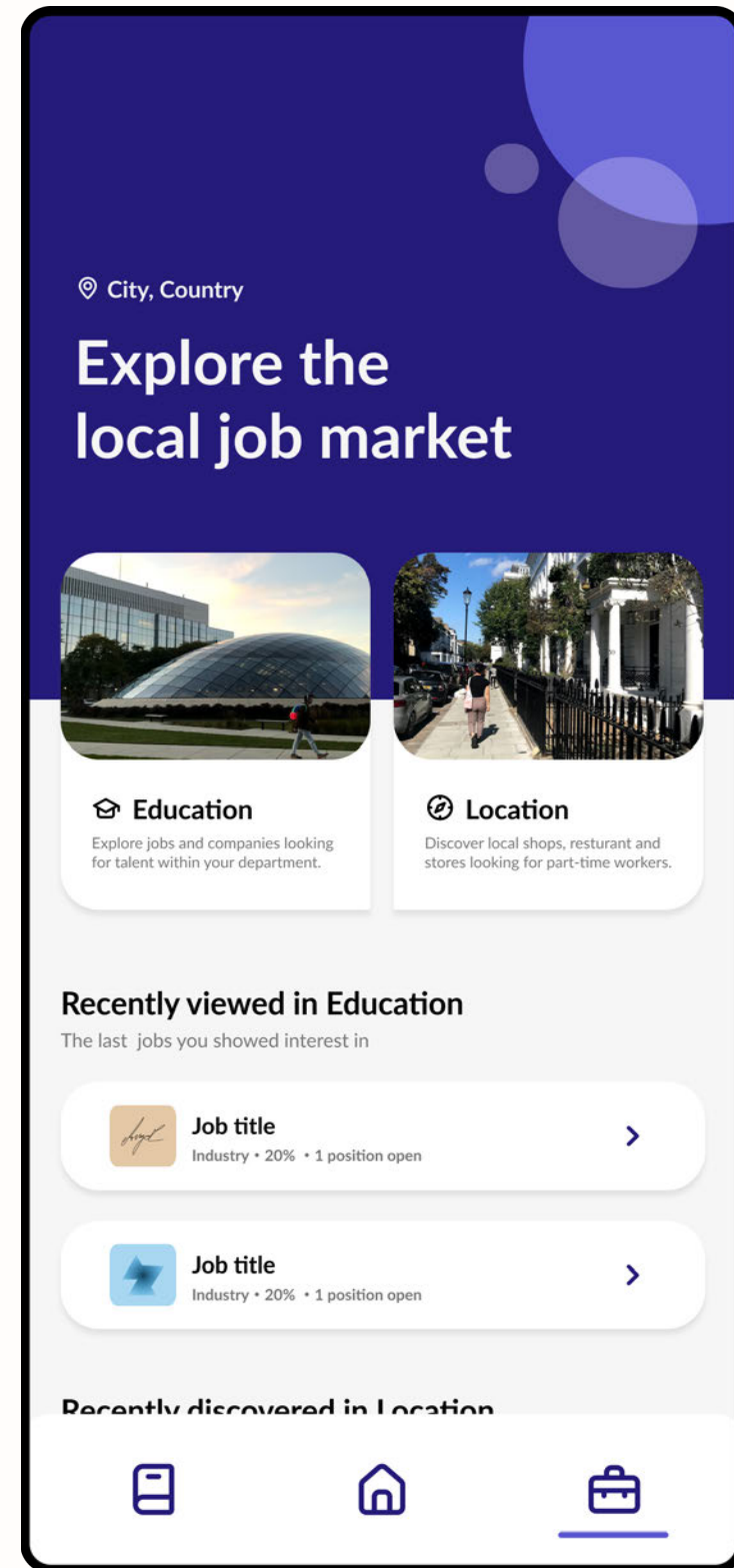
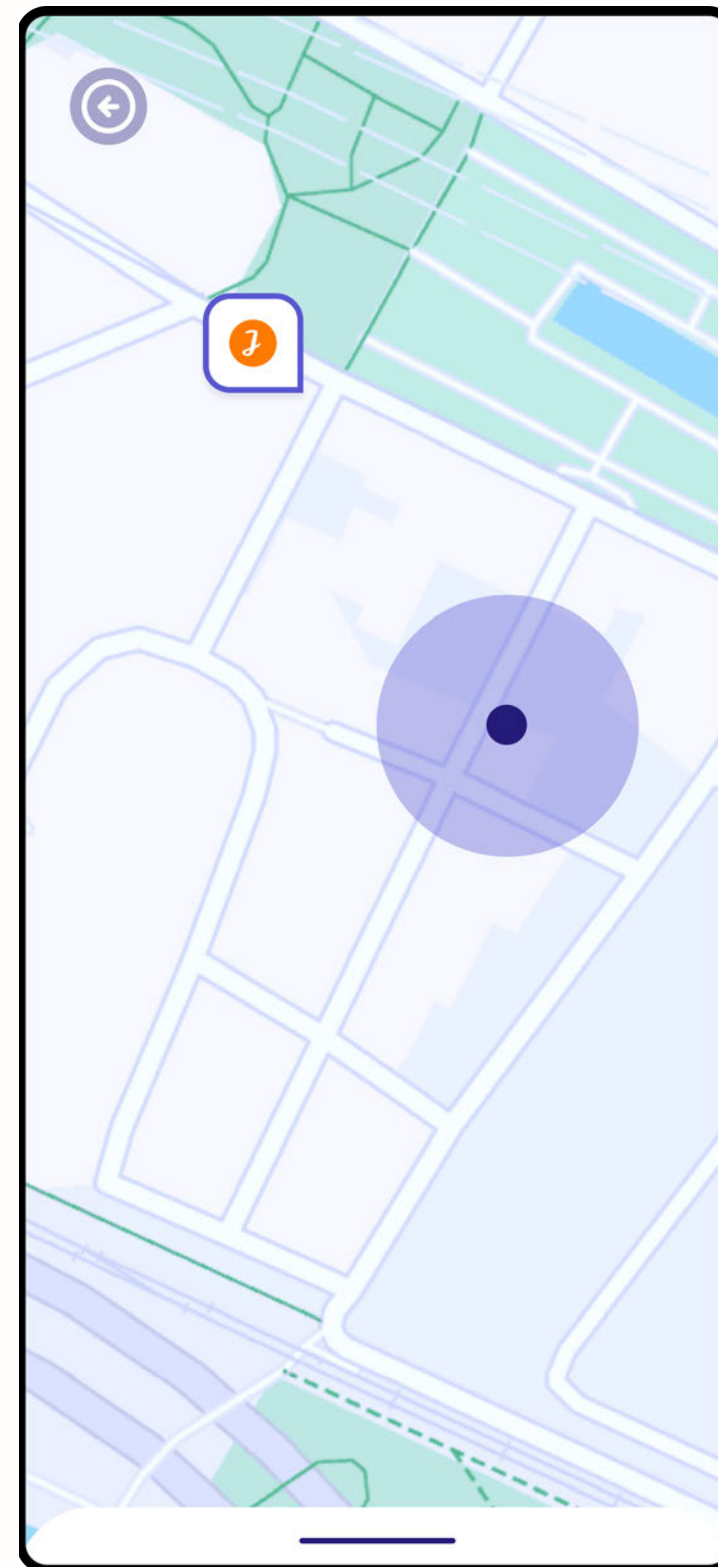Concrete and quick access to the important information in the job advertisment.

Accessible information regarding the company. Helpful for deciding if it is a potential culture fit, or for information for application letter.
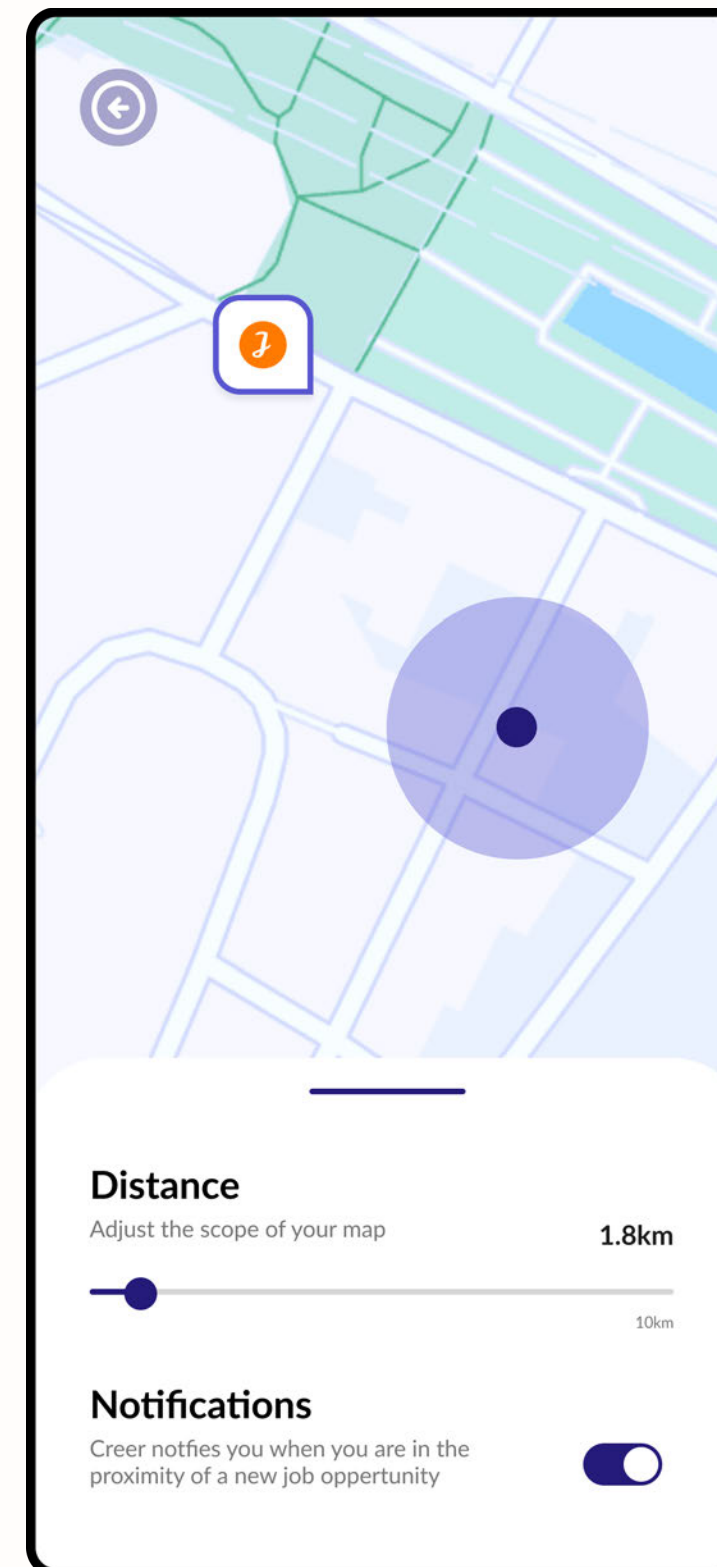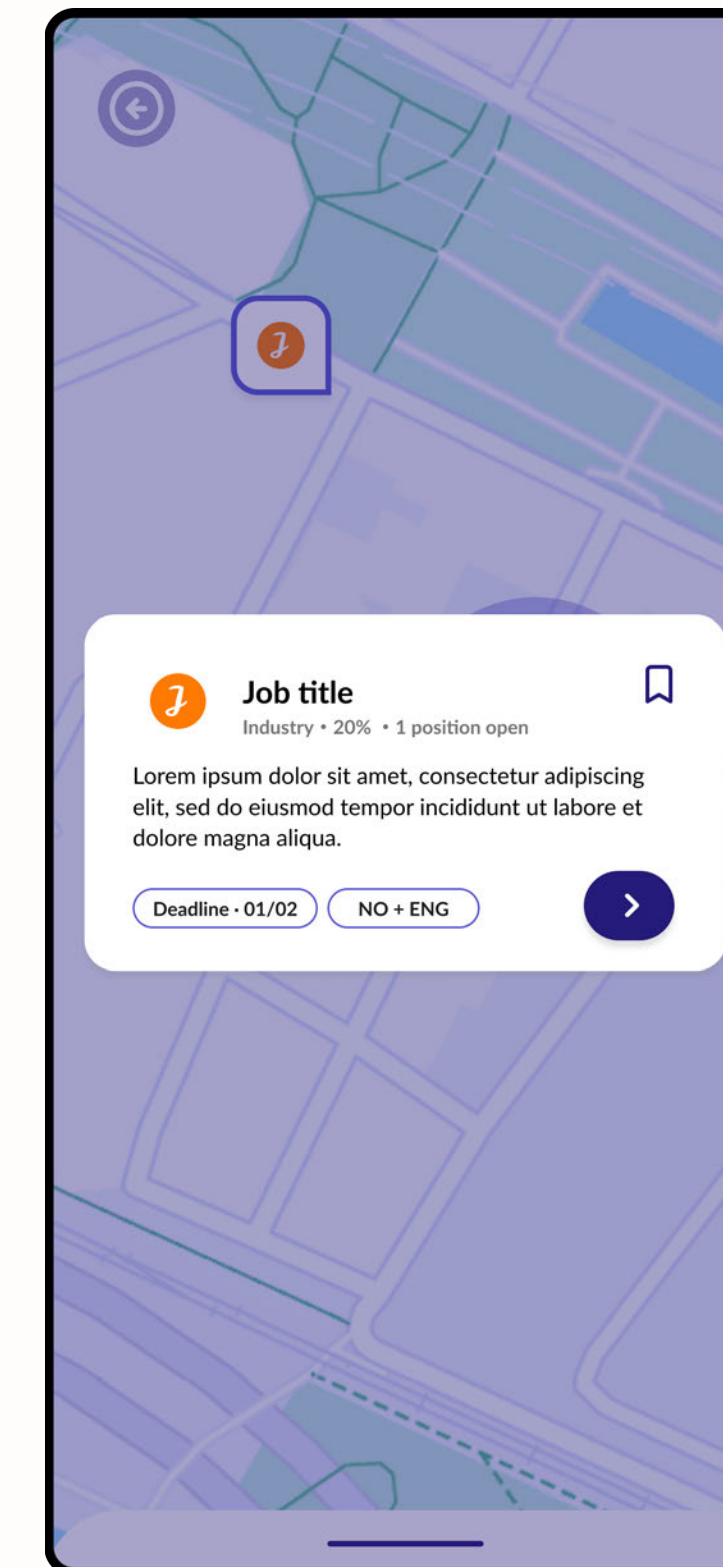
Discover by Location.

Location provides an overview of local, non-study relevant work. Perfect for the financially motivated student.
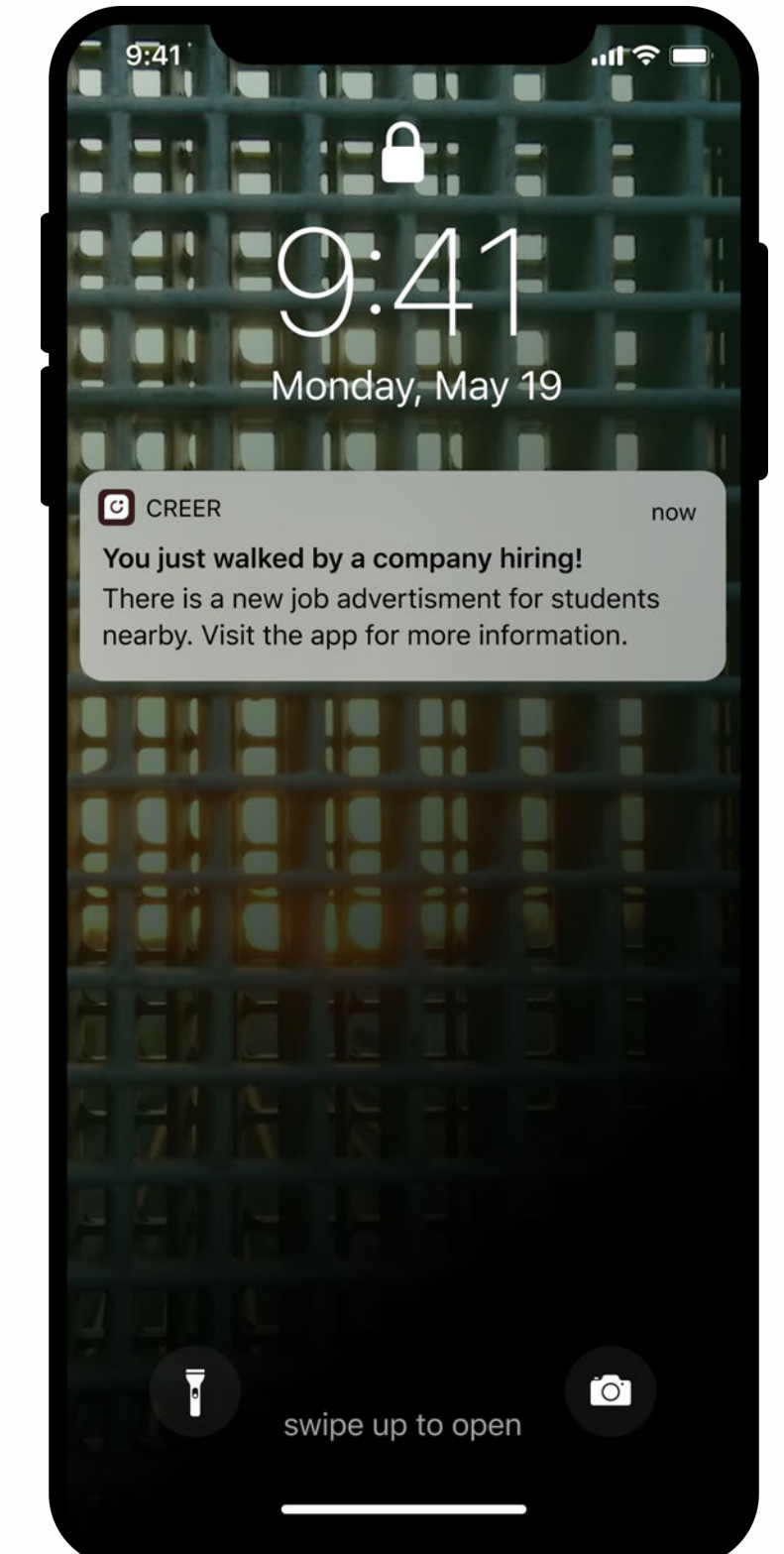
Local map showing location and nearby job opportunities.

Filter by distance, and enable push-notifications for the map.
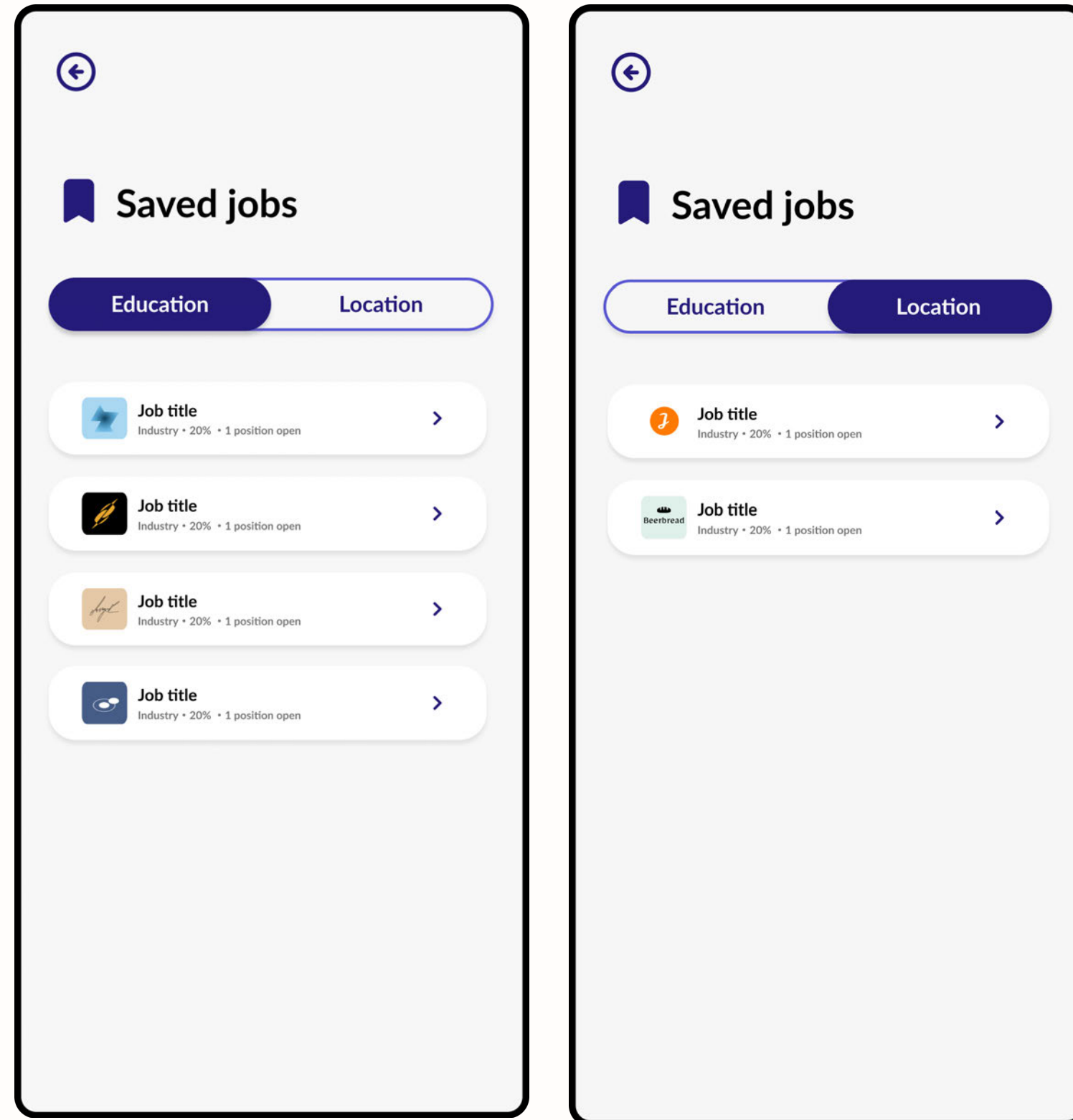
Short and quick relevant information provided regarding non-study relevant work.

Receive push notifications when on the move.

Manage.

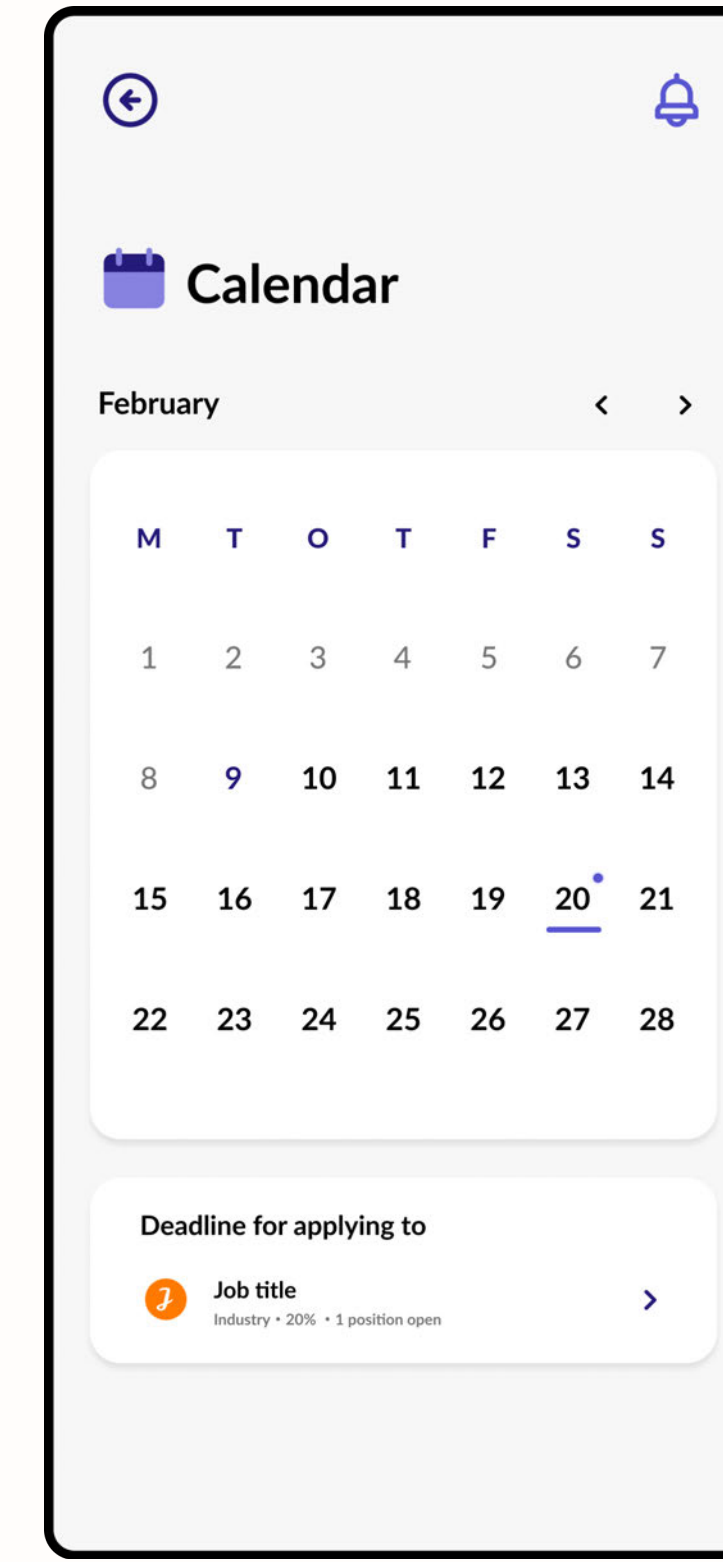A simple tool for keeping track of saved jobs, both educational and location based.
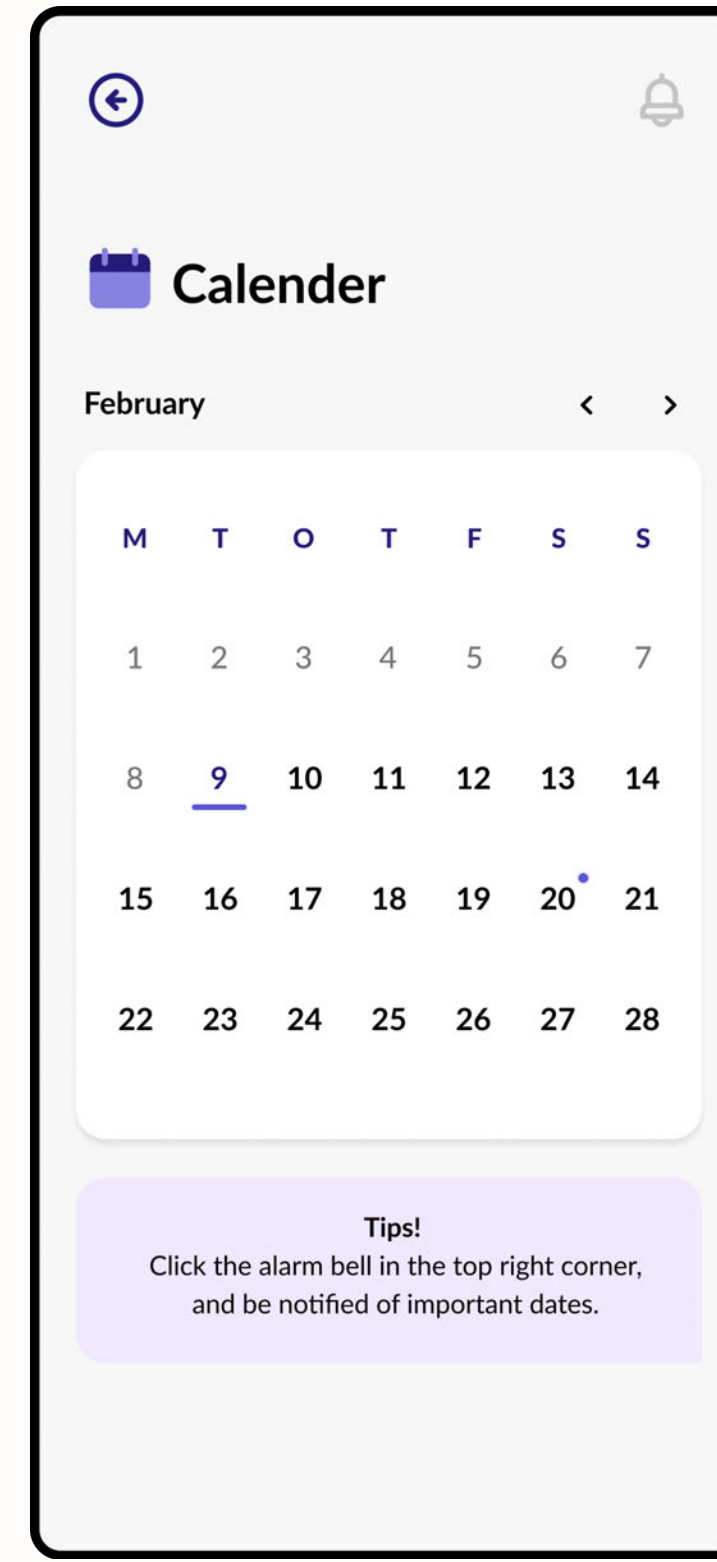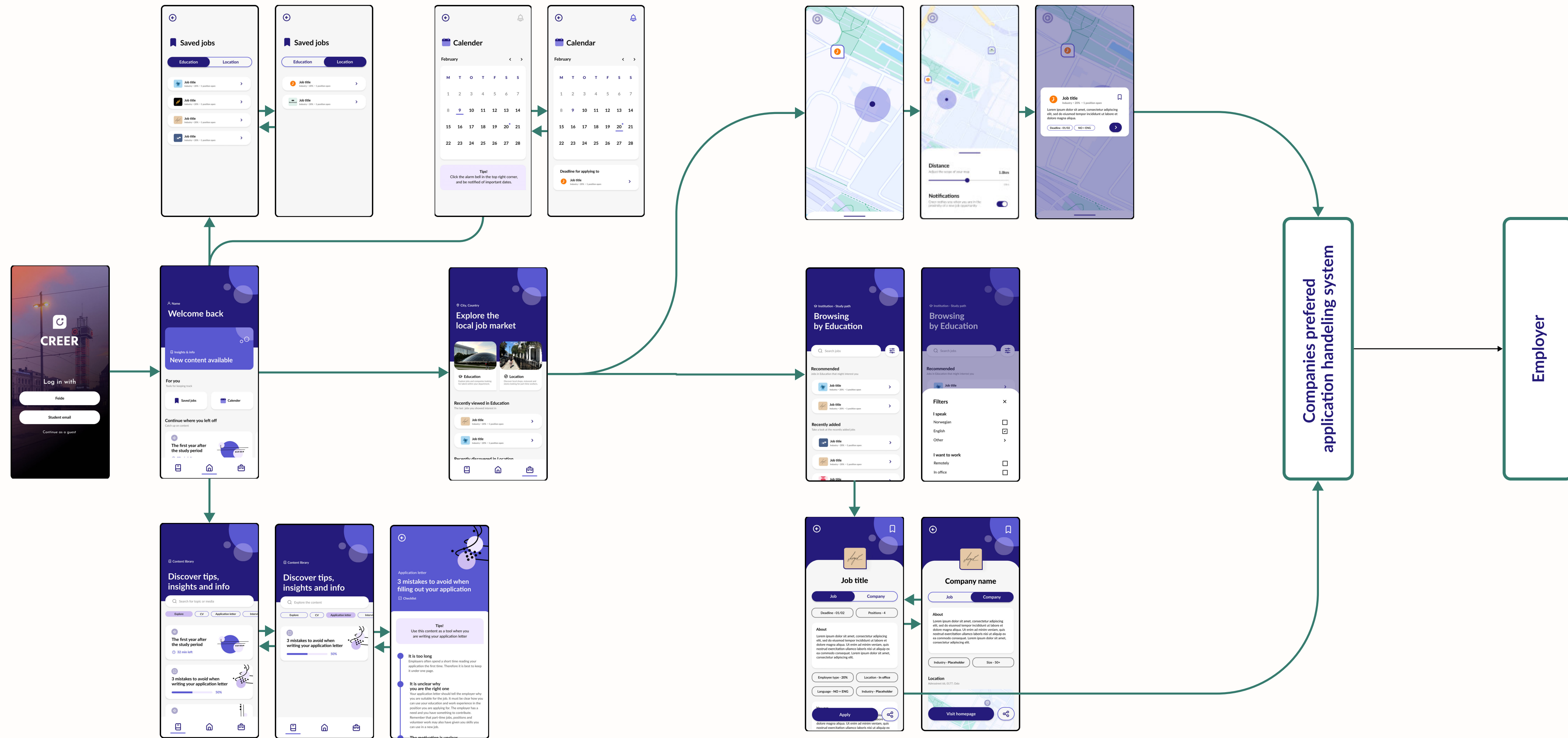
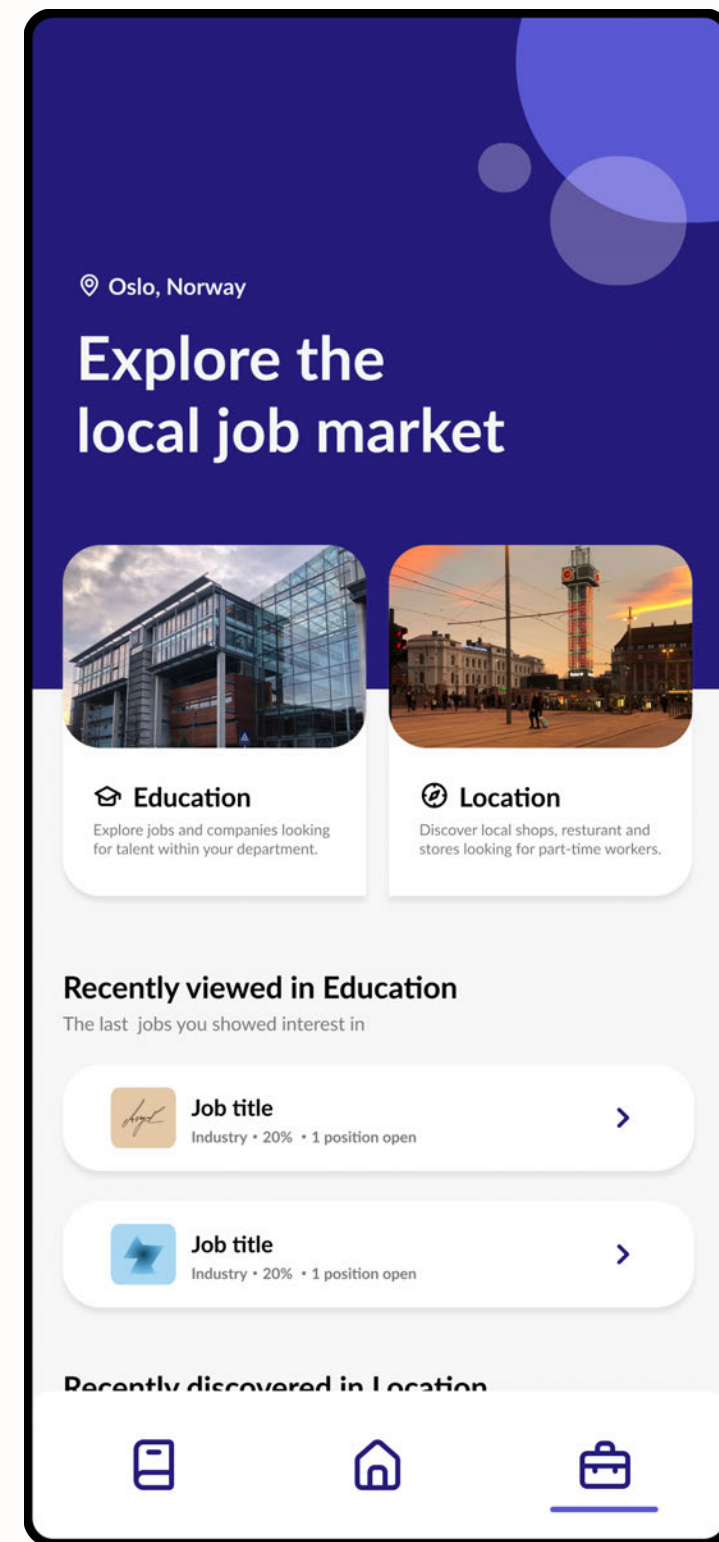An overview of important deadlines to remember.

Quick access to saved jobs with approaching deadlines. Enable push notification to get a reminder.
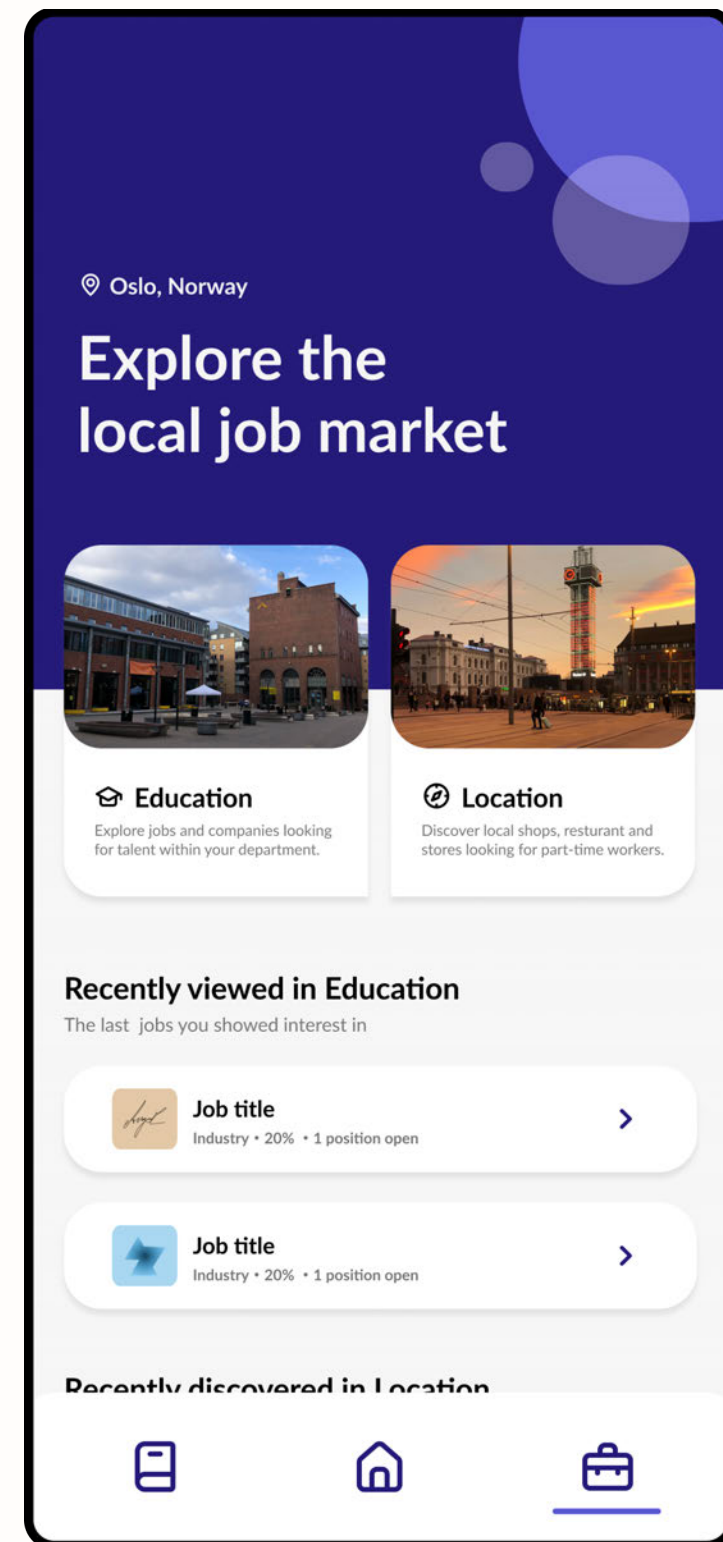
Main navigation.

Additional.

Example of Explore job pages,
when connected to an institute.
Here with BI.

Oslo Met
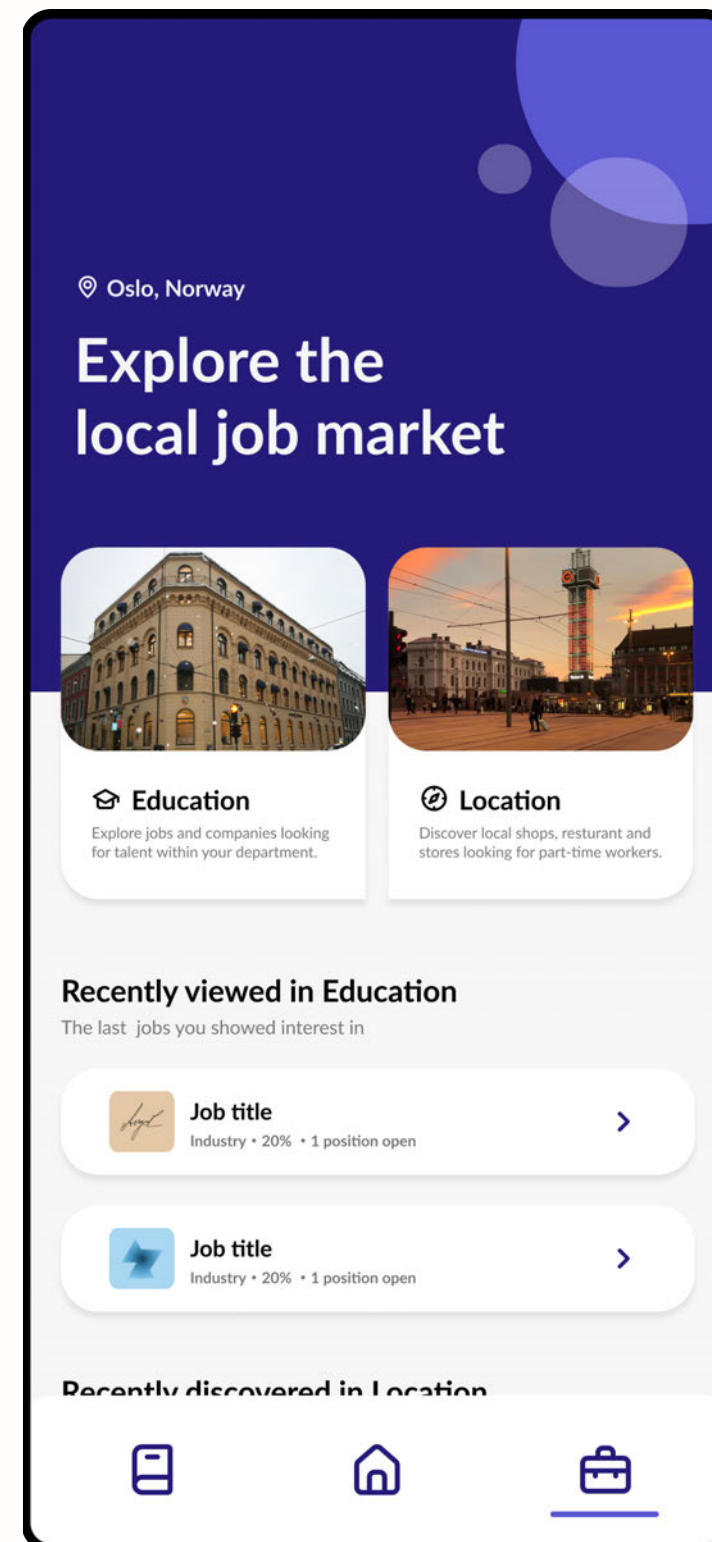
Kristiania University College
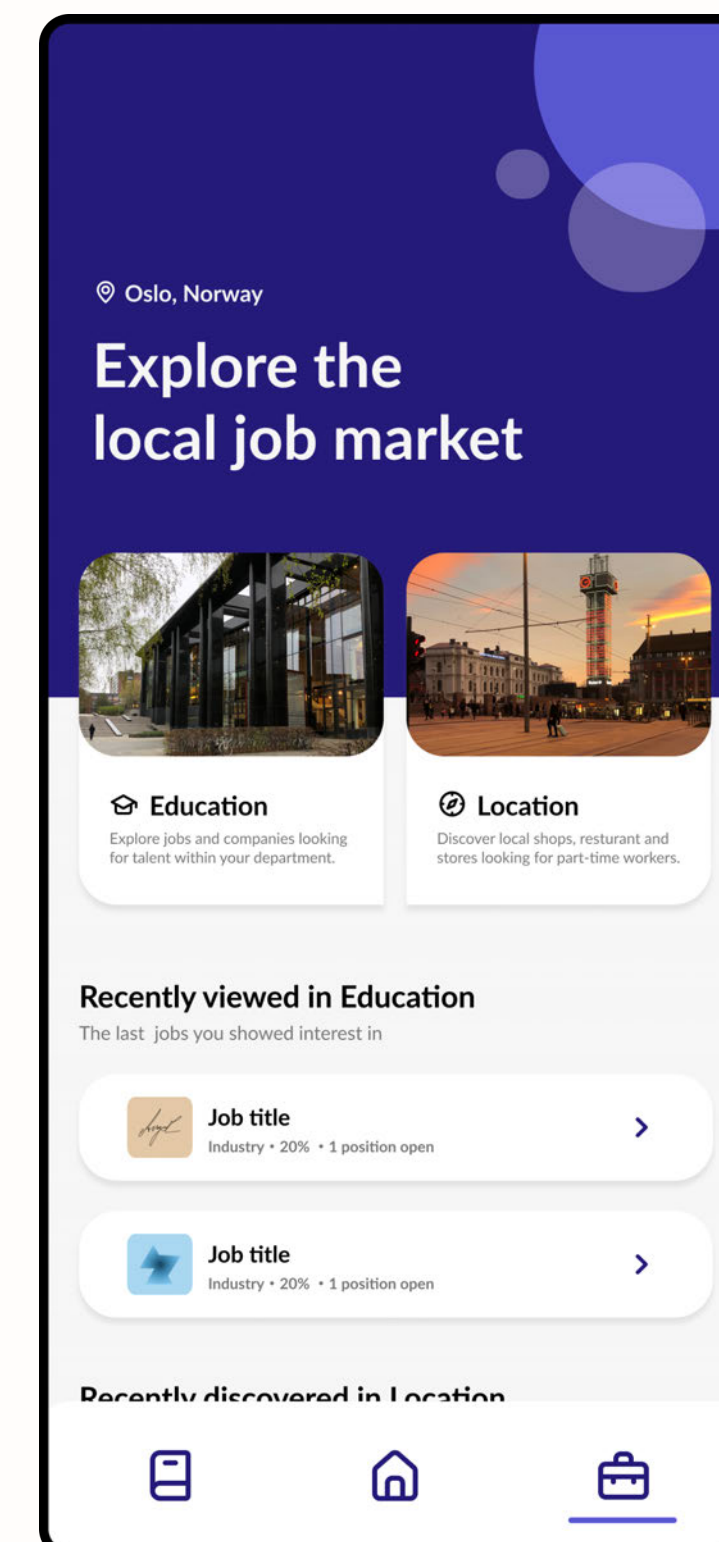
University of Oslo

Examples.

In order to contextualise Creer in the system, I have sketched out two simple user journeys. They showcase how the different segments of the user group, with individual goal, might utilize the different features of Creer.

To represent the students, I have created two personas based on the earlier user journeys (physical & digital) and interviews.

Meet Nicola and Dagny, two students at Kristiania University College, and Kristiania Profession College.

Nicola is an international master student, looking for study-relevant work. Having just moved to Oslo, Nicola is motivated both by network and experience. He has been considering finding a job in Oslo, since before arriving to the city. Seeing Creer advertised at the institutions Career center, he decides to test out the app.
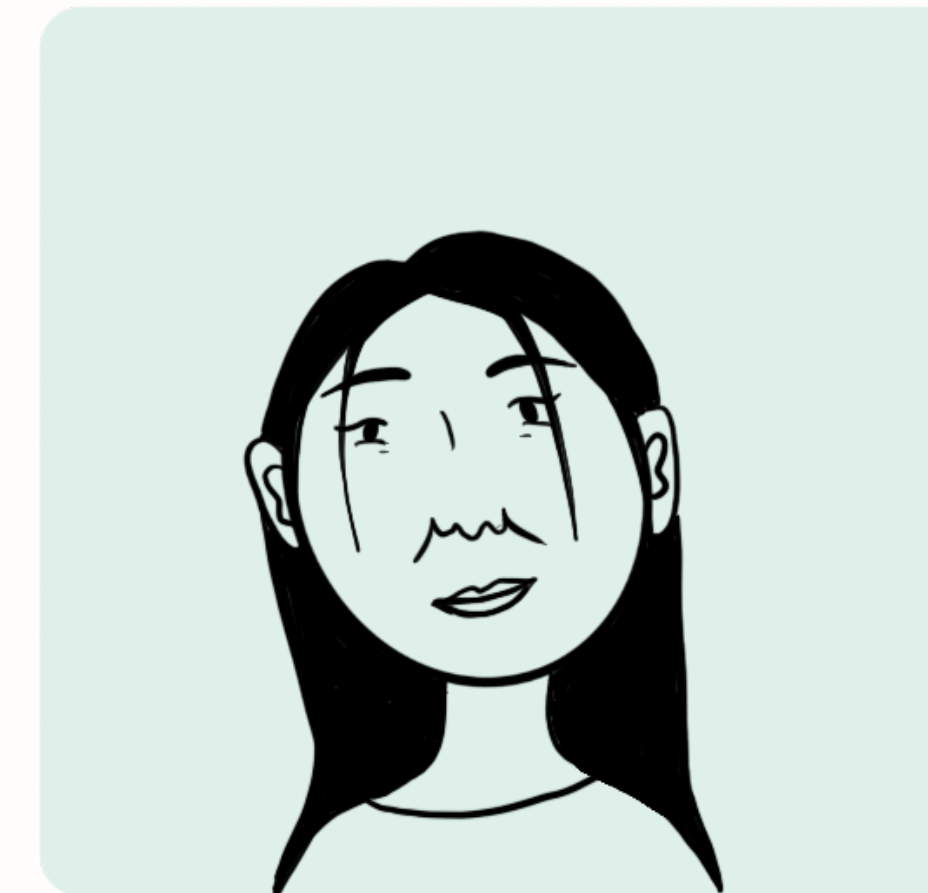
Dagny is in her second year of studying Illustration at Kristiania Profession College. She is looking for her first part-time job near either her institution or home.

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Dagny downloaded Creer during her first year. She hasn't been using it actively, but it is still installed. On her way home from school, she gets a notification.

Dagny opens Creer again, and navigates to the Content library. Using the filters, she find a relevant article, and utilizes it as she is writing her application letter.

CREER   now
You just walked by a company hiring!
There is a new job advertisment for students nearby. Visit the app for more information.

After a long day at work, Dagny is not as interested in engaging with job searching right now. She closes the app, and continues on her way home
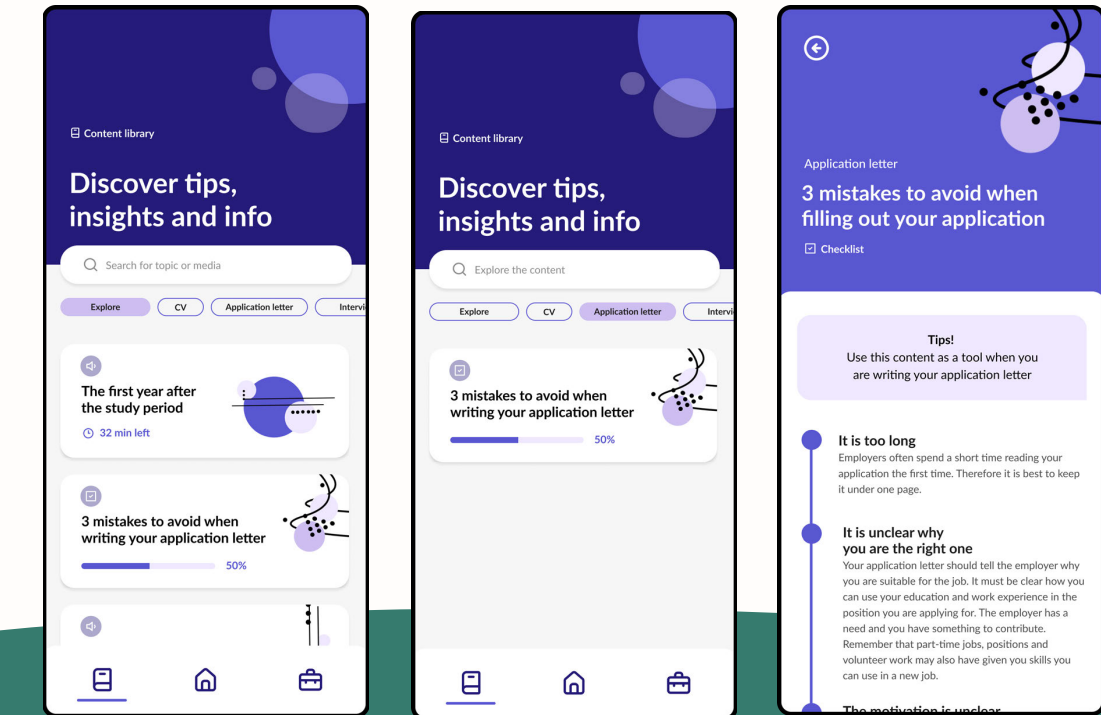
She navigates to the restaurants website, where she is told to submit an application letter. This being Dagny's potentially first part time work, she is uncertain on what to include in this letter.

Some days later, she walks past the restaurant on her way home again, and is reminded of the job advertisement. More energetic now than last time, she easily locates the job advertisment under "Recently discovered in Location"

She launches Creer, and is immediately taken to the map. Here she sees that a local restaurant is looking for a Barista.

Nicola has been considering finding a job in Oslo since before arriving. Seeing Creer advertised at the institutions Career center, he decides to test out the app.
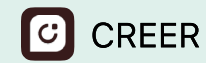
In the calender he finds a shortcut to the job he saved, under the date of the deadline.

Calendar

February

Deadline for applying to
△ Digital marketer

🔲 CREER   now

Time to apply?
The application deadline for one of your saved jobs are in less than a week.

He register with Feide, and quickly navigates to the job exploration page. Nicola is looking for something relevant to his masters in Information Systems.

CREER

Register with

Feide

Student email

Continue as a guest

Nicola discover a job with some potential. After skimming through the page, he realises there is still some time before the deadline. He saves the job, so he can easily find it later.

Digital marketer

Job   Company

Deadline - 20/02   Position - 4

About

Employee type - 20%   Location - In office

Language - ENG   Industry - IT

Apply

Using the filter, he makes sure the jobs he are viewing does not require Norwegian language skills

Browsing by Education

Browsing by Education

Browsing by Education

Recommended

Recommended

Filters   ✕

I speak
Norwegian
English
Other

I want to work
Remotely
In office

The future.

With my goal of creating something concrete and realistic, it was important for me to follow up any possibility of Creer to live on after my diploma was finished. In the final week before the diploma deadline, I met up digitally with Nina Østegaard and two of her coworkers, Per Erik Aspen and Mette Lise Martinsen, to discuss the future of Creer.

Per told about a similar project in progress at Kristiania, where a group of students are working on an app for matching students with employers. The project is mostly focused around the technology, and is in a way the other side of the coin in terms of my project. We spoke about the possibility of merging or collaborating after my project was finalised.

Revenue Stream
Another important thing I wanted to discuss with them was the potential revenue stream for Creer. We did not come to a conclusion, but discussed some potential revenue streams, from students and others. I therefore present the following as potential income for Creer:

▷ **(Student) Download paid version of app**
Pay a small, standarized fee when downloading directly from app store

▷ **(Student) In app subscription**
Unlock diverse content & features
Removes ads

▷ **(Employer) Boost opportunity of job ads**
Boost company or individual ad in app

▷ **(Employer) In app advertisment**
Ads, ideally relevant, run in the app

▷ **(External) In app advertisment**

▷ **Investor & funding**
Startuplab
Innovation Norge
Crowfunding

Creer Admin
During my planning of Creer the app, I sketched around the information flow (see p. 39). I brought the diagram with me, as well as an initial mockup of what the Creer Admin might look like.

They seemed excited about the addition, especially with the Events-component. This had briefly been discussed in earlier meeting, but given the scope and time limitation of my project, I had not been able to prioritize it in the current version of Creer. Currently they are using a recruitment system themselves, that they wanted to share with me post-delivery to integrate functions into Creer Admin.

Proposal for Creer Admin
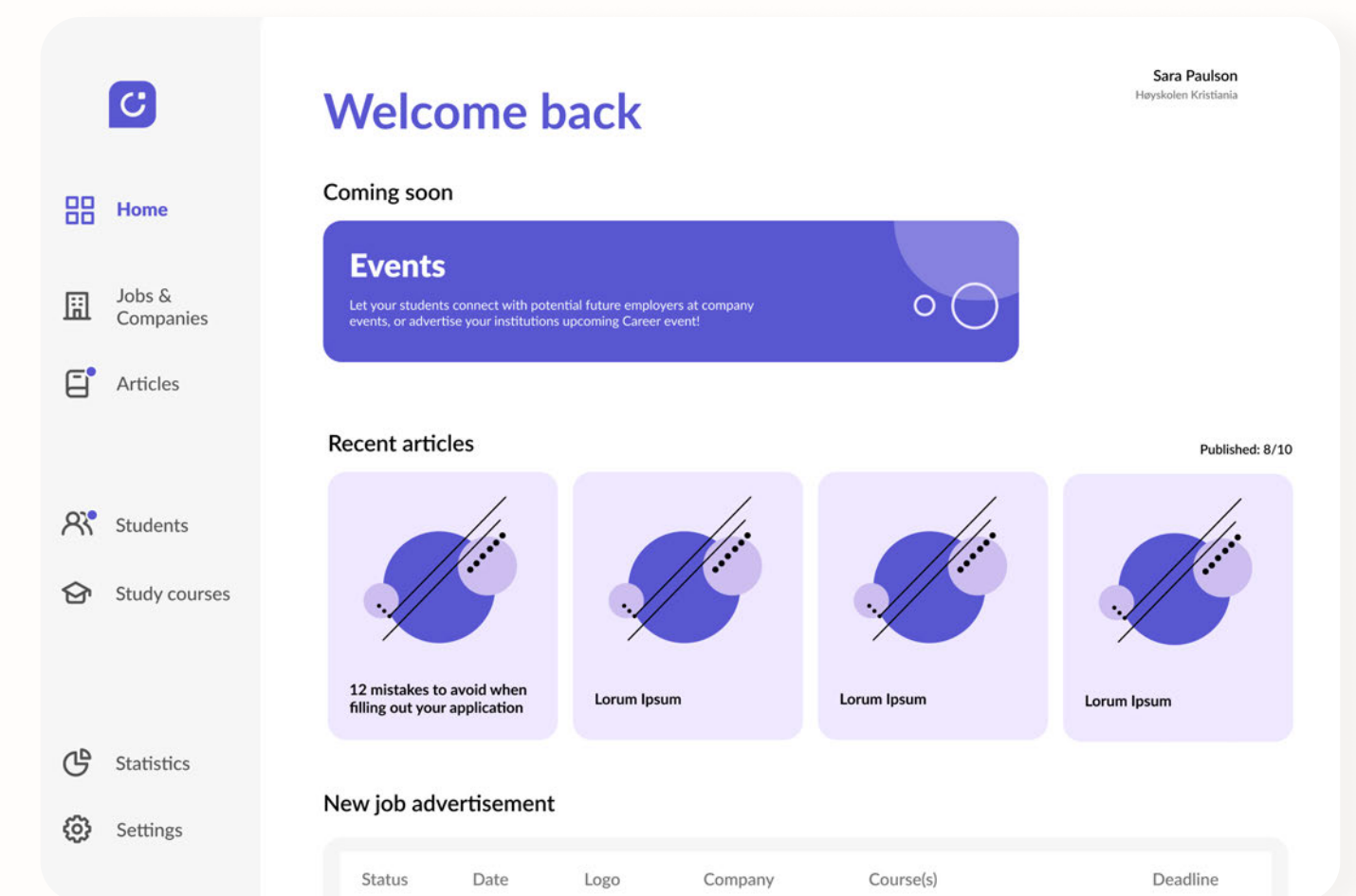
Thank you.

I would like to start of my reflections, with a thank you to everyone involved.

To all the participants who took the time to contribute, with discussions, conversations and inquieries. An especially big thank you to Nina Østgaard and the group at Kristiania, for your involvment, high energy, and belief in my project and Creer.

To my coworkers, for your patients and encouragments.

Thank you to AHO and my supervisors. Especially you Simon, for your patience and good advice. I will miss our biweekly Norenglish conversations.

And to my dear classmates, especially Angel, Maria and Xiyu. I could not have done this without you.

Family and friends for allowing me to rant about my project for the last four months.
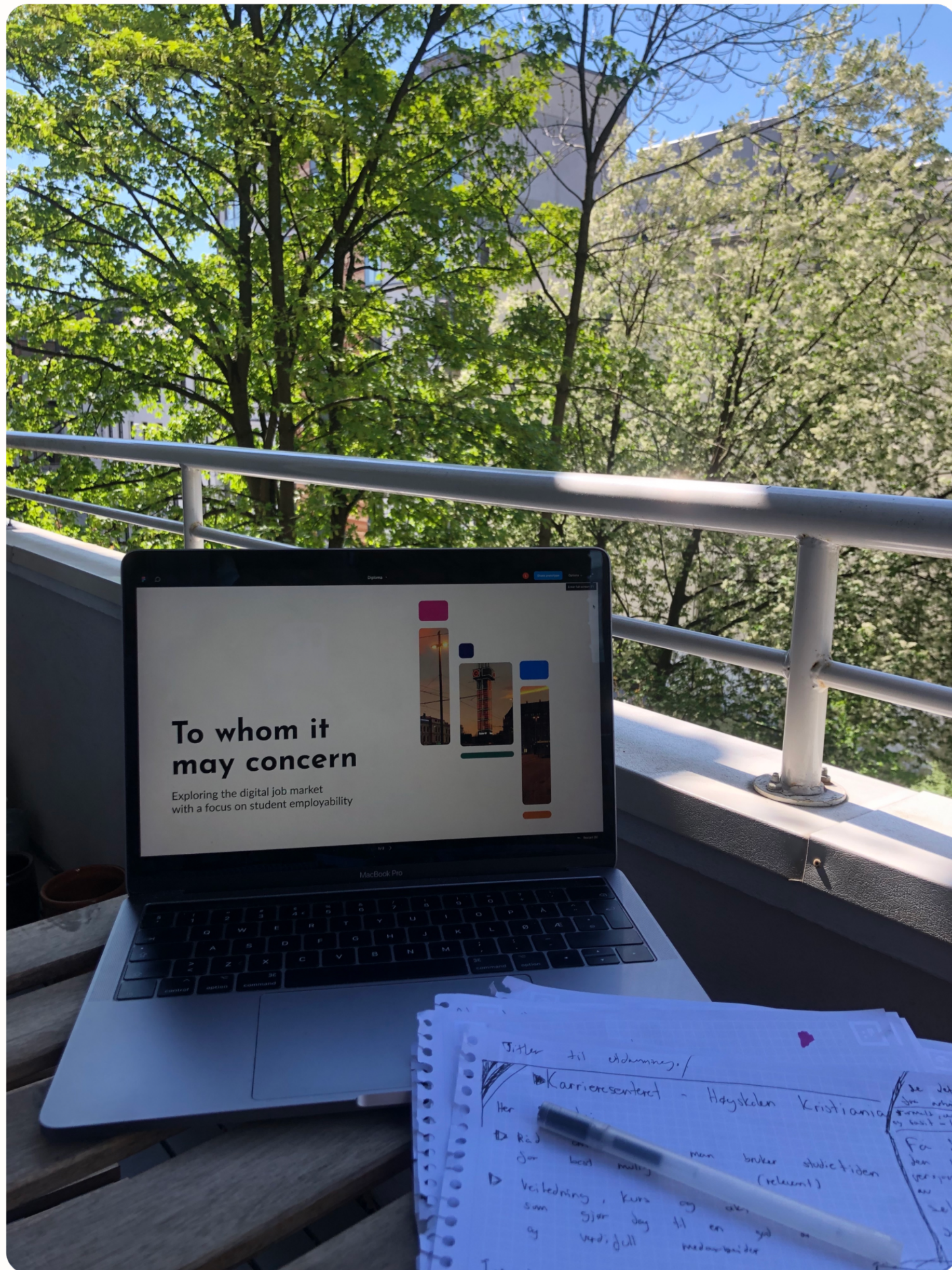
Reflections

My process

I love/hate research. Since as long as I can remember, I tend to get lost in the ocean of information one uncover when delving into a new area or project. Initially I thought I would avoid this by picking TWIMC as my project. But however concrete and diligent I was with setting deadlines, prioritizing and scoping, I still found that I spent a huge amount of time reading and researching. Relevant and otherwise.

The Innovation Framework helped a lot with solidifying the different phases. However if I where to redo this project, there are certain amendments I would make.

- I would find a collaborator. If I, as an example, met the group at Kristiania University earlier in my process, I might have been able to get access to more users and someone to ideate more collaboratively with. In addition, I could have explored the service of the career centers further.
- I would work in a pair. There are benefits to working alone, and together with another classmate.

I don't know how the future will play out, but I would encourage anyone doing their diploma during COVID and lockdown to make sure they have a good network around them. Especially I would advise against working where you live, sleep and eat, if possible. As I mentioned in my thank you notes, I could not have done this project without the support and company, even if it was digital.

Evaluation of concept

I find it tricky to evaluate my own project. I know that Creer is feasible, in terms of technology. I believe I am onto something that would strengthen the institutions as well as the relation between students and employers. I know that it is desirable, from testing with primary and secondary users, and behavioural patterns from tertiary users with similar projects. In terms of viability, Creer is so rudimental at this point, that the potential for scalability is huge. Scalability in terms of features, focus and geographical scope. But the way I see it, these are arguments for "potential". The only way to be sure of a product's value, is to put it into the market. And after that? Iterate, iterate, iterate.

Regrets

I am a bit disappointed in the obviousness of Creer. A hybrid between to existing services is not the explorative ideation I wish I had put aside more time for. On the other side, I saw a potential with the concept that was to become Creer. And with feedback from others seeing the same potential, I cannot bring myself to regret it that much.

I had hoped for a more collaborative process, but most of my inquiries seemed to have bad timing. As such I was both manager and maker of the project. I think Creer would have gotten a lot further, both concept and screens, if more brains had worked on shaping it.

It was hard for me to focus on one target group when all three are so highly relevant for the service of Creer. Balancing the general and the personalised has never been a strenght of mine. I do however think that the current UI of Creer is a good starting point for further development.

Disclaimer

I went as in depth as I could with my market research, however, to this day there are still new platform and services appearing in my targeted ads and in conversations around the project. The job jungel is large, and the digital even more so. Having looked into 97 cases, I had to stop. By positioning Creer as an institutional offer, with its value propositions towards both primary and secondary users, I believe and hope it has a solid foundation for at least become a notable challenger within the market.

Summary

Overall I am excited to see where Creer might go. I planned the current design with scalability in mind, both in terms of new features, and addition to old ones. I am especially looking forward to introducing and testing the concept with the tertiary users, as well as develop Creer Admin and the website.

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To whom it may concern.

Exploring the digital job market with a focus on student employability

Diploma · Spring 2021