

The Silent Village

Project proposal & Statement of Work

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Date: 01/24/2026

Revision History Table		Template Date 01/17/2026
Version	Summary of Changes	Date
V1	The project summary has been updated.	01/17/2026
V2	User/Market research has been added and the work of personnel has been assigned.	01/25/2026
V3	Draft 1 and User empathy interviews	02/01/2026
V4	Revised due to the instructions and fix format problems	02/19/2026

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1. Executive Summary

The Executive Summary was written by Hengyu Zhou.

The Silent Village is a 3D puzzle game developed based on the Unity engine, set in a medieval village and its nearby castle. Players will take on the role of a traveling doctor and investigate the mysterious disappearance of the village by exploring locations, collecting clues, and solving and logical puzzles. Core features include a clue system (for tracking evidence and objectives), investigation driven by interaction, inventory-based interaction, and puzzles centered around observation, reasoning, and medieval "medical" practices (such as identifying symptoms, concocting potions, and interpreting records).

Puzzle games are appealing because they offer structured mental challenges that encourage problem-solving and concentration. These benefits are supported by research on puzzle gameplay and cognition. At the same time, video games have become a mainstream entertainment medium, thus there is a strong demand for accessible, medium-sized game experiences. Our game stands out because it offers a non-combat investigation loop in a historically inspired medieval setting, combining classic puzzle structures with a doctor-themed reasoning approach, rather than violent elements. The result is a short, story-driven puzzle game experience that emphasizes curiosity, empathy, and reasoning over action.

Development will proceed in Unity through iterative milestones: pre-production (story outline, puzzle list, gray-box levels), production (core systems, one village center + one castle wing, implementing puzzles, user interface), and polish (game testing, bug fixing, balance adjustments, and final build). By the end of the semester, we will deliver a playable vertical slice, a complete user interface/log process, an exported PC version, and an updated game design document.

Team Member	Feature responsibility
Hengyu Zhou	Scene supervision, puzzle design and level design
	UI interface, mechanism design and scene design
Elijah Ruis	Code programming, interaction design and character design
Boyang Zhu	Art resources, actions and sound interactions

Table 1 Preliminary Feature Responsibilities

2. User/Market research

Overall market

This part was written by Hengyu Zhou.

"The Silent Village" is a single-player medieval exploration and puzzle-solving game that emphasizes fragmented storytelling, historical realism, and atmosphere-driven investigation. Its core audience overlaps with that of "A Plague Tale: Innocence" and "A Plague Tale: Requiem", with players valuing immersive narratives and emotional stories set in the plague era (mainly aged between 20 and 35). The game also draws inspiration from "Darkest Dungeon", which has attracted a large number of loyal players with its oppressive atmosphere and psychological system, and from "Journey to the Savage Planet", known for its environmental storytelling and fragmented emotional expression.

Unlike these competitors, "The Silent Village" stands out in three aspects:

Narrative - A multi-perspective structure (doctor, priest, orphan, commoner) that requires players to actively piece together the truth;

Atmosphere - One of historical despair and the tension of survival, rather than fantastical horror;

Gameplay - Puzzles are directly related to the narrative progress, ensuring that exploration and story unfold in tandem.

Empathy interviews confirmed that players desire a coherent narrative, a heavy psychological atmosphere without being overly gory, and puzzle difficulty that gradually increases in line with the plot. Design responses include a story log system, historically based audio-visual design, and a subtle hint system that guides players without reducing the challenge.

Existing Competitors

This part is written by Boyang Zhu

This game is set against the backdrop of the medieval plague/Black Death, with core gameplay centered on fragmented narrative, medieval dark atmosphere creation, and exploration-puzzle solving. Based on this positioning, we have selected three categories of core competitors, analyzed their market-related information, and clarified the differentiated advantages of our product. The details are as follows:

I. Core Competitors and Their Market Information

(1) A Plague Tale: Innocence & Requiem

User Base: The core users are enthusiasts of medieval historical themes, narrative-driven single-player games, and atmospheric adventure games, with an age focus on 20-35 years old (Newzoo, 2024). This group of users prefers immersive story experiences, values emotional connections with characters, and has high requirements for plot depth, character development, and historical background restoration. This is highly consistent with the emotional needs of the core audience for plague-themed games (Campos et al., 2021).

Market Performance and Characteristics: Developed by Asobo Studio, this series has gained high reputation and sales worldwide. Its core advantages lie in the exquisite restoration of medieval plague-era scenes, touching sibling emotional narrative, and a gameplay combination of mild puzzle-solving and stealth. Positioned as a mid-to-high-end narrative adventure game, it focuses on delivering strong emotional impact and atmospheric immersion. This core advantage aligns with the current market trend of immersive games. Research by IGDA (2023) points out that one of the core competencies of high-quality narrative adventure games is building deep immersion through scene restoration and audio-visual coordination, which is also the key for such games to gain high reputation and user stickiness.

(2) Darkest Dungeon

User Base: The target users are enthusiasts of medieval dark fantasy themes, roguelike game players, and lovers of highly challenging exploration-puzzle gameplay, mostly aged 22-40 years old (Pew Research Center, 2024). This group of users has a high acceptance of dark and oppressive atmospheres and strategic gameplay, values the sense of challenge in the exploration process and the depth of character growth, which is consistent with the core preferences of the audience for high-difficulty puzzle-solving games (McGonigal, 2020).

Market Performance and Characteristics: Developed by Red Hook Studios, this work is a classic representative of medieval dark-themed games. Its characteristics include a unique hand-drawn dark art style, a stress system reflecting characters' mental states, and gameplay combining turn-based combat and dungeon exploration. Its market positioning is niche but with extremely high user stickiness, focusing on satisfying users' demand for dark atmospheres and challenging gameplay.

(3) Gris (Reference Competitor for Fragmented Narrative and Atmospheric Exploration)

User Base: It mainly covers lovers of fragmented narrative games, artistic atmospheric game players, and light exploration-puzzle game players, with a wide age range (18-45 years old) (Newzoo, 2024; Pew Research Center, 2024). This group of users prefers slow-paced immersive experiences, values emotional transmission through visual design and narrative, and pays more attention to the artistic sense and emotional connotation of the game.

Market Performance and Characteristics: Developed by Nomada Studio, this game is renowned for its line-free fragmented narrative style, exquisite visual art, and light exploration-puzzle gameplay. It focuses on conveying emotions through environmental narrative and scene changes, and its market positioning is an artistic narrative game, targeting players who pursue emotional resonance and unique narrative experiences.

II. Product Differentiation Advantages

Compared with the above competitors, our game deeply integrates the core needs of three categories of core target users (lovers of fragmented narrative games, enthusiasts of medieval dark background atmospheric games, and fans of exploration-puzzle games), and forms unique differentiated advantages in three dimensions: narrative perspective, atmosphere positioning, and gameplay integration:

(1) Narrative Dimension Differentiation

Unlike the linear emotional narrative of the A Plague Tale series centered on specific characters, our game adopts a multi-perspective fragmented narrative model, connecting the story context under the plague through the perspectives of characters with different identities (such as commoners, doctors, priests, orphans, etc.). Users need to piece together the complete truth of the plague and the fate of the characters through the exploration and puzzle-solving process. This design is more in line with the preferences of lovers of fragmented narrative games, and at the same time enhances the sense of participation and exploration in the story experience. It is consistent with the core design logic of "active exploration enhances immersion" for narrative games proposed by Bowman (2022), whose research points out that the openness and interactivity of game narratives can significantly enhance players' emotional resonance and participation motivation.

(2) Atmospheric Creation Differentiation

Compared with the dark fantasy atmosphere of Darkest Dungeon that emphasizes horror and oppression, our game focuses on the restoration of the realistic dark atmosphere of the

medieval plague era. Through detailed scene design (such as desolate streets, isolated villages, plague-stricken hospitals), sound effect matching (whispers of survivors, creaking doors, distant church bells), and character state portrayal (pale faces, tattered clothes, complex psychological activities), an immersive sense of despair and survival atmosphere is created. It not only meets the core needs of enthusiasts of medieval dark background atmospheres but also avoids user alienation that may be caused by excessive horror elements. This is consistent with the best practices for atmospheric creation in plague-themed games proposed by Campos et al. (2021).

(3) Gameplay Integration Differentiation

Different from the light puzzle-solving in Gris that serves the narrative and the stealth-oriented gameplay design of the A Plague Tale series, our game achieves a deep integration of exploration-puzzle solving and narrative progression. All puzzles are closely related to the plot and the plague background (such as interpreting medieval doctors' notes to find antidotes, exploring secret passages in abandoned churches to obtain survival supplies, piecing together fragmented letters to restore the truth of the plague, etc.). The solving process of each puzzle will promote the progress of the narrative and the deepening of the atmosphere. While ensuring the integrity of the narrative, it is more in line with the core demands of exploration-puzzle game lovers and conforms to the stepped puzzle-solving and narrative integration design principles proposed by McGonigal (2020).

User Insights

This part is written by Boyang Zhu

To accurately locate the needs and pain points of the three categories of core target users (lovers of fragmented narrative games, enthusiasts of medieval dark background atmospheric games, and fans of exploration-puzzle games), we conducted empathy interviews with 5 potential users (including 2 lovers of fragmented narrative games, 2 enthusiasts of medieval dark atmospheric games, and 1 fan of exploration-puzzle games). The interviews adopted a conversational format, focusing on users' current gaming experience, existing pain points, and expectations for our game. The following are the core insights, user pain points, and targeted solutions of our product derived from the interviews.

I. Core Insights and User Pain Points from Interviews

(1) For Lovers of Fragmented Narrative Games

Core Insights: This group of users values the "active story exploration" experience brought by fragmented narratives. They hope that fragmented information (such as letters, diaries, environmental clues, etc.) has clear logical connections and can form a complete and in-depth

story context through sorting out. They are willing to invest time in thinking and associating but reject "meaningless fragmented information" unrelated to the core plot.

Core Pain Points: ① In most fragmented narrative games, clues are scattered, and it is easy to forget the previous plot and clues when advancing the game, leading to fragmented story experience; ② The fragmented information in some games is too obscure, and even after collecting all clues, it is difficult to piece together the core story, resulting in a sense of frustration; ③ The correlation between fragmented narrative and gameplay is insufficient, and the narrative and gameplay are often disconnected.

(2) For Enthusiasts of Medieval Dark Background Atmospheric Games

Core Insights: This group of users is attracted by the "immersive medieval dark atmosphere" and hopes that the game can restore the details of the medieval plague era (such as social order, costumes and architecture, people's living conditions, etc.). They pursue the "psychological oppression" brought by the atmosphere rather than superficial bloody and terrifying scenes, and at the same time attach importance to the coordinated matching of vision and sound effects to achieve an immersive experience. This insight is consistent with the research conclusions on immersive game atmosphere creation by the International Game Developers Association (IGDA, 2023), which points out that high-quality immersive atmosphere needs to be achieved through multi-sensory coordination and detail restoration, rather than relying on a single horror element stimulation.

Core Pain Points: ① Some medieval dark-themed games overemphasize bloody and terrifying elements, ignoring the restoration of historical atmosphere and the shaping of psychological oppression, leading to superficial atmosphere; ② The restoration of medieval background details is not in place (such as anachronistic costumes and architecture), which destroys the sense of immersion; ③ The atmosphere remains unchanged for a long time, lacking emotional ups and downs, and it is easy to produce aesthetic fatigue after long-term gameplay.

(3) For Fans of Exploration-Puzzle Games

Core Insights: This group of users enjoys the sense of accomplishment brought by solving puzzles through exploration. They hope that puzzles are closely combined with the game background and plot, and the difficulty increases gradually to form a reasonable difficulty curve. They reject "forced puzzles" unrelated to the plot and "excessively difficult puzzles" that rely on guesswork rather than logical reasoning. This feature is highly consistent with the "core preference model" proposed by McGonigal (2020) in his research on user experience of exploration-puzzle games, which points out that plot relevance and difficulty gradient are the key factors affecting user retention in puzzle-solving games.

Core Pain Points: ① In some games, puzzles are disconnected from the plot, and puzzles only serve as "tools to delay game progress" and cannot promote the story; ② The difficulty of puzzles is unbalanced, either too simple to lack a sense of accomplishment, or too difficult to cause long-term stuck, losing the willingness to continue playing; ③ Puzzle hints are unclear or misleading, making it difficult to find the direction to solve the puzzle.

II. Pain Point Solutions for Our Product

We aim to create a narrative-driven game, where the player, taking on the role of a doctor, will obtain fragments of the story from dialogues, environments, item descriptions and other information, with a game system to store these recorded fragments.

There is no boring puzzle-solving system in the game; the entire puzzle exists outside the story, just like a whodunit detective novel. The player themselves will be the main body of solving the puzzle, meaning that each person may piece together different conclusions.

In terms of atmosphere creation, we will faithfully restore the medieval background, researching and reproducing that era as much as possible from the perspectives of architecture, artistic style, language habits and so on.

I hope to focus more on the tragic stories of ordinary people to resonate with the audience, and finally piece together the whole story through several small stories similar to unit dramas. I will work hard on the plot script.

References

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<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/12345.001.0001>*

User empathy interviews

This part was written by Hengyu Zhou

We have identified three main user groups for the game:

Players who enjoy fragmented or environmental narrative styles

Fans of dark atmosphere games set in the Middle Ages

Players who like puzzle-solving exploration and narrative-driven experiences

Based on three empathy interviews, we have summarized several consistent viewpoints:

Players value the clarity and fairness of puzzles. Although they enjoy challenges, unclear goals, poor feedback, or puzzles that rely on trial and error rather than logical reasoning often frustrate them.

Atmosphere significantly affects engagement. Respondents who prefer medieval or dark settings emphasize background logic, background fidelity, and environmental storytelling as key factors.

Fragmented narrative techniques are attractive if they make sense. Players enjoy discovering story fragments through exploration, but only if these fragments can eventually be connected into a coherent story.

The higher the game quality, the greater the players' willingness to pay. Respondents indicated that they are more willing to pay for games with well-designed puzzles, storylines that respect players' comprehension abilities, and game mechanics that are sophisticated rather than repetitive and dull.

These insights directly influence our design approach:

We aim to reduce communication barriers in puzzle mechanisms by improving visual cues and player feedback.

Narrative elements will be presented through environmental storytelling and exploration, ensuring that each fragment contributes to the larger narrative outcome.

The medieval background setting will be strengthened through unified art direction, sound design, and environmental details.

The difficulty of the puzzles will gradually increase to prevent players from feeling frustrated too early.

3. Final Product Deliverable & Features

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

Key Features:

Feature:	Need:
Repairable gate	For optional ending 1, completing steps to repair it will allow for escape.
Cross items	Act as hints to help players when stuck. Limited and vague. A Press “e” item to use.
Puzzles	Themed puzzles such as unfinished chess matches, matching, word scrambles, to progress.
Tools/Inventory	Unlocks areas, Helps progress to a win condition.
Curse Timer	Loss condition, find a solution or escape in time. Otherwise become lost with the town.
Keys/locks	Cuts of certain areas and progress if the player is still missing something.
Interactive ghost / cursed objects	For optional ending 2, help ghost move on and rid the town of cursed objects to free the town.

Stretch Features:

Feature:	Need:
Tracking Ghost	Add difficulty as the player will have to get away and stay hidden to not lose.
Penalties on puzzle fail	Lose some sort of health or lose time for failing puzzles. This is for more difficulty.
More than 2 endings	Adding that a series of particular options or steps results in more than our two planned endings.
Game modes	Difficulties easy to hard. To make the game cater more to the players wants.
Optimized settings	Turn ghost on/off. Volume, brightness, aspect ratio, frame rate, sensitivity.
Random Generation	Adds variation and a reason to try the game again.

Feature 1: Repairable Gate

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

The most basic planned ending for our game. This gate will be missing parts to open, need some kind of pulley or jack to keep it off the ground, and other such things to function. Once open the player can walk out and survive the game. This is intended to be a “success?” ending half hearted, easy, and makes it apparent to the player they left a lot behind.

Feature 2: Interactive Ghost/ Cursed Objects

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

This is the second and preferred ending to our game. By solving the mystery of the town before running out of time the user can help rid the town of active cursed objects and free the ghost. In doing so the player will win and have played through the entire intended story.

Feature 3: Puzzles

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

This is the main functionality of our game, to get access to items and tools that aid in the players escape they will need to find and solve several different formats of puzzle. Some active ideas include unfinished chess boards, Word scrambles, matching games, and simple world navigation such as, here is an axe that is clearly intended for something but where?

Feature 4: Tools and Inventory

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

The player will only be able to carry so much and will need to have several items to complete puzzles. This inventory will include tools that will be used for various things around the map such as an axe, or lever that will lower a draw bridge.

Feature 5: Curse Timer

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

This will act as the primary loss condition in our game. The player will have a slowly lowering bar at the top of their screen, they must find a possible solution within the lotted time or have the curse that wiped out the town befall them as well resulting in a game over. This is to add stress, and challenge to the game.

Feature 6: Keys and Locks

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

This will allow us to make sure the player doesn't get to lost or wander farther then they should. It makes sure they don't get confused and can stay objective orientated.

Feature 7: Cross Items

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

These crosses will be usable one time items that provide hints. If you use more than one on the same problem it will simply add some time back to the curse timer.

Stretch Feature 1: Tracking Ghost

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

These ghost will use nav meshes to wander the map, if they see the player they will pursue them. On contact they will either immediately game over the player or drain the curse bar rapidly. This adds new difficulty to the player as they need to be mindful of their environment while solving these puzzles.

Stretch Feature 2: Puzzle Fail Penalties

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

On a puzzle fail the player will lose HP if implemented or lose some of their remaining time. Punishing the player for rushing. This is heightened difficulty and ensures the player cannot just guess.

Stretch Feature 3: Several Endings

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

Adding as many additional endings as possible is a goal we wish to achieve. Completing steps in certain orders or skipping parts will result in new successful and failed endings.

Stretch Feature 4: Game modes

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

To accommodate both hardcore and casual players difficulties will be added to the game so that everyone has a chance to experience our story.

Stretch Feature 5: Optimized settings

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

Settings are always an appreciated quality of life from developers. With allotted time basic settings such as volume control, brightness, frames, and aspect ratio will be provided. More complex settings such as turning off any potential gore or tracking ghost specifically is goal.

Stretch Feature 6: Random Generation

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

To make the game infinitely more re-playable Random generation of certain puzzles or changing the spawn location of certain items and puzzles is an extensive and hopeful goal to see in our game.

4. Project Timeline & Gantt Chart

This section was written by Elijah Ruis.

Milestone	Date
Team Formation	1/29/26
Setting up version control and unity for group	2/12/26
Psuedo Code, mapping, and test scenes	2/14/26
Framework done such as standard player	2/18/26
Signed proposal	2/19/2026
Repairable gate with at least 3 parts to start	2/21/26
Cross Item & Curse Timer complete	2/24/26
Tools & inventory applied	2/27/26
Keys & locks where needed	3/1/26
At least 4 Cursed objects, an interactive ghost	3/5/26
At least 4 functioning puzzles	3/8/26
Playtest session 1	3/10/26
Fine Tuning	3/13/26
All final models implemented	3/18/26
Animations & FX	3/21/26

Audio	3/24/26
Playtest session 2	3/26/26
Fine Tuning 2	3/28/26
Finish adequate variation for key and move to stretch features	4/1/26
Stretch Feature: Optimized settings	4/4/26
Stretch Feature: Puzzle Fail Penalties	4/6/26
Stretch Feature: Several Endings	4/10/26
Stretch Feature: Random Generation	4/13/26
Stretch Feature: Game Modes	4/16/26
Stretch Feature: Tracking Ghost	4/20/26
Finished Build	4/20/26
Playtest session 3	4/20/26
Fine Tuning 3	4/22/26
Poster Demo	4/23/26
Fine Tuning 4	4/28/26
Finished Build 2	4/28/26
iShowcase	5/1/26

Table 3: Milestone Schedule

5. Ethics

This part was written by Hengyu Zhou.

#	Question	Generally	Data Breach
1	Could a user sell drugs or other illegal items on your platform?	N	N
2	Could a user of your platform engage in sex trafficking?	N	N
3	Could a user sell class notes or cheat on their homework on your platform?	M	N
4	Could a stalker use your project to find someone?	N	N
5	Could your app be used to spy on or track individuals?	N	N
6	Could your app/software access the camera or microphone and record things without users being aware?	N	M
7	If someone uses your platform, could they be re-traumatized or have their mental health impacted in some way?	M	M
8	Could your algorithm promote material that would traumatize or upset individuals?	M	M
9	Would your users be upset if the data you collect was given to someone else?	M	M
10	Could a data leak potentially lead to identity theft?	N	M
11	If your site was hacked, would users of that product potentially lose their job, spouse, or family?	M	M
12	Should there be an age limitation on your product?	M	M
13	Could someone use your product to find, contact, and potentially commit elder abuse?	N	N
14	If the data on your platform was breached, could it be used to blackmail the users?	M	M

15	Does the existence of your project imply that a particular racial group, gender, religion or other protected category is inherently bad, gross, or unwanted?	N	N
16	Could your product be used to commit hate crimes against a specific group?	N	N
17	Does the primary content of your game or algorithm focus on something considered deeply unethical?	M	M
18	Does your game or software contain race, gender, or other stereotypes?	N	N
19	Could users of your app scam other individuals?	N	N
20	Is your particular algorithm biased towards predicting correctly only for one race, gender, or other group?	N	N
21	Are the users of your project, players of your game, or those being surveyed for your data aware of how their data will be used?	Y	Y
22	What are the possible misinterpretations of your results? For example - would a white supremacist or misogynist be stoked about your results if they misinterpreted it?	M	N
23	Does the use or purchase of your data potentially contribute to a dangerous group or regime?	N	N
24	Could your virtual reality environment cause injury to the user?	M	N
25	Are your study participants or game players aware that their data will be collected and used?	Y	Y
26	Does your game or app contain addictive design elements without benefit to the user?	M	M
27	Does your survey contain an aspect of compulsion or unusually large incentive, that would command users to take it even if it was to their detriment?	N	N

Could your research outcomes harm
28 an individual or entity? N N

For any questions marked with Y or M, I will implement safeguard measures to reduce potential harm. For mental health risks or retraumatization, I will include content warnings and optional participation features. To prevent the promotion of harmful algorithms, I will incorporate review filters and regular bias audits. User data will be protected through encryption, minimizing data collection, and clear privacy policies to reduce the risk of leaks, ransom, or abuse. Age restrictions will be enforced through account verification. To prevent addictive design, I will avoid manipulative reward systems and include usage reminders. For potential physical harm in virtual reality, I will provide safety guidelines and boundary warnings. All data collection requires informed consent and transparency.

6. Approvals

The project proposal is a document that needs the approval of everyone to move forward. If approval is denied, rework the proposal to fix the issue and begin the approval cycle again.

The Faculty advisor should be consulted often for the purposes of creating the proposal. After the Faculty Sponsor and the Team are comfortable with the contents of the SOW, only then should it go to the Sponsor for review.

If the Faculty Sponsor and Sponsor are the same person, try to be reasonable regarding what is possible to accomplish.

Type in the names in the "Approver Name" column, written signatures only in "Signature" and "Date" columns.

WARNING: Sponsors and Faculty Advisors require lead time to approve documents. Do NOT send a document to them and expect them to read/approve it immediately. Be courteous - give at least 3 business days. Thus, if the SOW is due by 5pm Friday, email it to them on the preceding Tuesday.

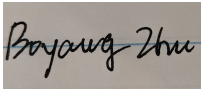
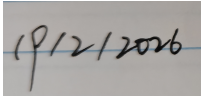
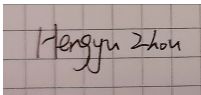
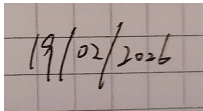
If your sponsor requests an email signature, please talk to your instructor. It is strongly preferred that they print the signature page, sign, and email a scan of the page.

Your instructor does not sign before submission, your instructor will sign after grading if the document passes.

<Keep the language below>

The signatures of the people below indicate an understanding of the purpose and content of this document by those signing it. By signing this document, you indicate that you approve of the proposed project outlined in this Statement of Work, the division of work, the Ground Rules and that the next steps may be taken to create a Product Specification and proceed with the project.

This document is based upon and supersedes the <PRD title> Version X.X. Deviations, (versus clarifications), from the PDR have been clearly noted. For any requirements not listed in this SOW, the PRD requirements shall remain in effect.

Approver Name	Title	Signature	Date
Hengyu Zhou	Team Project Manager		
Elijah Ruis	Team Member	Elijah Ruis	2/19/2026
Boyang Zhu	Team Member		
	Project Manager		
Drew Castalia	Advisor		2/19/26
	Instructor		

The instructor signs the document after it has been graded.

Before you submit to advisor/sponsor for review:

- *Refresh the table of contents*
- *Verify every table and figure has a number and caption (right click on the square thing upper left of figure/table and select insert caption). There should be at least one introductory sentence for every table/figure.*

- *White space is correct. Word can be a real pain, but you need to clean up your whitespace (adjust column sizes, make sure page breaks are in proper spot – don't cut tables in half or put in too many page breaks so that there are ton of mostly blank sheets).*
- *Make sure the revision block is correct.*

Before you submit for grading – update the author table below. It does not have to be 100% accurate but should be updated if there are major changes and should give the instructor a good idea of how much each person has contributed.

You can highlight the words in a section to get the word count (it will be displayed in the lower left). For tables and diagrams just put n/a for the word count.

Section	Author	Word Count
1. Introduction	Hengyu Zhou	303
2. User & Market Research - Overall Market	Hengyu Zhou	219
3. User & Market Research - Existing Competitors	Boyang Zhu	995
4. User Insights	Boyang Zhu	826
5. User empathy interviews	Hengyu Zhou	257
6. Final Product Deliverable & Features	Elijah Ruis	957
7. Project Timeline & Gannt Chart	Elijah Ruis	182
8. Ethics	Hengyu Zhou	505

7. Appendix

1) Project Team Responsibilities

- The Project Manager will set up and facilitate a weekly call/meeting with the Faculty Advisor. The Project Team will provide weekly status updates to the Faculty Advisor including upcoming deliverables, critical issues, and any adjustments to the Project Plan.
- Documents will be provided to the Faculty Advisor with adequate time for review and signature. The time necessary for review will be agreed with the Advisor. The minimum review time will be 3 days prior to the document due date.
- Design files will be provided to the Faculty Advisor as requested in a format agreed to with the Advisor.
- Support requirements will be clearly requested from the Faculty Advisor with the dates required and an adequate time for fulfilling the request.
- Modifications requests to the Project Plan by Faculty Advisor will be reviewed and agreed to within 1 week of the request.

2) Faculty Advisor Responsibilities

- The Faculty Advisor will provide knowledge and expertise to help the group stretch their skills.
- The Faculty Advisor will participate in a weekly or bi-weekly call/meeting with the Project Team to review the project status, upcoming deliverables, priorities, issues, and progress to the agreed Project Plan.
- The Faculty Advisor will provide document review, feedback and approval, rejection, approval with contingencies with adequate time for the Project Team to meet the course due dates.
- The Faculty Advisor will provide feedback to requested support requirements from the Project Team. This includes feedback and guidance on design implementations decisions, design files, test plans, test procedures and test results.
- The Faculty Advisor shall provide technical advice and guidance to the Project Team answering inquiries approximately 1 hour per week.
- Modifications to the Project Plan by the Project Team will be resolved and documented within 1 week of the request.
- Grade the finalized project using a skill-based rubric
- Attend iShowcase in May.

A. Ground Rules

How the team will conduct the business of completing this project. What are the expectations and ground rules the team will agree to? How will you conduct discussions, manage dissenting views, and make decisions? How will you hold each other accountable for completing this project? Each team member must sign the Approvals section below indicating their acknowledgement of these Ground Rules. Do not remove items from this list, but you may add items to this list.

As a team and as individual team members, we agree to:

1. Stay focused on our objectives and goals.

Each time the team meets, we will clearly define our objectives and desired outcomes at the beginning of the meeting. We will politely remind team members if we are getting off track.

2. “Sidebar” any issues that are relevant but not consistent with the immediate objectives.

Occasionally, important matters are raised that are not relevant to the immediate goals of the meeting. To keep the group on track, but avoid losing the issue, create a “sidebar” where these topics can be listed and discussed later.

3. Listen when others are speaking.

We will listen and consider others’ input before adding our own comments.

4. All viewpoints will have an opportunity to be heard.

We understand that some team members may be quieter than others. We will make an effort to get each team member’s viewpoint and that no one dominates the discussion.

5. Differences of opinion will be discussed respectfully

We will identify areas of agreement before assessing areas of disagreement. We will encourage each other to look beyond our own point of view. We will discuss different ideas respectfully. As a team, we will weigh the merits of different opinions and agree on a process for choosing a direction. All team members will respect and follow the decision or direction.

6. Look for the good points in new ideas.

We will endeavor to explore the value in each idea as we assess and select our path forward.

7. Focus on the future, not the past.

We will use our past experience to inform our decisions, but focus the discussion on the future objectives. Blame for past performance is counterproductive, we will focus on finding solutions.

8. Agree upon specific action items and next steps.

At the end of each meeting and discussion, we will summarize and agree on specific next steps, action items and assignments.

9. Accountability

As team members, we will each be responsible for our individual assignments and contribution to achieving the team objectives and goals. We will honor our responsibilities and not let our team members down.

Feedback Response

The issue of excessive word count in the "overall market" section has been addressed and the content has been streamlined and optimized. Some content from the User empathy interviews section has been moved to the User/Market research section. The format and word choice have been optimized.