

SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS FOR BUSINESS

Component 1 – Coursework Portfolio

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INTRODUCTION

Modern businesses hold a varied collection of software application to amplify productivity, communication, collaboration and information management. These digital solutions assure organisations to accomplish daily tasks more proficiently, allowing activities such as document creation, data analysis, e-commerce, teamwork and communication. As technology advances, businesses are increasingly embracing software applications to optimise processes, strengthen decision-making and uplift overall performance.

This report finds various software applications frequently used in business environments, including e-commerce website builders, mind mapping tools, Microsoft Office applications and communication and collaboration platforms. Each application is examined to assess its important features, benefits and limitations portraying how it can contribute to different business functions and help book workplace productivity.

In addition to theoretical analysis, this report includes practical examinations of selected software features. these hands-on tasks, complemented by screenshots and concise explanations, provide evidence of each application's functionality and shows how they can be used in real-world business scenarios. Relevant citations and a comprehensive reference list are included throughout the report to acknowledge the sources and support the information presented.

TASK 1 – E-COMMERCE WEBSITE BUILDERS

1.1 Introduction

An e-commerce website is a digital platform that helps businesses sell products or services through the access of the internet [1]. It gives customers the ability to discover product offerings, compare different options, make purchases, process secure payments and receive order confirmations without having to leave their homes [1]. Many businesses take advantage of e-commerce website builders to assemble professional online stores without requiring extensive technical knowledge. This section of the report considers two modern e-commerce website builders, focusing on their important features, functionalities and advantages for supporting business operations.

1.2 Squarespace Commerce

Squarespace Commerce is the e-commerce solution within the Squarespace ecosystem, giving users the ability to launch online stores with remarkable ease. This platform provides an extensive suite of tools for product sales, inventory management, payment processing, and sales tracking. Its focus on user-friendly design and usability makes Squarespace Commerce a popular choice for businesses looking to start a professional online identity [2].

Squarespace also includes website hosting, security updates, content management, SEO tools and marketing features within a single platform, reducing the need for multiple external services [2]. Along with a range of professionally designed templates, it also gives its users the tools to help their businesses in creating and maintaining online presence [2]. In addition, its responsive design guarantees that websites operate easily on desktops, smartphones and tablets, ensuring a consistent user experience.

It's an all-in-one, no-code website building and selling platform that helps businesses manage their websites and online stores more practically while maintaining a professional appearance [2]. It merges practical e-commerce features with professional website design, making it a good fit for different businesses such as boutiques, florists, digital creators and service providers. This makes it easier for businesses to develop attractive and functioning online stores customised to their specific requirements [2].

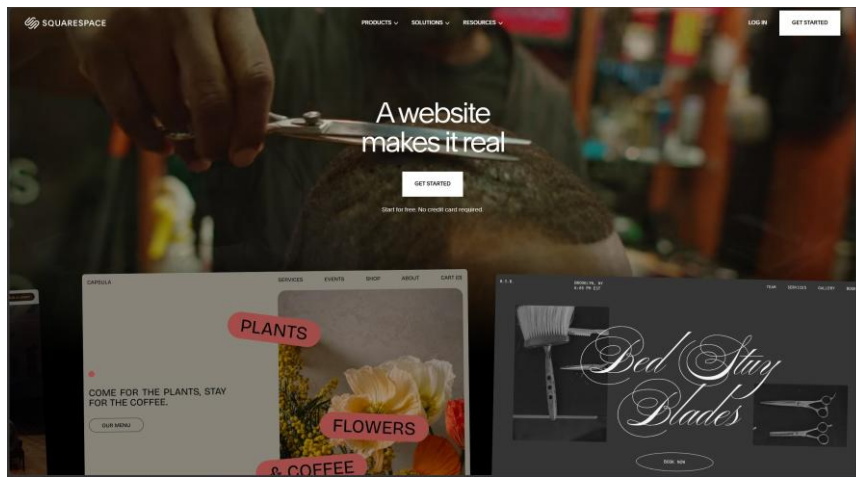


Figure 1: The Squarespace Commerce website builder homepage displaying website templates, business solutions and tools for creating a professional online store where customers can get started to create new stores or login to manage existing stores. Source: Squarespace [3]

1.3 Ecwid

Ecwid is designed to serve businesses in creating professional online stores while supporting the development of e-commerce activities. Users have the flexibility to sell a diverse number of products including their own self manufactured, sourced from other suppliers, through dropshipping services, subscription models or by offering services and digital downloads [4].

The platform also included advanced discount tools, automated marketing emails, business reports and multilingual support, helping businesses improve customer engagement and reach a wider audience [4]. By assisting businesses in controlling product inventories and sales from multiple platforms within a single interface, Ecwid eases workflow performance and customer accessibility. Even though Ecwid provides one-page checkout and business reporting tools, it also guides businesses optimise customer shopping experience and monitor sales performance more widely [4].

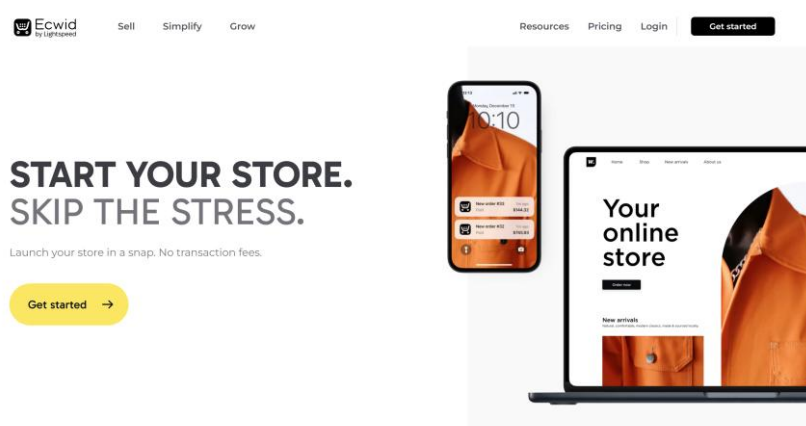


Figure 2: The Ecwid E-Commerce homepage that highlights tools for building and managing online stores. Source: Ecwid [4]

1.4 Summary

Both Squarespace Commerce and Ecwid present modern e-commerce solutions that support the creation and management of online business operations with ease. These platforms come prepared with features such as inventory management, secure payment systems, mobile-responsive website functionality, and social media selling tools, all of which play a part in improving workflow productivity and customer accessibility [2], [4].

Furthermore, both platforms give businesses the potential to create professional online stores without requiring advanced technical or coding skill, making them accessible to small businesses and independent entrepreneurs. Overall, these platforms help businesses create and manage online stores more easily, demonstrating the growing importance of e-commerce website builders play in modern business environments [2], [4].

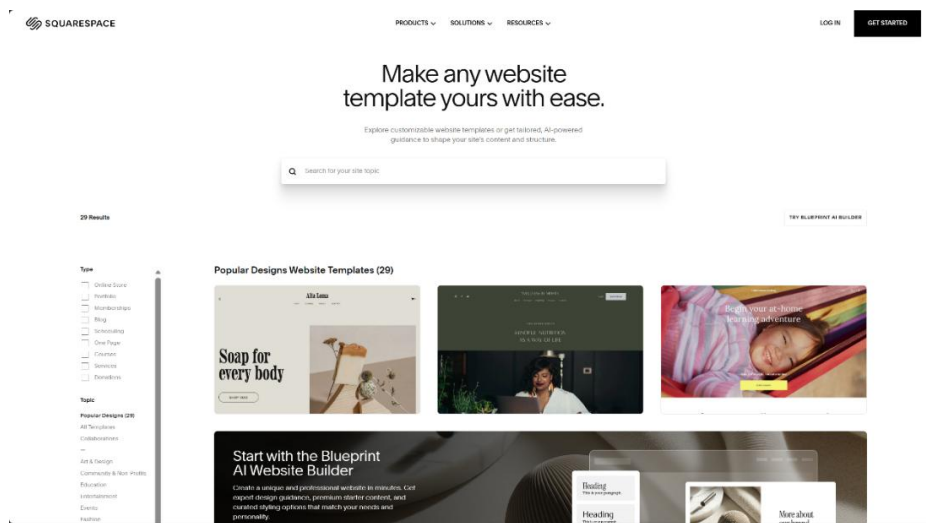


Figure 3: Squarespace Commerce website templates for creating professional business websites. Source: Squarespace [2]

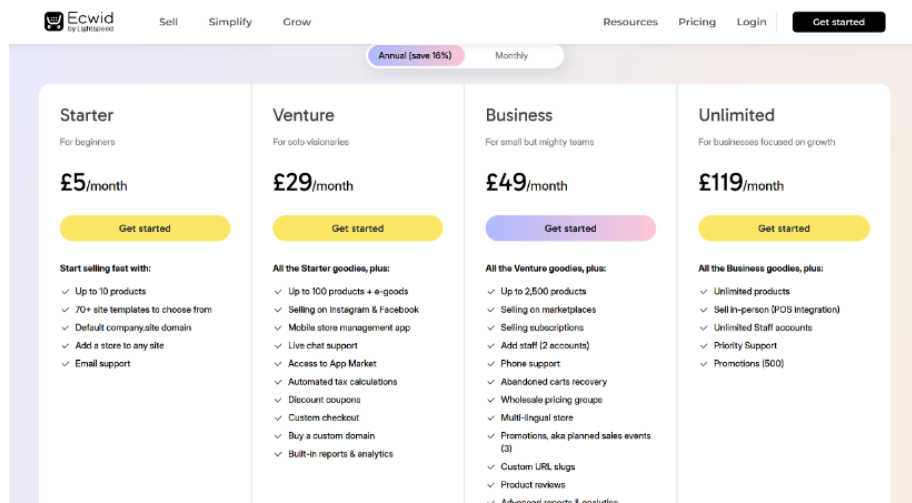


Figure 4: Ecwid e-commerce pricing overview showing the platform's subscription options and included features. Source: Ecwid [4]

TASK 2 – MIND MAPPING

2.1 What Is a Mind Map?

Mind mapping is a visual technique used to organise information, ideas and concepts centred around a core topic [5]. This method benefits both individuals and businesses to present information in a clear and structured manner through the use of branches, keywords, colours and diagrams to progress knowledge. The connections between ideas help users understand how different elements relate to one another [5]. Mind maps are commonly used for brainstorming, project planning, problem solving and decision-making in business environments. The concept of mind mapping dates back to at least the 3rd century AD. However, the term “mind map” gained widespread recognition through the efforts of psychologist Tony Buzan in the 1970s [5].

Furthermore, many organisations take advantage of mind maps to conduct strategic planning, organising workflows and managing complex information, making it easier to understand key ideas and their relationships. Actively using a mind map after its creation is an important step as regularly reviewing and testing knowledge strengthens understanding and long-term memory retention [5].

2.2 Benefits of Mind Mapping

Mind mapping allows both students and professionals to solve problems in a related issue, communicate ideas easily and plan projects together. Research has also shown that mind mapping can improve student engagement, idea structuring and analytical thinking, making it a valuable learning strategy in education [6]. Moreover, mind mapping not only improves memorisation but also provides several other advantages worth considering. Below is a summary of five key benefits in both academic and business settings: [7]

1. Increases information intake: arranged format of mind maps intensifies cognitive retention and accelerates the memorisation process [7].
2. Illustrates versatile applications: mind maps can be employed in various contexts including brainstorming, note-taking and visual diagramming [7].
3. Supports the understanding of new concepts: mind maps interpret connections between ideas, promoting learning and understanding [7].
4. Builds engagements in learning: mind mapping sparks deep interactions with content, making the educational experience more captivating [7].
5. Simplifies tough decisions: by producing ideas into a clear structure, mind maps in truth clarify complicated communications [7].

2.3 Contemporary Software Applications Mind Map

The mind map below provides a clear overview of modern software applications widely used in business settings. It arranges software into suitable areas such as e-commerce, office productivity, communication, design and marketing, and data management. This visual represents the illustrative options of software applications to increase daily business operations and boost administrative planning.

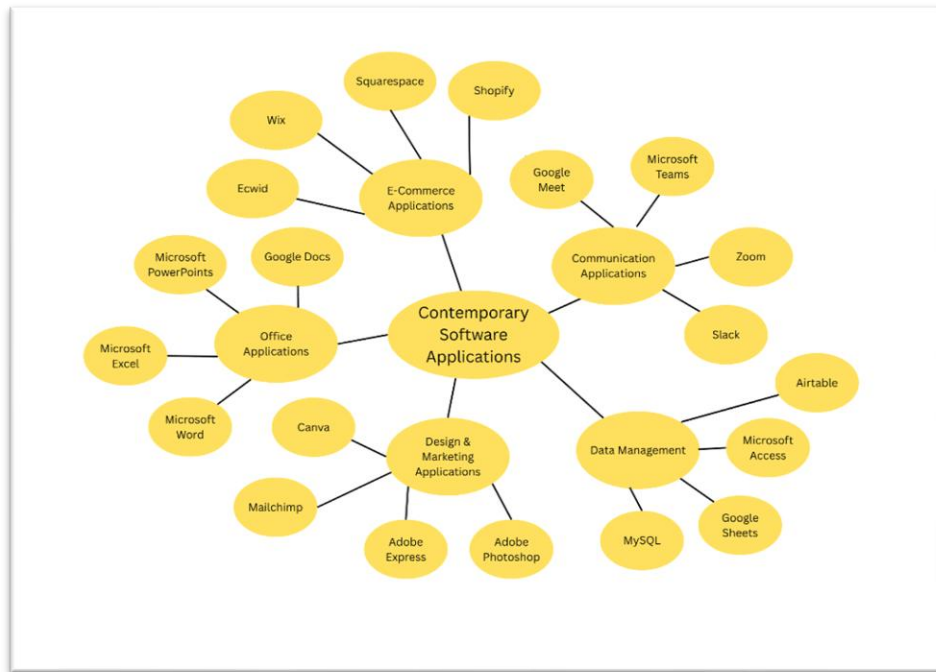


Figure 5: A mind map categorising contemporary software applications according to their business functions and examples of software within each category. Source: Author.

TASK 3 – OFFICE APPLICATIONS

3.1 Introduction

According to Richard Harris, Microsoft Office is a productivity software that gives users a mixture of applications designed to simplify business expertise, collaboration and document management [8]. As technology continues to evolve every day, Office applications become necessary in day-to-day business operations. They grant businesses to produce professional documents, organise and analyse data, create impactful presentations and manage information precisely. This section of the report examines Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access, expressing their key features, benefits and limitations in business settings.

3.2 Microsoft Word

Microsoft Word is a multipurpose word processing application developed by Microsoft, designed to help users create, edit and format professional, educational and personal documents with ease. It offers a fantastic formation of tools for customising documents, including options to change fonts, adjust page layouts and insert tables, images, charts and hyperlinks. The application also includes helpful features like spelling and grammar checking, templates, Mail Merge and Track Changes. Microsoft Word is widely used by businesses, schools and individuals alike due to its user-friendly workspace and support for multiple document types. While some advanced features may require a Microsoft 365 subscription or added user experience, the overall accessibility of the application assures users can benefit from its rich offerings [9].

In addition, Microsoft Word presents several advantages for individuals and businesses alike, such as productivity, professional document formatting and collaboration through shared editing features. While the desktop version of Microsoft Word provides a broad scope of built-in features that develop user experience, the online version may have certain limitations. As noted by Carissa Gudino, Word Online has several limitations including: [10]

- Word Online does not include a built-in citation manager tool for automatically storing references or generating citation lists. As a result, users must create and format citation manually, which may increase the likelihood of formatting mistakes and referencing errors [10].
- Word Online also lacks the Mail Merge feature, preventing users from generating large numbers of personalised documents from a single template. Businesses that regularly produce large numbers documents may therefor need to use the desktop version of Microsoft Word, as it provides the full Mail Merge performance required for these tasks [10].
- Word Online provides a basic level of support for graphics and design tools. Users can view SmartArt graphics, which allows for some visual enhancement, though creating or editing these elements isn't possible in the online version. While features like grouping objects, drawing shapes and using digital pen tools are limited, making it more difficult to produce visually detailed or professionally designed documents. Image positioning is also a less versatile compared to the desktop application, which may affect document layout and presentation [10].

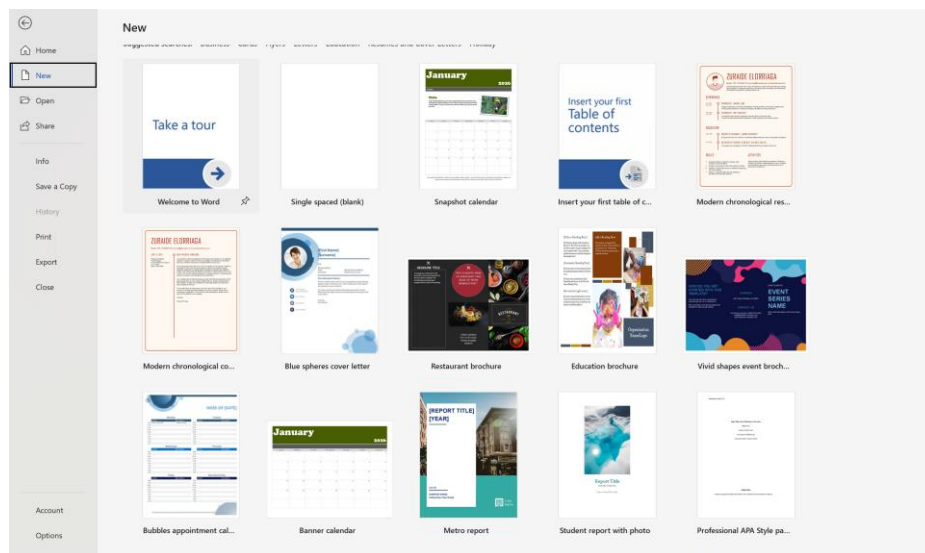


Figure 6: Home screen displaying various templates within the desktop application of Microsoft Word.

Source: Author.

3.3 Microsoft PowerPoint

Microsoft PowerPoint is a dynamic presentation application developed by Microsoft that lets users create and present information through an engaging series of slides. PowerPoint is widely used in businesses, schools and organisations as it presents ideas clearly, support audience engagement and strengthen communication. It can also be used for meetings, training sessions, project proposals and educational presentations. While being accessible on any operating system like Windows or iOS, it offers a mix of features such as templates, themes, charts, images, videos, animations and transitions while also allowing collaboration, simplifying the use of sharing and editing presentations with others [11].

However, there are a few limitations to consider: [11]

- PowerPoint has remained largely unchanged over the years, which can make presentations seem outdated compared to those made with more modern presentation tools [11].
- The comprehensive collection of tools and features can feel overwhelming for new users, making it difficult to learn and use them skilfully [11].
- Presentations containing large files or multimedia may run slowly on older or lower-performance computers [11].
- The desktop version tends to be pricier than other presentation software that provides similar features [11].

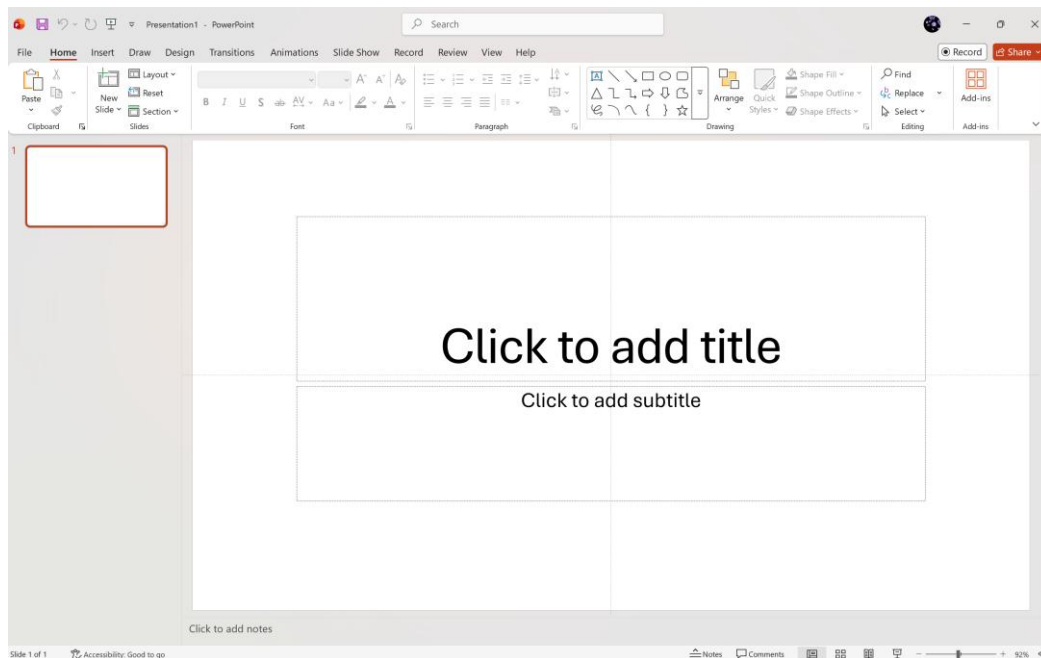


Figure 7: Microsoft PowerPoint showing the main workplace, ribbon tools and slide navigation panel used for creating and editing presentation, source: Author.

3.4 Microsoft Excel

Microsoft Excel is a spreadsheet application created by Microsoft that allows users to organise and store data in a structured way, using rows and columns. It provides various different functions and formulas to perform calculations, manage large datasets and arise insights from information. Excel includes features like charts, graphs, Pivot Tables and conditional formatting, which assists data to be presented clearly and understandably. Many businesses, schools and professionals rely on it for tasks such as budgeting, financial analysis, inventory management, project planning and report creation, making it a fundamental tool for improving productivity and supporting informed decision-making [12].

While also providing a wide range of built-in features that support data management and analysis, it also includes over 500 functions and formulars, granting users to perform mathematical, statical, financial and logical calculations with precision. the software also provides charts and conditional formatting, boosting the visual presentation of data and making it easier to spot trends and patterns. Additionally, Pivot Tables and Pivot Charts allow users to summarise and analyse large datasets competently, while tools such as Sort, Filter, Data Validation and Remove Duplicates help keep information organised and accurate. With support for automation through Macros and VBA, real-time collaboration via Microsoft 365, and Power Query for importing, transforming and managing data from different sources, this application stands out as a remarkable tool for business reporting and decision-making [12].

However, Microsoft Excel also has several limitations. It is prone to human error, as incorrect formulas or inaccurate data entry can produce unreliable results. The software can also slow down or become unresponsive when faced with large datasets or complicated calculations, especially on less capable machines. While Excel gives users the ability to collaborate through Microsoft 365, the issues of version control and simultaneous editing can occasionally create conflicts between users. Furthermore, advanced

features like Power Query, PivotTables and VBA need a level of knowledge that leaves many inexperienced users struggling to navigate them thoroughly. The software can also expose users to security risks when sensitive files are shared or stored without appropriate protection [12].

Order ID	Product Name	Product ID	Salesperson	Region	Units Sold	Unit Price (£)	Total Revenue (£)	Target Achieved (Yes/No)
1001	Digital Ads Package	DAP001	Alice	London	5	200	1000	Yes
1002	SEO Service	SEO002	Bob	Manchester	3	150	450	No
1003	Social Media Boost	SMB003	Charlie	Birmingham	8	120	960	No
1004	Website Design	WD004	Alice	London	2	500	1000	Yes
1005	Content Marketing	CM005	Eve	Leeds	6	180	1080	Yes
1006	PPC Campaign	PPC006	Bob	Manchester	4	250	1000	Yes
1007	Email Marketing	EM007	Charlie	Birmingham	7	130	910	No
1008	Branding Package	BP008	Eve	Leeds	3	400	1200	Yes
1009	Video Ads	VA009	Alice	London	5	220	1100	Yes
1010	Influencer Promo	IP010	Charlie	Birmingham	4	300	1200	Yes

Figure 8: Microsoft Excel worksheet displaying sample sales data used to organise information and perform calculations using formulas and functions. Source: Author.

3.5 Microsoft Access

Microsoft Access is a powerful database management system created by Microsoft and it's part of the Microsoft 365 suite. While it may not be as widely used as other applications within Microsoft, Access gives an impressive solution for generating, storing and managing large data. It blends relational database engine with an easy-to-use graphical t, providing users to create tables, forms, queries and reports without needing extensive programming knowledge. Additionally, it supports macros and Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) for automation and tailored database development. These operations position Microsoft Access as a valuable tool for increasing business processes, managing information smoothly and contributing to informed organisational decision-making [13].

However, the limitations of Microsoft Access weigh heavily. Its functionality diminishes for large scale databases as performance can be hindered by larger data volumes and more users. Moreover, being primarily a desktop application, it restricts remote access and web-based collaboration compared to modern cloud database systems. The lack of support for some current web technologies makes it a poor choice for organisations that need enterprise-level database management or need highly scalable applications [13].

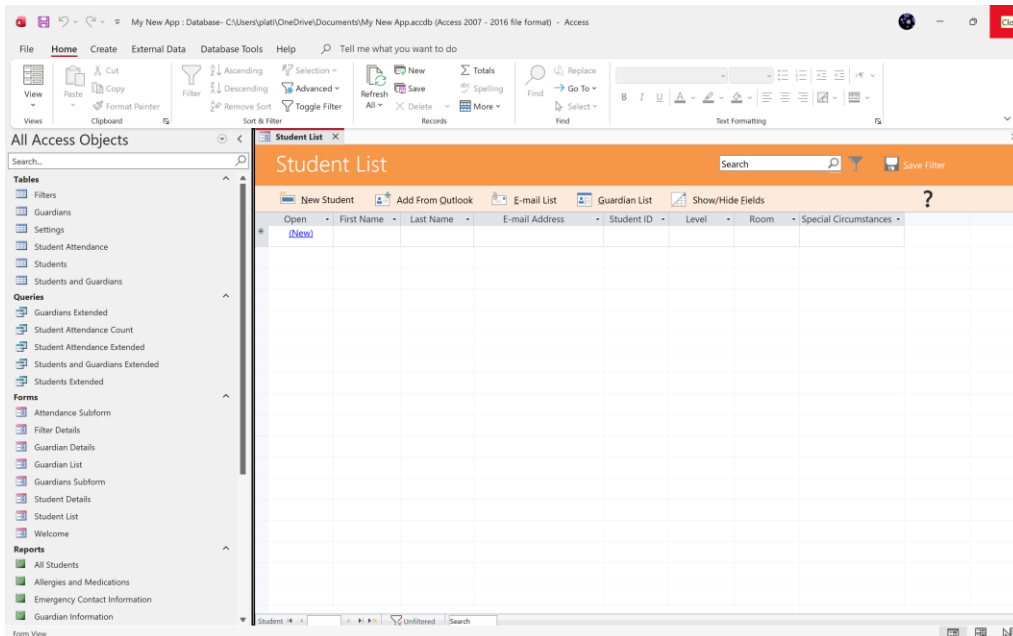


Figure 9: Microsoft Access database showing a template of student records view and database management tools. Source: Author.

3.6 Practical Demonstration of Microsoft Excel Features

Microsoft Excel gives a selection of tools that help users analyse data and simplify calculations. To showcase the use of Excel in business operations, two features were explored: the IF Function and Pivot Table. The screenshots below illustrate how these features were applied with sample data, along with explanations of their purpose and outcomes.

3.7 IF Function

The IF Function is a logical feature in Microsoft Excel that assesses whether a condition holds true or false. Based on the outcome, Excel provides one value when the condition is satisfied and a different value when it isn't. many businesses make use of the IF Function to classify data, analyse sales goals and streamline decision-making processes.

In this activity, the IF Function was used to assess whether the Total Revenue surpassed £900. The formula `=IF(H2>900, "High", "Low")` was implemented in cell J2. This formula evaluates the value in cell H2. If the revenue exceeds £900, Excel displays "High"; if not, it shows "Low". Once the formula was input into the first cell, by dragging the little box shape on the bottom right of cell J2, it seamlessly copied down the rest of the rows using AutoFill, which automatically categorised every sales record. As shown in figure 10, just sales record was identified as "Low", while the majority surpassed the threshold and were classified as "High."

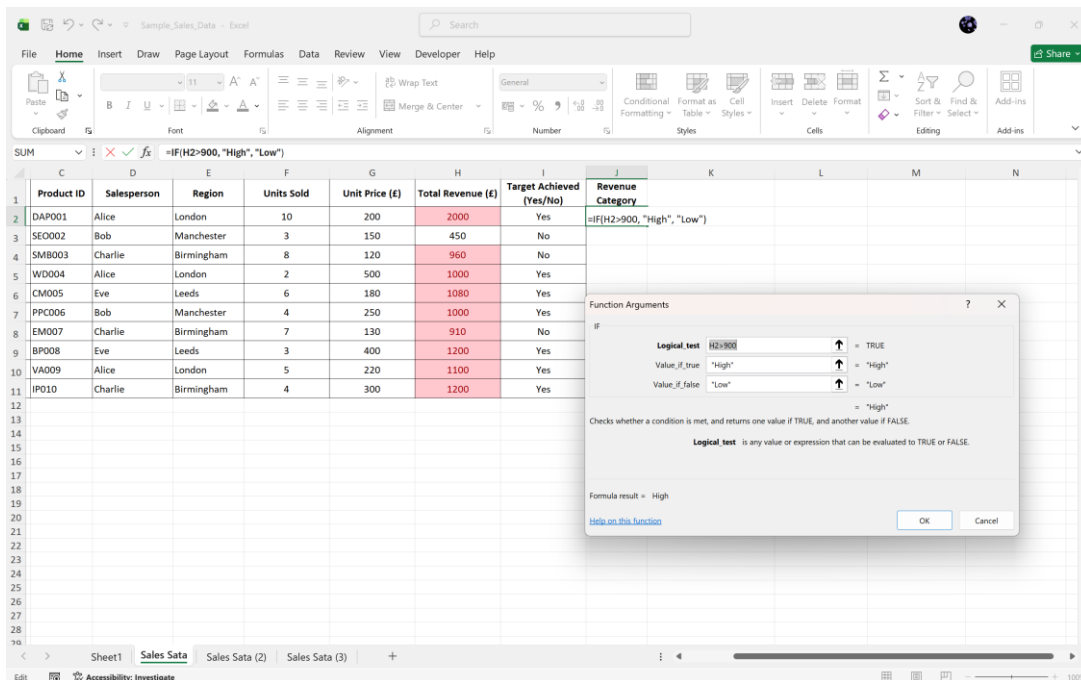


Figure 10: Entering the IF Function using the Function Arguments dialog box. The logical test was set to $H2 > 900$, meaning Excel checks whether the Total Revenue is greater than £900. If the condition is true, the value is “High” is returned; if the condition is false, the value “Low” is displayed. Source: Author.

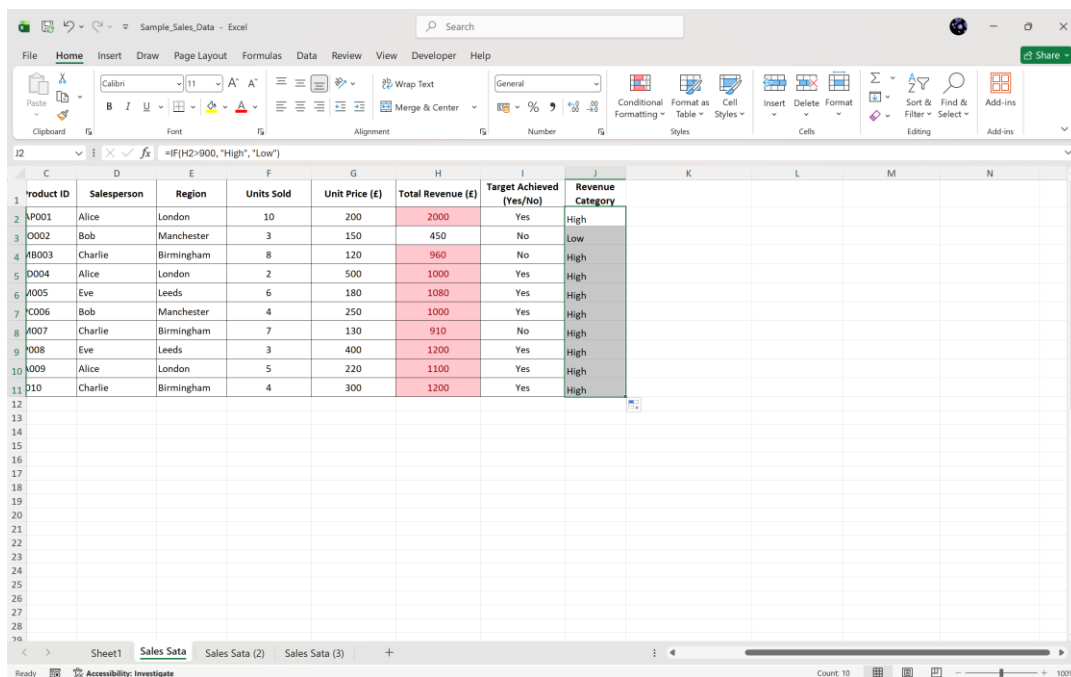
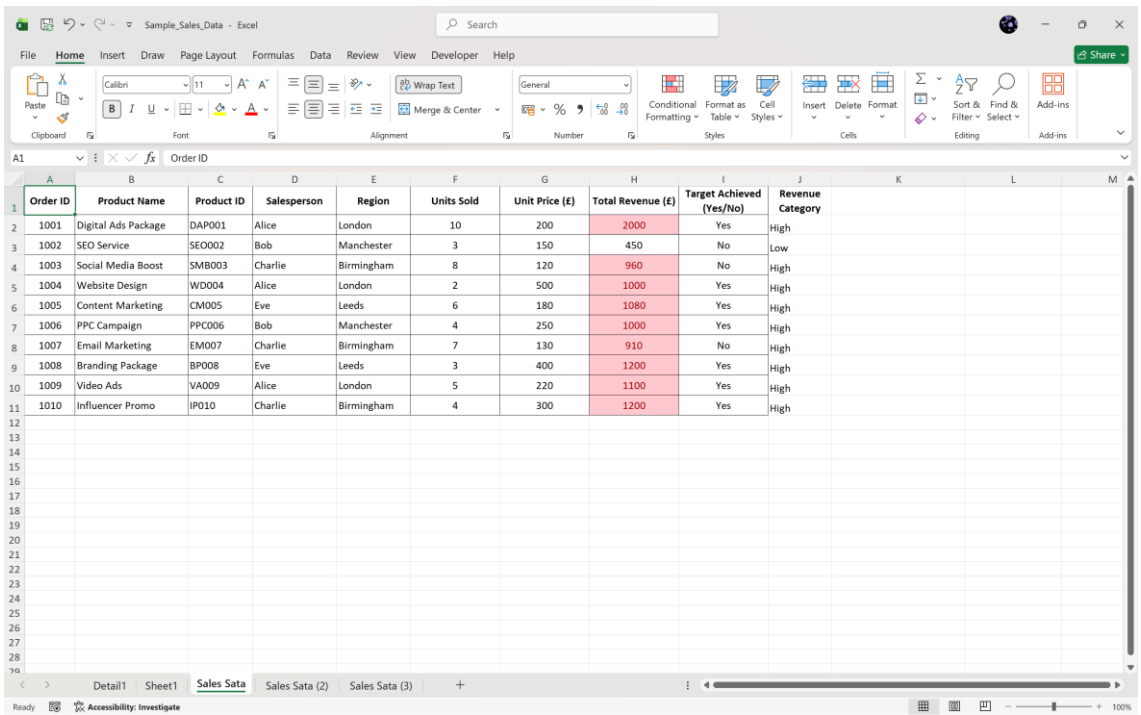


Figure11: Completed IF Function results after copying the formula to the remaining rows using Autofill. The function automatically classified each sales record as “High” or “Low” based on whether the Total Revenue exceeded £900, reducing manual work and improving accuracy. Source: Author.

3.8 Pivot Table

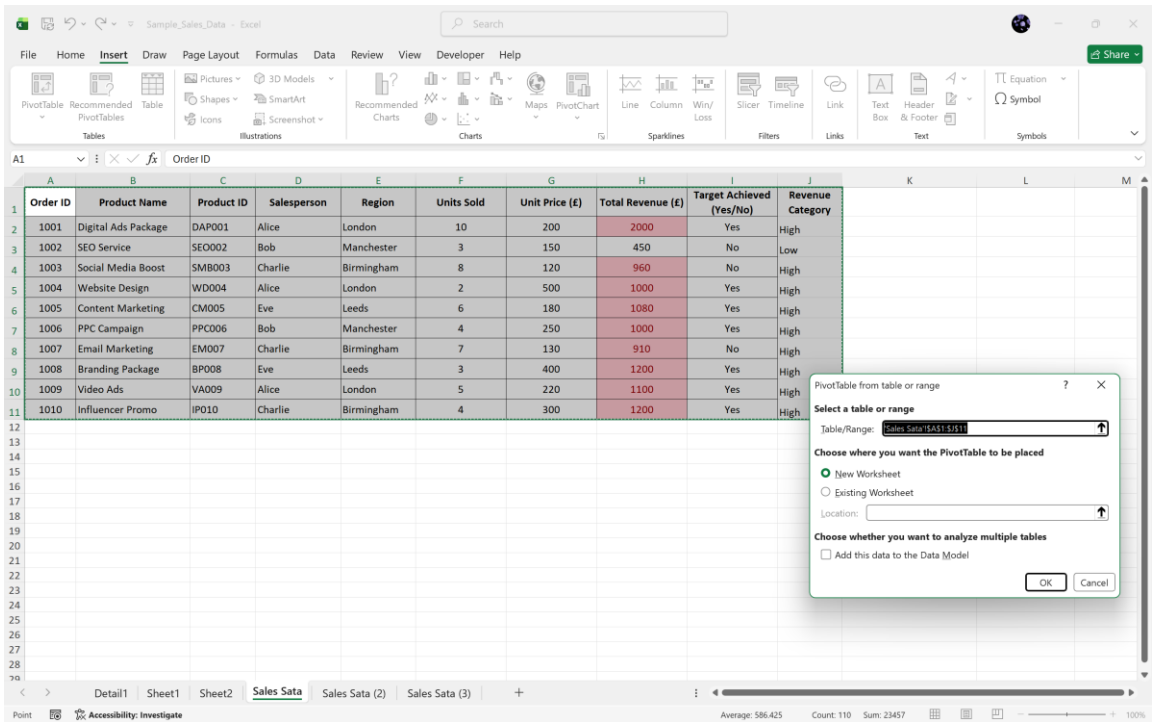
A Pivot Table was created with the sample sales dataset to summarise business information and analyse sales performance. The data was organised by salesperson, region and product, while Excel automatically computed the total Order ID values, Total Revenue, Unit Price and Units Sold. A Pivot Chart was also

generated to visually present the summarised data, making it easier to compare sales information and recognise patterns. This shows the ability of Pivot Tables to organise large datasets and increase business reporting and decision-making.



Order ID	Product Name	Product ID	Salesperson	Region	Units Sold	Unit Price (£)	Total Revenue (£)	Target Achieved (Yes/No)	Revenue Category
1001	Digital Ads Package	DAP001	Alice	London	10	200	2000	Yes	High
1002	SEO Service	SEO002	Bob	Manchester	3	150	450	No	Low
1003	Social Media Boost	SMB003	Charlie	Birmingham	8	120	960	No	High
1004	Website Design	WD004	Alice	London	2	500	1000	Yes	High
1005	Content Marketing	CM005	Eve	Leeds	6	180	1080	Yes	High
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1007	Email Marketing	EM007	Charlie	Birmingham	7	130	910	No	High
1008	Branding Package	BP008	Eve	Leeds	3	400	1200	Yes	High
1009	Video Ads	VA009	Alice	London	5	220	1100	Yes	High
1010	Influencer Promo	IP010	Charlie	Birmingham	4	300	1200	Yes	High

Figure 12: Sample sales dataset used to create the Pivot Table. The dataset contains information including Order ID, Product Name, Salesperson, Region, Units Sold, Unit Price, Total Revenue and Revenue Category, which was selected for analysis. Source: Author.



Order ID	Product Name	Product ID	Salesperson	Region	Units Sold	Unit Price (£)	Total Revenue (£)	Target Achieved (Yes/No)	Revenue Category
1001	Digital Ads Package	DAP001	Alice	London	10	200	2000	Yes	High
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1008	Branding Package	BP008	Eve	Leeds	3	400	1200	Yes	High
1009	Video Ads	VA009	Alice	London	5	220	1100	Yes	High
1010	Influencer Promo	IP010	Charlie	Birmingham	4	300	1200	Yes	High

Figure 13: The sample sales dataset was selected before creating the Pivot Table. The highlighted data includes product details, salesperson, region, units sold, unit price, total revenue and revenue category, which will be summarised for analysis. Source: Author.

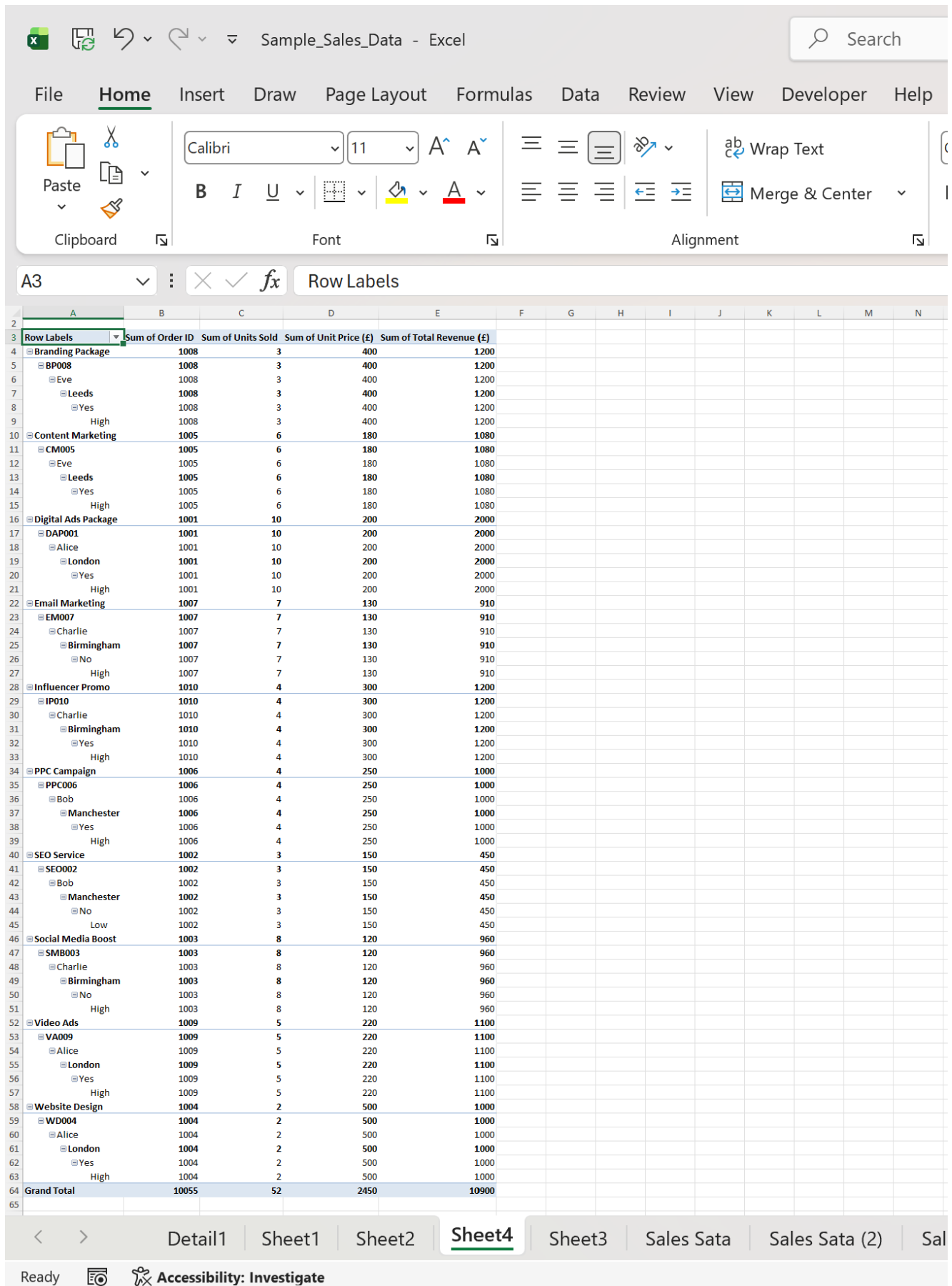


Figure 14: The completed Pivot Table summarises the selected sales data by grouping records and automatically calculating values such as Order ID, Unit Sold, Unit Price and Total Revenue. This allows data to be organised and analysed clearer. Source: Author.

TASK 4 – COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

4.1 Introduction

Simond Hall notes that technology has positively reshaped the way businesses communicate and collaborate, accelerating quicker interactions, cloud-based teamwork and upgrading the workplace structure [14]. Modern communication and collaboration applications motivating employees to share information, collaborate in real time and connect regardless of their location. As organisations increasingly embrace digital technologies, these applications have become the utmost importance for driving productivity, teamwork and successful business operations. This section of the report analyses Microsoft Teams as a communication platform and Google Docs as an online collaboration tool, exhibiting their key features and practical applications within today's business landscape [14].

4.2 Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams is a strong communication platform developed by Microsoft that gives users the ability to connect and collaborate consistently within a single application. It brings together instant messaging, voice and video calls, online meetings file sharing and task management, sustaining teamwork regardless of location. Teams merges brilliantly with Microsoft 365 applications, allowing users to access files, share documents and manage projects all in one place. With features like dedicated channels, document sharing, meeting schedule and real-time collaboration, businesses can expand communication, boost productivity and thrive in a remote or hybrid working environments [15].

Microsoft Teams provides a multiplicity of features that elevate communication in the workplace in the workplace. Users can set up dedicated channels for specific departments or projects, centralise documents, organise virtual meetings and collaborate on shared files in real time. With the platform having a simple layout of features, applications like Microsoft Planner, OneNote and SharePoint make it easier for Teams to manage tasks and access information more conveniently. In addition, Teams provides high level security and supports mobile access, allowing employees to communicate and collaborate securely from almost any location [15].

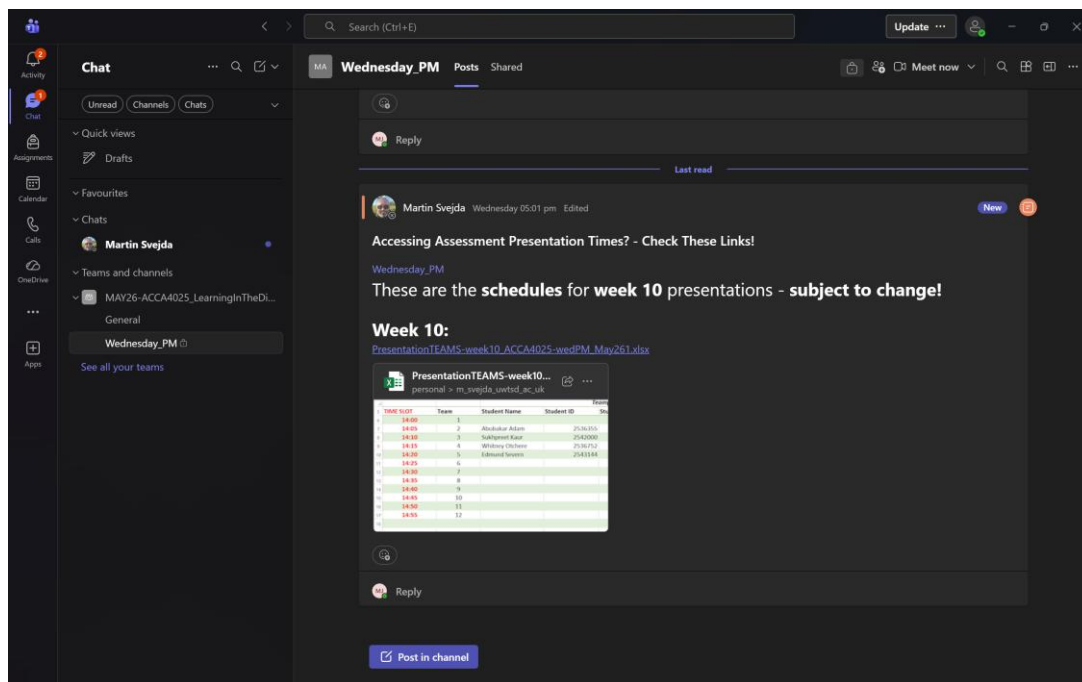


Figure 15: Microsoft Teams application showing a team channel used for communication and collaboration. The screenshot displays a post containing presentation schedules and an attached Excel file shared within the channel, demonstrating how Microsoft Teams allows users to communicate, share files and access important information in one central location. Source: Author.

4.3 Google Docs

Google Docs is a great cloud-based word processing application created by Google that lets users create, edit and store documents online. It offers real time collaboration where multiple users work together on the same document at the same time. This feature is perfect for businesses, schools and remote teams. The application automatically saves changes as users work, which helps prevent data loss and keeps documents current. Google Docs also blends with other Google Workplace applications, making sharing files and collaborating across different devices and locations quick and straightforward [16].

Google Docs has several different features that improve collaboration and boost productivity. Users can work on documents simultaneously, leave comments, suggest edits, check the version history and manage document permissions to determine whether others can view, comment or edit. These tools minimise the need for sending multiple document versions via email, making it simpler for teams to communicate, organise information and complete tasks thoroughly [16].

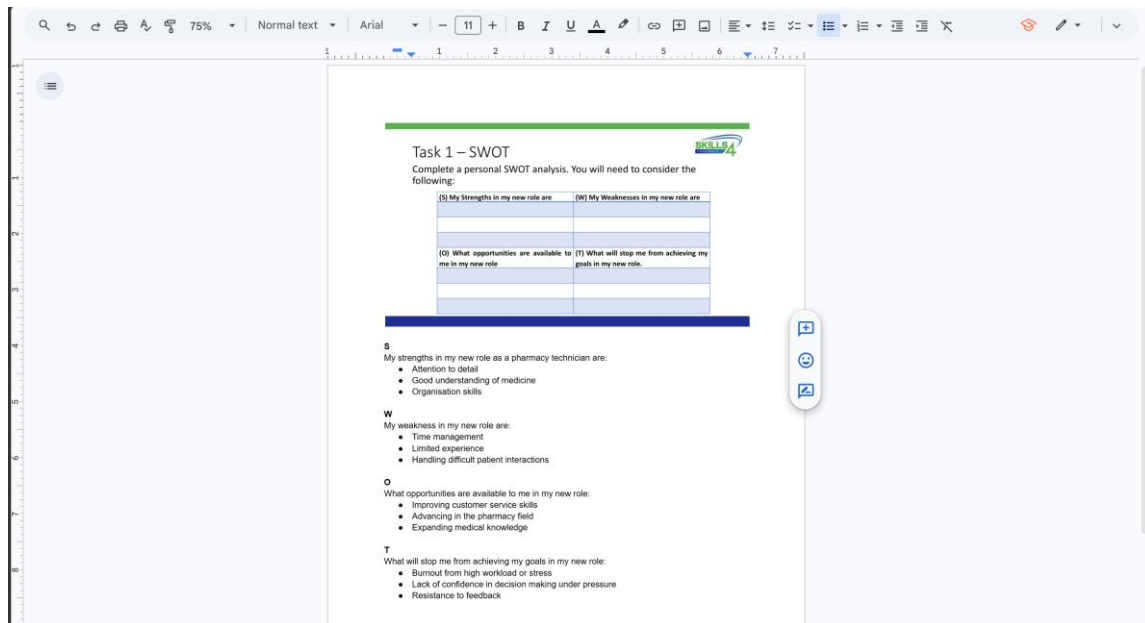


Figure 16: Google Docs document window showing a SWOT analysis document. The screenshot illustrates how Google Docs allows users to create, edit and organise documents online while supporting real time collaboration, automatic saving and easy document sharing, making it suitable for teamwork and business communication. Source: Author.

4.4 Practical Testing – Microsoft Teams Calendar

Microsoft Teams supports a collection of communication features that help users organise meetings and manage their schedules quickly. To give an idea on how its practical use, the Calendar feature was tested by creating a new meeting. This feature encourages users to schedule meetings, invite participants, set dates and times, and organise business activities within a single platform. The following screenshots instruct the steps taken to create a meeting using Microsoft Teams.

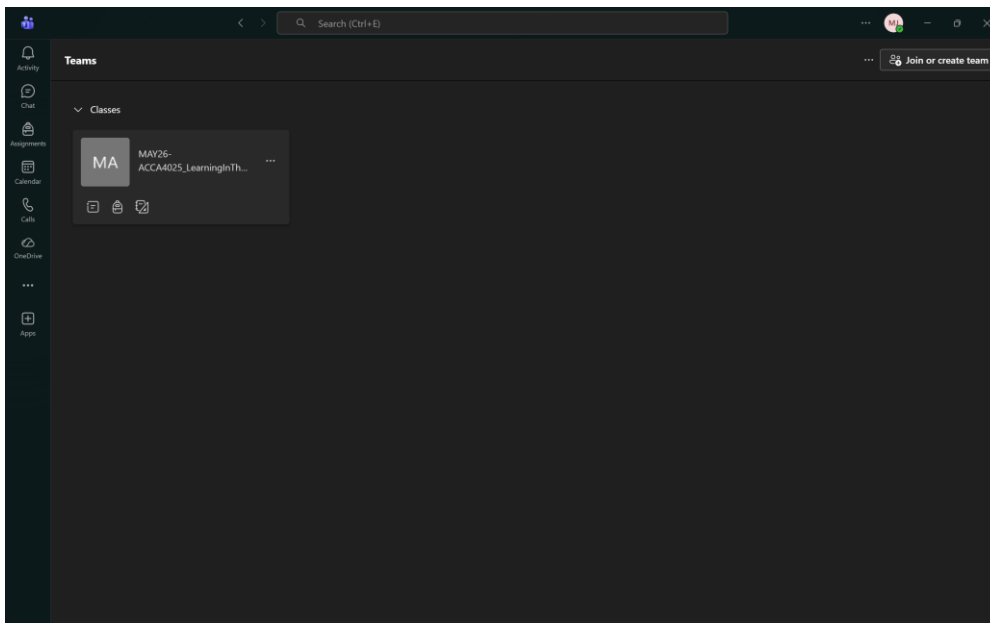


Figure 17: Microsoft teams showing the main Teams workplace before creating a meeting. Source: Author.

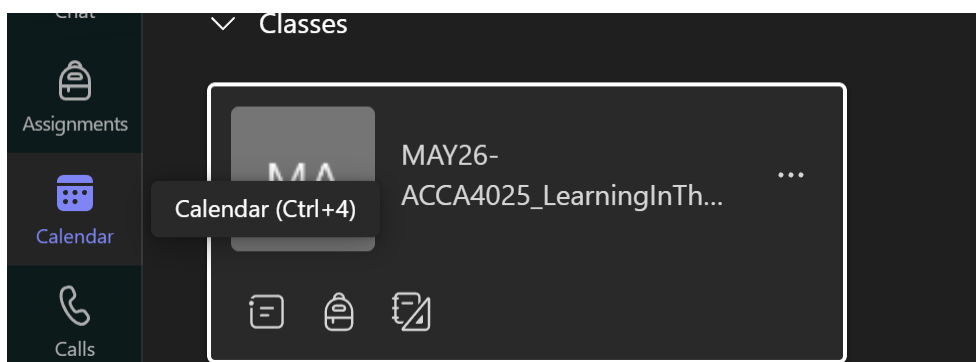


Figure 18: In this screenshot displays the Calendar. Press it and it will take the user to the Calendar.

Source: Author

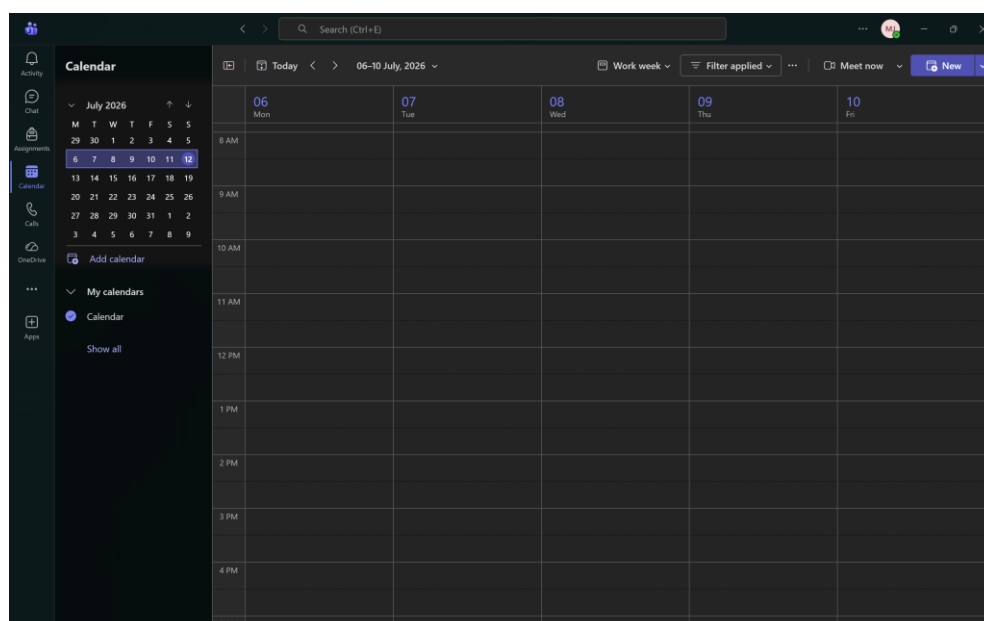


Figure 19: Microsoft Teams Calendar exhibiting the meeting creation window. Source: Author.

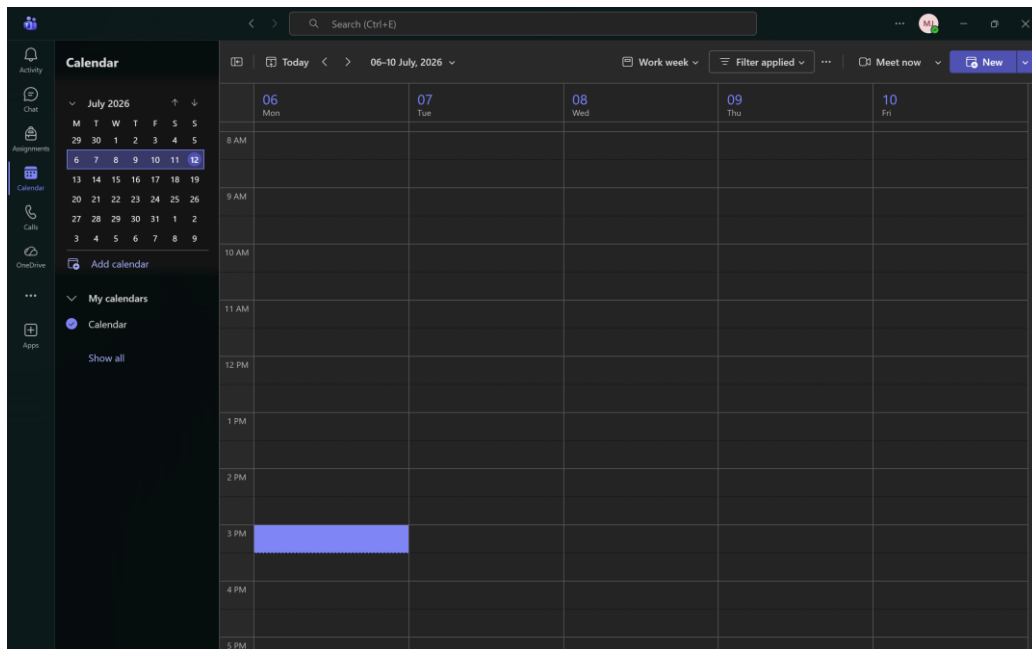


Figure 20: Microsoft Teams Calendar exhibiting the weekly schedule before creating a new meeting.

Source: Author.

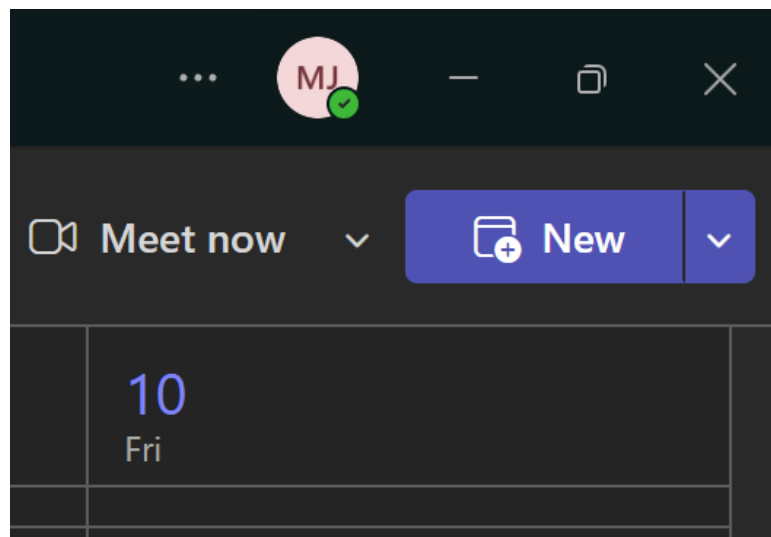


Figure 21: Create the meeting by pressing + New. Source. Author.

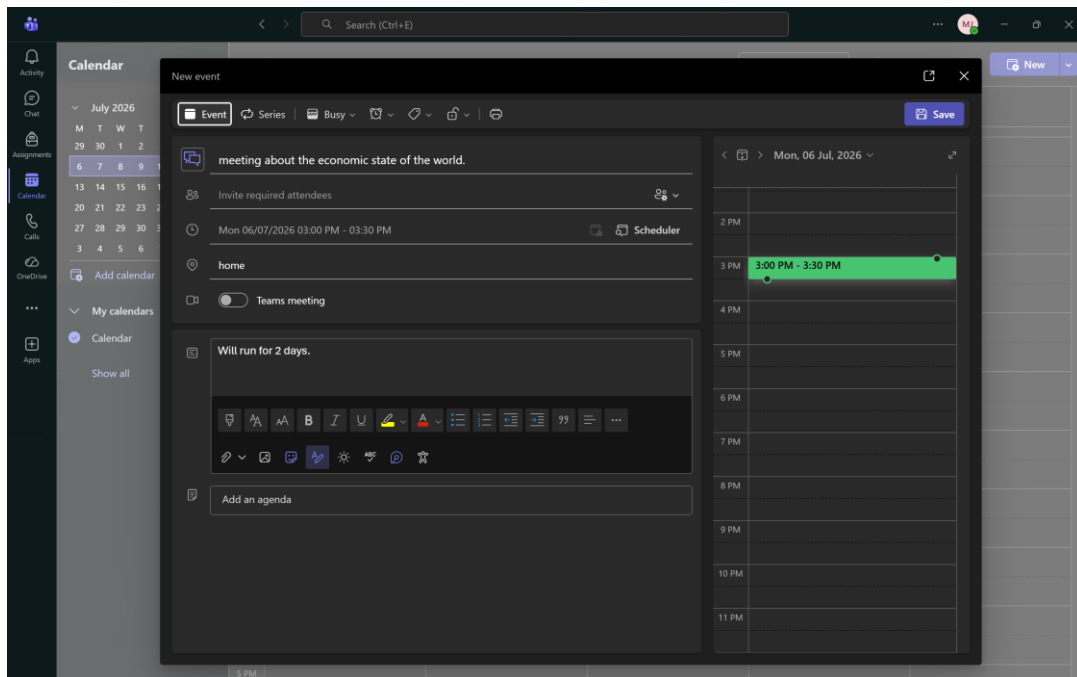


Figure 22: Microsoft Teams New Event window opens up and the screenshot showcases the meeting details before the event is saved. Source: Author.

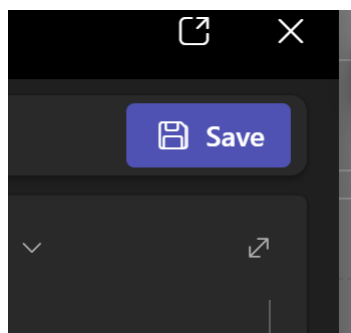


Figure 23: By pressing the Save button, the meeting has been scheduled and a notification of the event will be sent to the user. Source: Author.

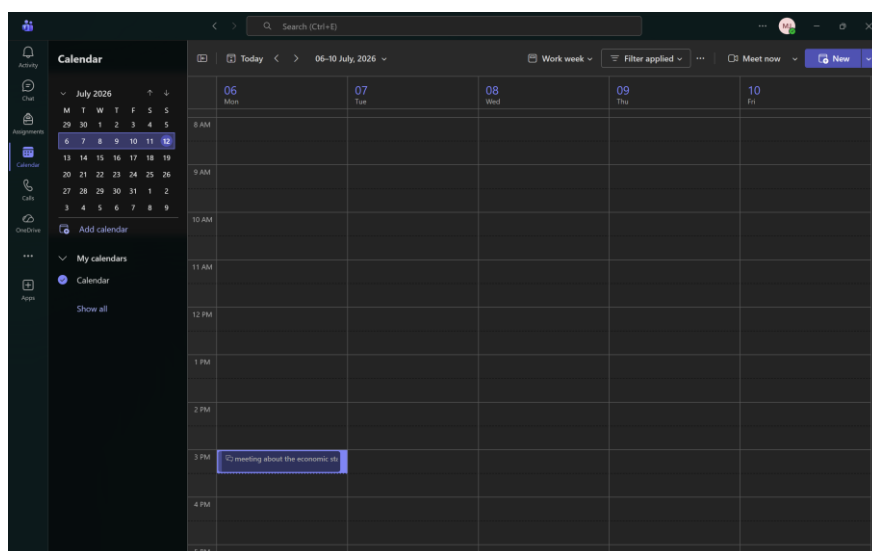


Figure 24: Screenshot of the scheduled meeting created in the Calendar. Source: Author.

4.5 Practical Testing - Google Docs

Google Docs makes it easy for multiple users to collaborate on the same document and the same time. Show this useful feature, the document sharing feature was tested by preparing a document and opening the sharing options. The following screenshots show the steps involved in sharing the document.

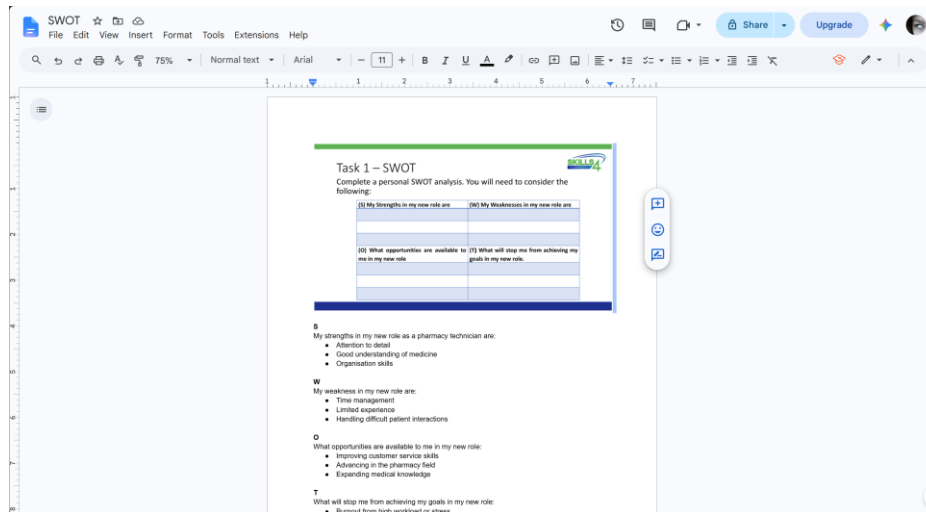


Figure 25: Google Docs displaying a document before it is shared with other users. Source: Author.

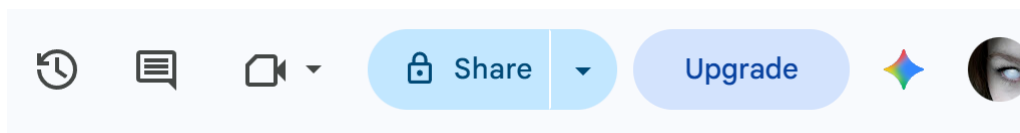


Figure 26: Screenshot showing the Share button with the padlock where users can share the document and select options on how to view it. Source: Author.

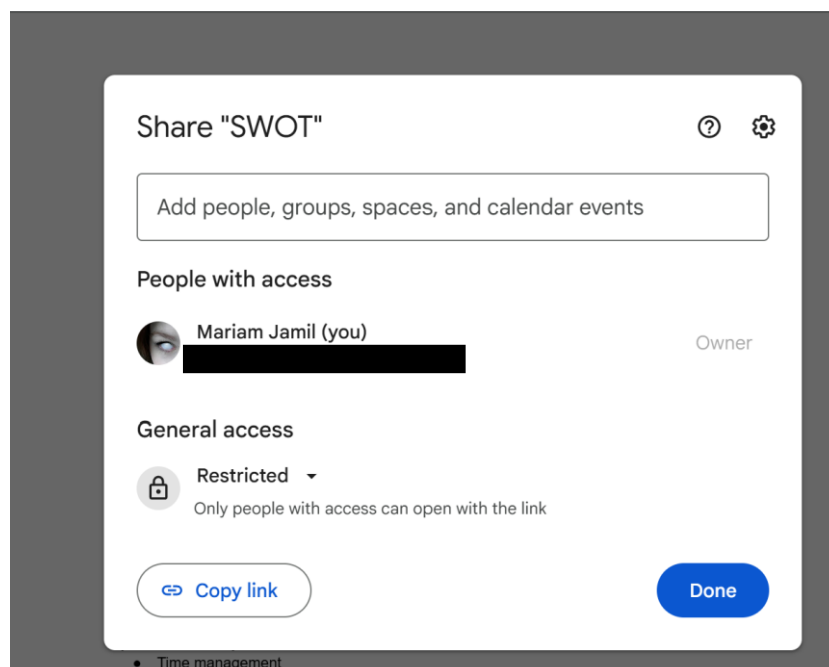


Figure 27: By pressing the Share button, a small window pops up where the user can add people to the document to edit, manage access permissions and invite collaborators. Source: Author.

CONCLUSION

This report has recognised a diverse range of software applications that are popular in today's businesses including Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Access, Microsoft Teams and Google Docs. Each application was examined to highlight its key features, advantages and areas of improvement, showing how every application assists in different business activities like document creation, presentations, data analysis, database management, communication and collaboration.

The practical tasks served an excellent opportunity to apply the acquired knowledge by discovering a range of features within these applications. This involved using formulas and Pivot Tables in Microsoft Excel, creating a database in Microsoft Access, scheduling meetings in Microsoft Teams and sharing documents through Google Docs. Completing these exercises modelled how these applications can improve coherence, increase productivity and stimulate effective teamwork in both educational and professional contexts

The report also noted that while each application has its unique strengths, they do come with certain limitation. For instance, Microsoft Word Online may have fewer features compared to desktop version and Microsoft PowerPoint and Excel often order users to develop technical skills to employ their advanced functions fully. Similarly, Microsoft Access may present challenges for some organisations due to its difficulty and platform restrictions. Nonetheless, each application remains invaluable in supporting everyday business operations.

In summary, the applications discussed in this report equip organisations with helpful tools for creating professional documents, inspecting and managing data, composing information, communicating effortlessly and collaborating with colleagues. Familiarity, with the features and practical applications of these tools is necessary for enhancing digital skills and boosting workplace productivity. As businesses increasingly accept digital technologies, these applications will continue to serve as fundamental resources for furthering proficient work practices.

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