This first iteration of the student hub in late 2014 was a starting point towards bringing key information together from a diverse range of sources into a unified interface, with the goal of making this important information easy to find and to create a more seamless, cohesive and reliable experience for students.

**TOOLS USED:**
- Photoshop (image editing)
- Wave, colour contrast checkers and W3C code validators
- Basecamp (team / stakeholder comms)
- Evernote (project comms)
- Git (site back-ups, basic versioning)

**MY ROLE:**
Working alongside project managers, marketing experts, UX researchers and testers and content developers, my role focused on developing wireframes, mock-ups, HTML prototypes, web design and CMS template development and developing support documentation for site maintainers.
WEB / UI DESIGN

STUDENT HUB

For this project I worked to an extensive brief which included the following criteria:

- Fully responsive, mobile-first layouts
- Modern, clean interface
- Evolve a colour schema for each section that would be used across both web and print products
- Use of large, responsive feature images

One of the special challenges in this project included developing new custom ‘interim’ templates within a tight timeframe. The web branding was in a state of flux and a new template system was being developed in another team – due for release shortly after this site was due for launch.

I needed to keep the user interface and primary navigation harmonious and intuitive in the context of a variety of older branding and templates (used across sites that were linked to from this site) as well as fit in with the previews of the evolving and soon to be launched web template system - we didn’t want it to look dated or inconsistent once the new templates started being implemented on new sites.

The code needed to be clean and simple so that it might hopefully easily rolled into the new templates with minimal fuss and rework, and also be easy and flexible for maintainers to work with when handed over.

At the same time, there was some new (to me) and reasonably complex aspects to the theme build in the CMS, including a robust solution for the responsive feature images, colour theming across sections and making everything easy to manage in the CMS for content maintainers with minimal web experience. All of this in a tight timeframe and a responsive and agile project management framework was quite a challenge!
THE SIX THEMES (LANDING PAGES)
The Student Hub team requested a solution for offering an extended amount of news and events related to each topic area to appear on each of the index pages. The brief included the following criteria:

- They did not want to use a carousel or a layer over the large feature image.
- It was also important that the index listings not be pushed too far down the page, requiring excessive scrolling, or jump links, to get to this key content.
- The interface needed to remain clean, simple, uncluttered and open.

Illustrated here is a potential solution that was explored and implemented for live testing in the first iteration of the site:

- Important news appears at the top of the page (1-2 items) open by default and less important, or older news is hidden under a prompt in the form of a large down arrow button.
- When clicking on the down arrow an envelope of extra news content is revealed in a smooth sliding motion (pushing the remaining page content further down the page underneath it). Clicking on the up arrow will close the extra news section and bring the other page content back up.

A variety of news type formats with simple classes were included in the templates / model pages for flexibility and visual interest, including: small and large videos, calendar items, highlight news, coloured backgrounds.

The news sections could also be easily turned off each page so the page was balanced when no news was needed.
A more subtle treatment for each colour scheme was used on the inner content pages and lower-level index pages, keeping the content sharp, focused and clean, and suitable for more extended reading (where needed). Section theme colours were incorporated into headings, boxes, buttons.

The feature image was de-emphasized (but available) as links to these pages opened by default with just a glimpse of the bottom of the image.
Along with custom handover training, this support site is provided to site administrators and maintainers inside their site folder and provides tools and instructions specific to maintaining their site as well as links into relevant information provided elsewhere by internal and external web communities to help them in their maintenance tasks.

Each support site is based on a standard base template so I can implement it quickly for each new project. It uses nested content areas for efficient reproduction, ease of updates and consistency of messaging, but is also easily customisable for each client or project and administrators can easily build upon it.

Through some quick A/B testing I found that a kitschy ‘ta da / presenter’ style stock photo helped to focus attention to the index content.