

CLIMATE ADVOCATES — CENTRAL SAINT MARTINS

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work, But What If Nobody Slept?

The Collaborative Toolkit Project — 2025–26 Academic Year

Presented by Jiaqi (Kiki) Zheng and Runxin Zheng

Why this work exists

Climate challenges require collective thinking and action, yet meaningful collaboration rarely happens on its own. This project set out to make visible what group work actually feels like — the tensions, negotiation and care that often remain hidden within teamwork and overlooked within assessment frameworks.



Climate Advocates Programme

Part of UAL's Climate Action Plan, supporting students' engagement with the UAL Principles for Climate, Social and Racial Justice, through research, curriculum co-design, consultations and creative projects.



**Three workshops.
One publication.
Two conferences.**

Developed with tutors, course teams and the Educational Development team, inviting students across BA and MA courses to reflect on collective learning.

2025–26 ACADEMIC YEAR

WHAT WE DELIVERED

Six deliverables, one body of work



01

MA Workshop

In-person · Mapping Collaboration



02

BA Workshop

Online · Negotiating Needs · Creative Unions



03

Staff Development Day

Online · Shared agreements · Creative Unions



04

Collaborative Toolkit 2nd Edition

Printed publication



05

Oxford Brookes Conference

Power & positionality · June



06

RAISE Conference

Newcastle · September

Three workshops, across BA, MA and staff. Before, between and after collaborations.



POSTGRADUATE · IN PERSON

Mapping Collaboration

Drop-in reflection session, one week after a four-week collaborative project. ~45 students used emotional mapping and NVC-informed vocabulary to trace uncertainty, tension, alignment and fatigue.



UNDERGRADUATE · ONLINE

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work, But What If Nobody Slept

2 anonymous Mentimeter sessions during Creative Unions, Week 2, for ~90 students across 11 courses. Quizzes and short answers surfaced positionality, communication style and personal capacity within group work.



STAFF · ONLINE

Building Shared Agreement

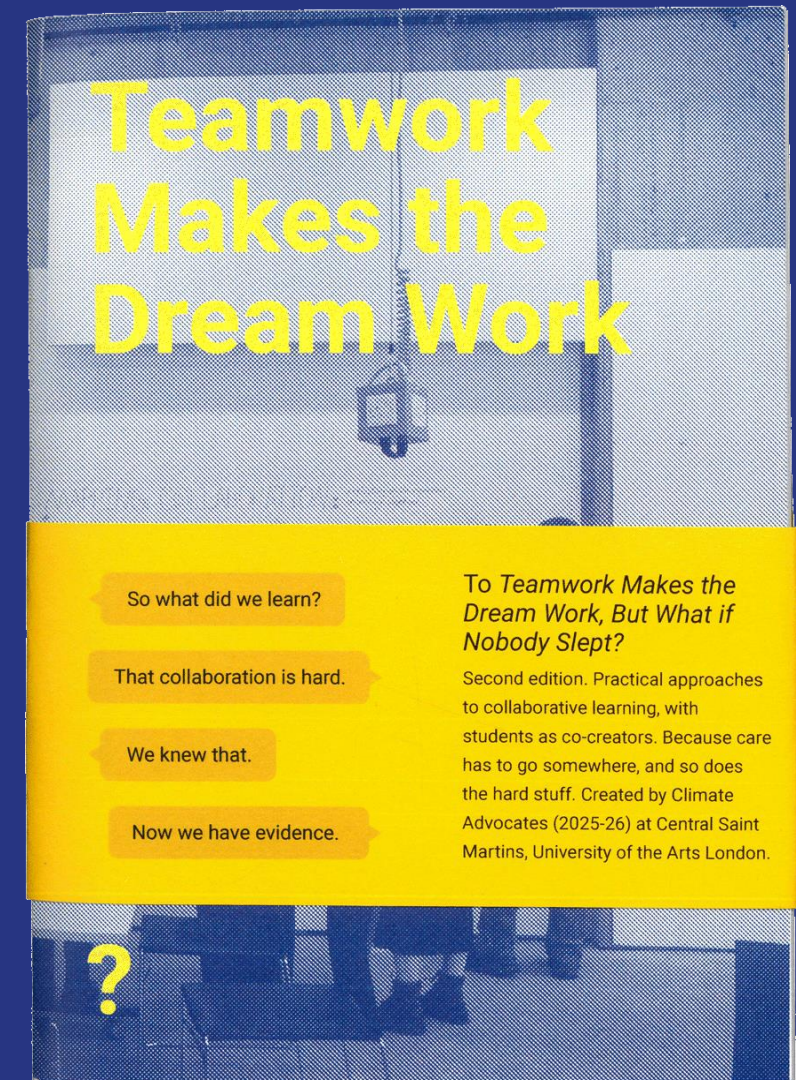
2 two-hour staff development workshop for ~30 colleagues across creative unions, co-creating shared agreements for collaborative teaching practice.

DELIVERABLE 04

The toolkit, second edition



Building on *What We Carry, What We Share* (2025), this second publication, *Teamwork Makes the Dream Work, But What If Nobody Slept?*, stays closer to lived experience: the discomfort, uncertainty and surprise of working with others. The case studies trace how collaboration unfolds, and what conditions make it possible, or cause it to struggle.



Taking the work further

Two conferences for further dissemination beyond UAL



JUNE 2026 • ONLINE

Oxford Brookes International Teaching & Learning Conference

Focus: power and positionality

Sharing how Student-as-Partners programme surfaces questions of voice, positionality and power within creative higher education.



SEPTEMBER 2026 • NEWCASTLE

RAISE Conference

Researching, Advancing & Inspiring Student Engagement

Contributing to wider conversations on student engagement and co-creation practices across the UK higher education sector.

KEY LEARNINGS

What the workshops revealed



Communication is the work

Listening, negotiating and adapting mattered more than disciplinary background or technical skill.



Collaboration is emotional labour

Students consistently described group work through stress, trust, frustration, humour and care, elements that are rarely visible in final outcomes.



Trust needs time

Many groups only reached stronger alignment near the end of the project timeline.



Equity isn't uniformity

Equal contribution didn't always mean identical tasks, recognising different strengths supported fairer collaboration.

KEY LEARNINGS

In participants' own words

“

We established our expectations from the beginning so we could align our thinking and manage the workload.

ON ALIGNING EARLY

“

Others want to do their part but also not be the lead. I thought I was somewhat alone in this.

ON SHARED STRUGGLE

“

I can't do everything on my own, I'm relying on my team.

ON INTERDEPENDENCE

KEY CHALLENGES

What made collaboration harder



Ambiguity at the start

Open briefs, unfamiliar collaborators and complex datasets often led to early disorientation.



Uneven support

Some students felt unsupported by tutors when group tensions emerged, with no clear escalation route.



Data literacy gaps

Confidence working with unfamiliar datasets directly affected engagement and participation.



Time pressure

Short timeframe left little room to build trust before deadlines intensified emotional strain.



Misaligned expectations

Disciplinary differences and unspoken cultural or language barriers made shared direction harder to reach.



Invisible labour

Final presentations rarely reflected the interpersonal complexity behind the collaborative work itself.

WORKING TOGETHER

How and why



Jiaqi (Kiki) Zheng

COORDINATION · FACILITATION

Led outreach, initiation and facilitation across the workshops, building relationships with course teams and applying for external opportunities.



Runxin Zheng

GRAPHIC DESIGN · FACILITATION

Shaped the visual identity of the toolkit and co-facilitated sessions, bringing design thinking directly into the workshop process.



Time constraints pushed us to work asynchronously, with loose roles and cross-overed responsibilities.

Monika and fellow Climate Advocates were a constant soundboard, generously offering their time and support throughout the journey.



Collaboration is itself a form of learning — it requires time, practice and support.

Thank you — With gratitude to the 2025–26 Changemaker Programme and the past cohorts of both programmes. This publication exists because of the people who came before us and those still tending the same ground. Thank you to the supportive course teams, the Educational Development team, CSM publication team, and every participants who shared their experience.