

**Enhancing the Student Experience:
Impact Evaluation Report of Intercultural Communication
student sessions at University of the Arts London**



Spring 2024

Dr Anita Strasser

“What inspired me a lot is the process of making. We make something, and therefore we can look at it, appreciate it, communicate about it together, and build relationships around it. By making space an artistic environment, the imagination, contradiction and relationship with both materials and other people within the environment can be exposed and questioned.

As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a studying environment, these making sessions can inspire UAL students to collectively reimagine and reinvent the workshop spaces as the heart of the common grounds. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, meanwhile revealing more diversity through beautiful making and storytelling, resonating more empathy through sharing knowledge and inspiration, and encourage more creativity through interaction and collaboration.”

Former UAL student commenting on her experience as IC workshop participant and facilitator.

Front cover image: Collaborative iPad drawing of Culture by MA Textile Design students at Chelsea College of Arts made during an IC workshop in 2022.

Summary:

Intercultural Communication (IC) is a section of the International Student Experience Programme which offers additional learning opportunities for students to support their studies and experience at UAL. IC student sessions comprise a variety of interactive, creative and cross-course workshops, projects and collaborations, which focus on values, difference, intercultural competencies and collaboration skills, working towards cultural and linguistic inclusivity and the building of cohesive learning communities. In the academic year 22/23, there were approximately 2,200 attendances over 120 IC events across the colleges. This is an increase of 35 events and 700 attendances from the previous year, with numbers increasing steadily since sessions began in October 2018 (bar minor dips during the COVID-19 pandemic).

Feedback is that IC student sessions have a significant impact on students' personal and professional development, enhancing students' sense of self-confidence, belonging and well-being and significantly improving their overall study experience at UAL. Students report having a better understanding of their values and attitudes, being more open towards difference and differing perspectives, feeling more equipped for course work, collaborations and complex topics, feeling part of a community and feeling valued and validated. Students also report significant impact on their creative attributes and employability skills, helping their transition from student life towards a professional career. As such, IC student sessions not only address UAL's [Social Purpose](#) agenda and its drive to enhance students' [study experience](#) and [employability and creative attributes](#), but also offer a potential solution to some of the feedback given by students on NSS 2022/23 forms.

Student feedback on IC student sessions was reiterated by course/unit/programme leaders working with IC, with the additional comment that also staff benefit and learn from collaborating with IC. Overall, IC sessions are seen as a fundamental part of an international university such as UAL, with its IC department doing essential work to equip students (and staff) to engage with very diverse cohorts and industry partners.

It is recommended that IC increases its visibility and raises awareness among teaching staff of its student offer and the impact this has. This is to encourage more staff to work with IC with the ultimate aim of reaching more students to enhance their intercultural communication and collaboration skills. It is also recommended that IC has a clear definition of intercultural communication on its webpages to ensure transparency and avoid misconceptions of who/what IC is for (it is for all students, including home students).

Introduction:

This report offers an impact evaluation of student sessions run by Intercultural Communication (IC) at University of the Arts London (UAL). IC is part of the International Student Experience Programme and offers workshops and projects for students to support their studies and experience at UAL. The workshops have an interactive and peer-learning approach and aim to develop students' intercultural awareness and competencies, collaboration, reflection, creative and critical thinking skills, and an understanding of values and difference. They are run as part of course programmes and college events, often bringing together students from across courses and colleges. Projects such as the Language-Art Project (LAP) also offer opportunities for intercultural, cross-course and cross-institutional collaborations, using various art forms to engage creatively with linguistic themes. IC workshops and projects work towards cultural and linguistic inclusivity and the building of cohesive learning communities. IC also offers opportunities for other forms of (paid) student engagement, for example, working with student and alumni 'ambassadors' – students who have been trained up to co-facilitate a variety of IC workshops, and with Curation students to curate LAP exhibitions. All in all, IC student engagement opens *alternative learning spaces* – spaces which offer a pressure-free, culturally and socially democratic environment which fosters collaboration, inclusivity, community and belonging, as well as creativity and employability skills. Given UAL's international and highly multicultural community, such alternative learning spaces are of particular relevance and importance.

This report set out to evaluate the impact IC student sessions have on students' learning journeys, personal development and if/how the sessions help foster a sense of belonging, self-confidence and an appreciation of difference. The evaluation project and report, funded by the International Student Experience Programme, were conducted and written by Dr Anita Strasser, a visual sociologist currently working as a researcher at IC. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Anita on: a.strasser@arts.ac.uk. You can also contact Gareth Rees, Head of IC (g.rees@arts.ac.uk) or Helen McAllister, Associate Dean of International Student Experience Programme (h.mcallister@arts.ac.uk).

Key Findings:

- The evidence demonstrates that IC student sessions have a significant impact on participating students. This ranges from improved intercultural communication and

collaboration skills, a deeper understanding of cultural and personal differences and a greater appreciation of difference to developing more confidence and employability skills, feeling validated and valued and combating isolation. As a result, participation has contributed to a greater sense of belonging and well-being and, overall, an improved student experience at UAL.

- The significance of the impact of IC student sessions on students' study experience, their sense of well-being and belonging to UAL, was particularly strongly expressed. Many commented on the pressure-free, non-hierarchical, safe and welcoming atmosphere of IC sessions, enabling them to discuss a variety of (course-related) topics, express their identities, concerns and personal experiences, learn from others and form lasting friendships with people from different backgrounds and disciplines.
- The significance of the impact on students' learning journeys was also expressed. Several students highlighted that the critical discussions in the safe environment of IC sessions helped them build the confidence and skills to pursue self-initiated projects, think more critically and cope better with course pressures, assignments and projects. Participants highlighted that IC addressed what they experienced as shortcomings on their courses.
- Student and alumni 'ambassadors' and exhibition curators also described having gained self-confidence, employability skills and creative attributes, contributing to their ability to gain valuable work experience, pursue projects and work outside university and apply for jobs and other opportunities more confidently and successfully.
- Programme, course and unit leaders reiterated the aforementioned benefits of IC student workshops but also commented on how working with IC helped them teach more diverse cohorts and prepare students for challenging collaborative projects. They also commented on the benefits of embedding IC in course programmes with bespoke sessions so that students can become better intercultural communicators.
- There was consensus among students and staff of the value of IC student sessions (benefits as described above). They highlighted the need to widen the IC student offer, providing more opportunities for collaborative student workshops and projects, working more with courses and programmes to offer bespoke IC sessions and finding ways of taking the acquired skills, knowledges and experiences beyond the University.
- Overall, IC student sessions address UAL's [Social Purpose](#) agenda and its drive to enhance students' [study experience](#) and their [employability and creative attributes](#). They also offer potential to address issues reported in NSS feedback e.g. 2022/23:

not feeling part of a UAL community; lack of opportunities for connections and collaborations; not having gained the necessary skills and experience to transition into working life.

1. Background:

IC, originally Intercultural Communication Training (ICT), was set up by the Language Centre in 2016 to run staff training sessions to help staff support and communicate with an increasingly diverse, international and multicultural student population. The initial sessions offered were *Clear and Accessible English* and *Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Communication Skills*, followed by *Name Pronunciation Training* and *Supporting Active Participation in Class*. The idea to also run IC sessions for students soon followed with the first session held in 2018. This session was entitled *Modelling Intercultural Communication*, using Lego® Serious Play as a visual method that helps facilitate critical thinking, communication and problem-solving skills. Since then, the range of IC student sessions has increased rapidly including projects and events, going beyond the notion of ‘training’ and towards opening *alternative learning spaces* – pressure-free, culturally and socially democratic spaces which support cultural and linguistic inclusivity, the building of cohesive learning-communities and opportunities for belonging, validation and friendships. Given UAL’s international and highly multicultural community, such alternative learning spaces are of particular relevance and importance.

The graphs below show that since the beginning of IC student sessions in 2018, the total number of sessions offered and the number of attendances per year has increased sharply, with only minor dips during the COVID-19 pandemic.

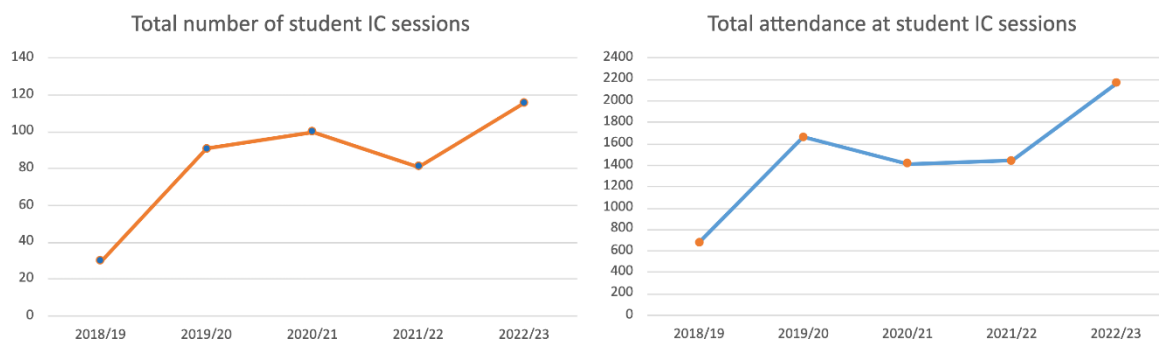


Image 1: IC data from 2018/19 until 2022/23. Source: IC database.

1.1 IC student workshops



Image 2: Zine-making workshop at CSM during the Big Welcome October 2023. Photo: Anita Strasser.

IC student workshops, conceived, developed and largely delivered by Adam Ramejkis (IC Student Engagement Lead), have an interactive and peer-learning approach, and cover intercultural competencies, collaboration skills and working with values and difference. The use of visual materials such as building Lego® models, making geometric shapes with Tangram or Polypad or making zines, and the utilisation of other materials such as INIVA Values Cards and online platforms such as Padlet and Miro, help to facilitate creative and critical inquiry, communication and problem-solving skills and shape the main method of the workshops. The five most common workshops and their descriptions, [as on the IC page on Canvas](#), are listed below:

Visualising Culture

Participants explore the complex nature of culture and share their understandings with their peers. Using an online version of Tangram (building images with geometric shapes and colours), they create visualisations of their ideas to then share and discuss for peer-centred learning and critical thinking. The workshop is carefully staged to ensure all voices are heard, and covers a range of aspects related to culture (including but not limited to: personal and national cultures, the complexity and dynamic nature of culture and the importance of avoiding stereotyping by engaging with people as individuals).

Visualising/Shaping/Modelling Communication

Through visualisation and storytelling activities, using either online platforms Polypad and Padlet or using Tangrams or Lego®, students reflect on and share personal 'critical

incidents' related to (intercultural) mis-communication. Through discussion with peers, they reflect on the communication breakdown in those incidents. They then create a visualisation of a quality, skill, behaviour, knowledge or action that could have prevented this miscommunication. The session finishes with a group activity, mapping the competencies identified for successful intercultural communication with a selection from the Global People Intercultural Competency Framework.

Reflection on collaboration

Students reflect on, and analyse, previous experiences of collaboration in their lives and education backgrounds. Then, in small groups, they develop a set of principles for successful collaboration, which are shared and compared across the full cohort. The workshop uses Padlet and Miro as the learning tools, which enable fully inclusive peer-interactive learning with a visual display element. This session is useful at any time in their course, but has particular relevance before embarking on group work and collaborative projects.



Image 3: Representations of Culture made by students during IC workshops using iPad drawing (top left), Lego® (top right) Polypad (bottom left) and Tangram (bottom right).

Talking about values

Through storytelling and reflective activities that use INIVA creative and emotional learning cards, students explore values held by themselves and their peers, with a particular focus on understanding and working with difference. As a key outcome, the students connect the values they have identified and explored to their own manifesto – be that a personal, an artist’s, a designer’s, a coder’s or a business manifesto. The workshop opens students up to the importance of values within the university and the creative arts sector, and enables a depth of peer discussion in this area that may otherwise be hard to achieve.

Intercultural zines

A single zine-making workshop, with students making zines in response to intercultural provocations that can be related to their subject area as well as the theoretical and contextual background to interculturality and communication. The session involves applying critical thinking skills with a creative expression. While it is a useful and engaging stand-alone workshop, it is an ideal final session if your students have taken other workshops with us, as it is an excellent way to review and consolidate their learning and thus enhance its impact on their personal, professional, academic and creative development.

As Intercultural Communication is part of Education Services without direct contact with students, workshops were initially offered to courses by contacting course leaders. Through word-of-mouth and promotion via the Academic Enhancement Team, course leaders gradually started requesting IC student workshops. Workshops can be requested as one-off sessions or as a series of sessions, and the workshop format is flexible and can be adapted according to the needs of students, courses and units. IC has also expanded its workshop range into more bespoke and embedded sessions, also offering advice and conflict solutions and helping prepare students to work on collaborative (community) projects. Through further promotion and word-of-mouth, event organisers and project leaders started collaborating with IC, with a particular interest in zine-making workshops. Below is an overview of IC’s main work to date, predominantly organised and delivered by Adam Ramejkis (with support from IC team members and student ‘ambassadors’. For the latter, see Section 3.2):

1. Part of courses such as Graduate Diploma Graphic Design at Chelsea, Graduate Diploma Textile Design at Chelsea, BA Graphic Design Camberwell, BA Theatre Design Wimbledon, MA Innovation Management CSM, BA Fashion Buying and Merchandising LCF, BA Photography LCC and many more.

2. Part of course programmes, units, projects and collaborations including *The Value of Difference*, *In Response*, *Whose History?*, *Collaborative Challenge*, *Fashioning Stories*, *Traces*, *Roots & Routes* and *Communicating through Intercultural Lenses*, as well as a collaboration with Hong Kong Baptist University involving three film screenings and two zine-workshops (with one online with participants in Hong Kong).
3. Part of events such as *Big Welcome*, *Black History Month*, *LGBTQIA+ History Month*, *Creative Hack*, *Earth Day* and others (mainly as one-off zine-making workshops).



Image 4: Lego® workshop for BA Graphic Design at Camberwell, Oct 2023. Photo: Anita Strasser.

Some of the projects have resulted in published and co-written articles (see [Whose History?](#), [In Response](#)), joint conference presentations (e.g. [In Response](#), [Drawing on Ideas](#)), some of which involved students (e.g. [Intercultural Communication Across Courses](#)), and collaborations with various groups including Shades of Noir, Student Union Societies, Central Communications Team, Central EDI Team and UAL Library and Student Services. For example, *The Value of Difference* is a collaborative workshop comprising three distinct yet connected sessions which run simultaneously: an IC workshop on diverse perspectives of (critical) thinking and learning, a library session comparing UAL and INIVA/Stuart Hall library collections, and an archives session engaging with artefacts from 'Tell us about it Archive'. Students are divided into three groups and the sessions run three times so all students can experience all sessions.

The popularity of [zine-making workshops](#) as part of events or simply to offer alternative spaces of collective making and being together also resulted in [UAL's first Zine Exchange and Publishing Fair in 2023](#) at Peckham Levels, bringing together students, independent publishers and printers and local residents. This event proved so popular, it is now a biannual event. Finally, from private conversations it also emerged that some projects and some of the ideas and discussions generated during IC workshops have informed college assignments including reflective writing, projects and dissertations (staff and students).

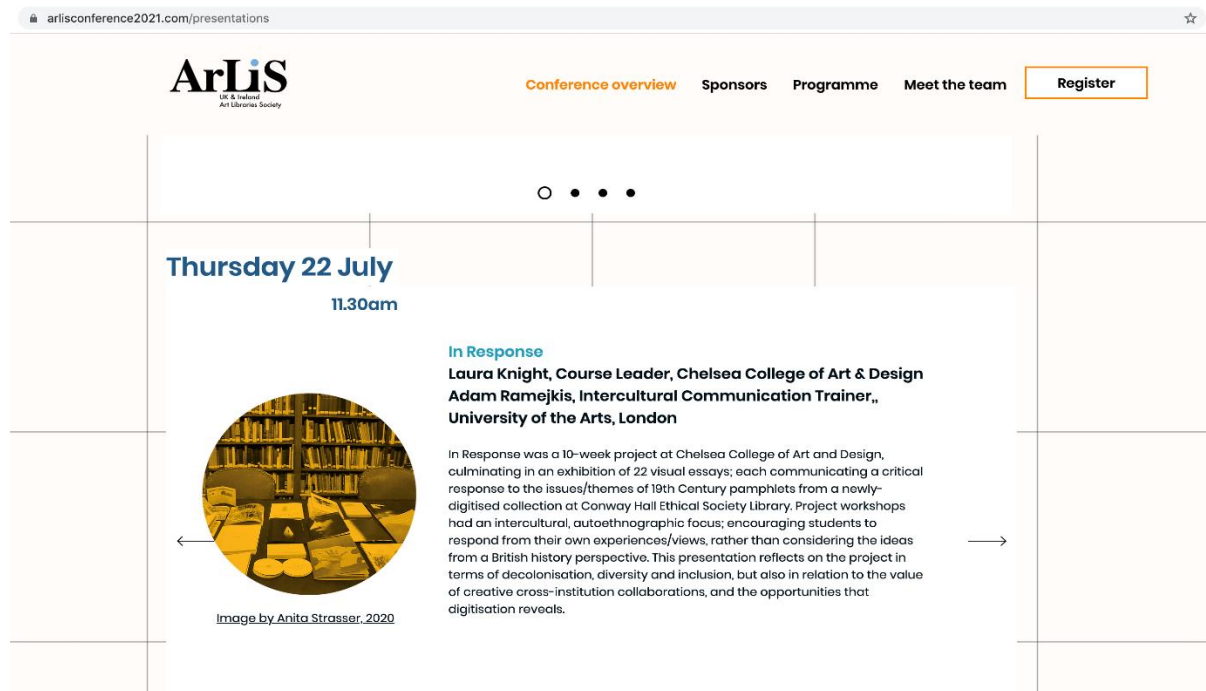


Image 5: Presentation programme at the ArLis Conference 2021, detailing a presentation by Laura Knight, Course Leader at Chelsea, and Adam Ramejkis, Intercultural Communication Trainer. Screenshot from website in 2021 (page now unavailable).

As part of IC's workshop programme and student engagement, the department is also working with student and alumni 'ambassadors', training students and recent graduates who have participated in IC student workshops and/or projects to co-facilitate workshops on course programmes or events, such as the Big Welcome, Creative Hack and the Zine Fair. These students are registered with and paid through Arts Temps, thus providing them with real work experience and an opportunity to enhance their employability skills. IC also welcomes students' own workshop and project ideas and has supported students in running their own projects and workshops and invited presentations at UAL events.

1.2 The Language-Art Project

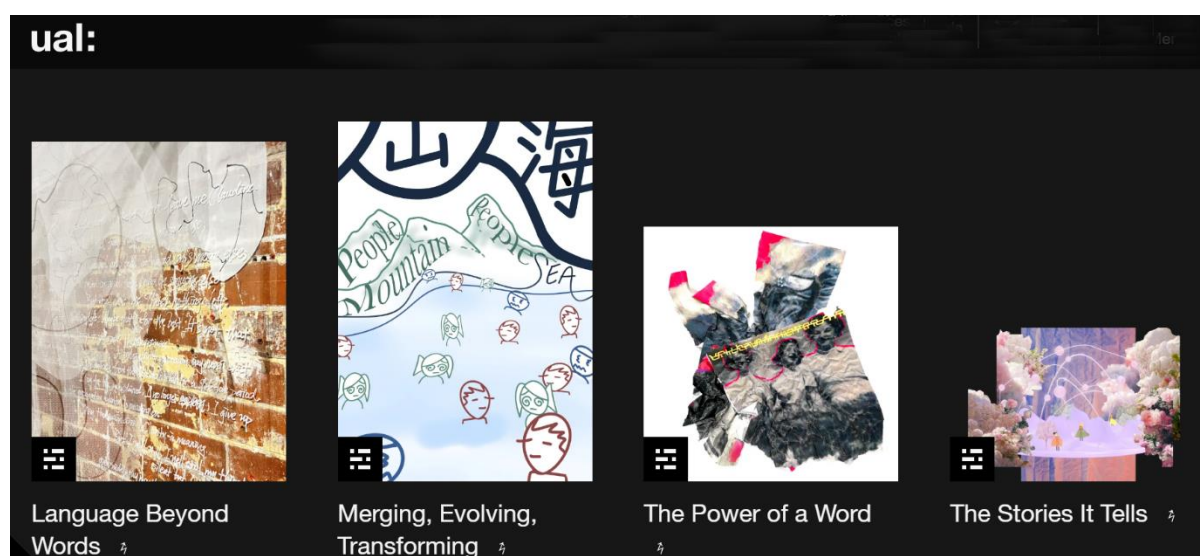


Image 6: Language-Art Project exhibition themes 2023. Screenshot from [website](#).

IC has also expanded its portfolio by organising projects such as the annual [Language-Art Project](#) (LAP), conceived, developed and coordinated by Karen Harris (IC Staff Development Lead). LAP aims to gather diverse groups of students from across UAL to create a variety of language-themed art, resulting in an exhibition held at one of the UAL campuses and online. Participants are encouraged to develop, individually or collaboratively, a creative response to linguistic themes, sharing their own understandings, interpretations and experiences of language(s). The project fosters an imaginative, exploratory and open approach not only for the purposes of art-making but also to offer a culturally and socially democratic space where people from different courses, disciplines and backgrounds can come together.

The project was inaugurated in 2019 with an exhibition of 12 artworks held at CSM. There was no project in 2020 when the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was reintroduced in 2021 and has been run since with 20-25 students exhibiting work each year. In 2021 and 2022, the exhibitions were held online only and whilst the 2023 exhibitions was also shown online, it was also displayed at the Student Union Gallery at LCC. The 2024 exhibition was held at the Window Gallery at CSM as well as online.

Some of the works produced as part of LAP have resulted in presentations, podcasts and publications. For example, in 2021 two participating students were invited to an interview as part of the [Post-Grad Community Open Studios Podcast Series](#) to share their experiences of taking part in LAP. In 2022, students gave presentations of their artworks produced during LAP to the Academic Support Forum 'Who Do We Think We Are': [Artist Presentation – the](#)

[Language-Art Project](#) and [A Celebration of Language](#). Another student took part in an interview about a poem written as part of the Many Languages Poetry Club – an offshoot project of LAP also developed and run by Karen Harris, which was published on the UAL website under the title: '[Poetry as Cultural Doorway: Reflecting on the war in Ukraine by Camberwell student Petrică Bistran](#)'. Additionally, Karen Harris published an article entitled '[Creative projects as a way of bringing students together](#)' in *Times Higher Education*. In 2024, 3rd year Illustration & Visual Media student Flora Lu gave an illustrated talk on '[The Evolution of Ancient Chinese Oracle to Modern Chinese Characters](#)' at LCC, a project which was part of her 2023 LAP project.



Image 7: Advertisement for Flora Lu's talk at UAL. Screenshot from [Eventbrite](#).

LAP is another example of IC's openness to students' needs and ideas in that it has worked in collaboration with Curation students for two LAP exhibitions. Responding to three students' requests to take on the curation of the exhibition, this group of Curation students has been able to gain hands-on experience of curating online and physical shows. As with the student and alumni 'ambassadors', the Curation students are registered and paid through Arts Temps. Such initiatives therefore provide students with the opportunity to develop skills and confidence and gain work experience, thus increasing their employability skills.

This evaluation report, then, looks at the impact these alternative learning spaces offered through IC student sessions has had on students' learning journeys and experiences at UAL. It does this through three major lenses:

1. The impact of IC student workshops as part of course programmes/unit/projects
2. The impact of IC working opportunities for student and alumni ‘ambassadors’
3. The impact of IC projects such as the Language-Art Project

2. Evidence gathering:

The evaluation project took place between October 2023 and February 2024. The report consists of qualitative data from a combination of anonymous feedback forms, online comments, testimonials and visual material generated during IC student sessions collected by Adam Ramejkis and Karen Harris between 2019 and 2023, and interviews, group discussions and creative workshops, as well as participant observation and photographing conducted by me, Anita Strasser.

The data set consists of:

In relation to course programmes/unit/projects	In relation to student and alumni ‘ambassadors’ (participating in and facilitating workshops)	In relation to the Language-Art Project
43 anonymous workshop feedback forms collected between 2019 and 2023	Anonymous workshop comments collected from 6 ‘ambassadors’ in June 2023	5 anonymous LAP feedback forms collected between 2019 and 2023
42 comments made online for a post-workshop reflection exercise in 2020	Anonymous testimonials from 7 ‘ambassadors’ collected between 2019 and 2023	7 LAP testimonials collected between 2019 and 2023
A planned workshop with 8 participants from one course had to be cancelled due to illness. Rescheduling proved impossible due to differing timetables	1 creative workshop involving 7 ‘ambassadors’ in October 2023	2 creative workshops: one with 3 Curation students in January 2024 and another with 3 participating artists in February 2024
3 interviews with course/unit/programme leaders, conducted between December 2023 and February 2024	2 interviews with ambassadors for case studies, conducted in December 2023	2 interviews with students for case studies, conducted in February 2024
Photographs of workshops and material generated during IC student sessions	Photographs of workshops and material generated during this IC research	Photographs of workshops, LAP artworks and material generated during this IC research

I worked in close collaboration with Adam Ramejkis (Student Engagement Lead and main facilitator of IC student sessions), Karen Harris (Staff Development Lead and facilitator of the Language-Art Project) and Gareth Rees (Head of IC and IC workshop facilitator). I would like to thank them for helping with contacts, setting up workshops, providing access to completed feedback forms, existing texts, images and information.

Workshops with students lasted 2-3 hours to facilitate inclusive and democratic discussions and to encourage more creative and engaging responses to questions. With my background in Visual Sociology and participatory research methods, I applied more participatory, creative and visual forms of gathering feedback and disseminating information as this is able to capture better the affective dimension of lived experiences. This is also in line with the ethos of IC student sessions and projects, all of which involve socially and culturally democratic ways of collaborating and (art)making to foster belonging and community. Thus, I have also incorporated images of creative output made during IC sessions, not only to illustrate what was made but also to communicate the affective, creative and inclusive ethos of IC student sessions (see Image 8).

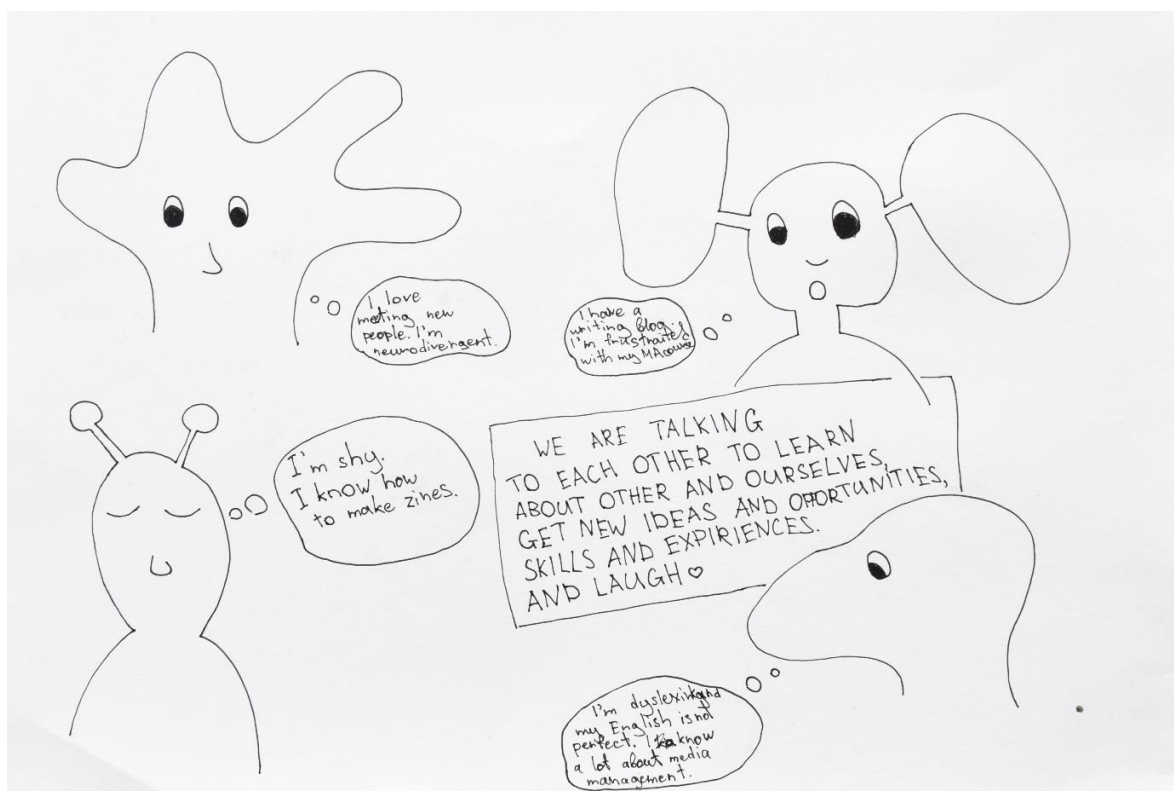


Image 8: Drawing made in a workshop in October 2023 to indicate what IC workshops enable and that IC is open to students of all backgrounds, experiences and disciplines. Photo: Anita Strasser.

Group discussions were recorded and transcribed, as were individual interviews, which lasted between 30-90 minutes. I analysed transcripts, feedback forms and testimonials thematically to draw out the most frequently mentioned points of impact:

- improved intercultural communication and collaboration skills
- understanding values and difference
- developing self-confidence and feeling validated

- Opening up connections between students who might not otherwise have communicated
- enhanced employability and creative attributes
- combatting isolation and experiencing a sense of belonging and well-being
- an improved study and course experience

A limitation of written feedback and written-up recorded discussions and interviews is that some of the emotion expressed is lost. For many students, participating in IC workshops and projects has had a profound impact on their learning experience and well-being at UAL as well as on their personal development. Visual material has the capacity to articulate lived experience in a different way, reaching deeper levels of consciousness and thus communicating better the affective impact of lived experience. Therefore, I also analysed the visual material generated during research sessions to draw out the more affective dimension of participation. The hope is that the combination of images and texts captures more fully students' experiences of participating in IC student sessions.

The project was communicated in an accessible way to participants at the outset and information sheets and consent forms were distributed before meetings and sessions. While most comments remain anonymous, for the case studies, participants agreed to have their names included in the report. When other student names are mentioned, it is because they requested to be named. Course, unit and programme leaders also agreed to be named. Those named had the opportunity to read their contributions before publishing and suggest edits. Furthermore, where staff were interviewed during their working hours, students or alumni were either paid through Arts Temps contracts (if registered) or rewarded with UAL canteen and arts shop vouchers.

3. Findings:

The findings of this report are organised into three over-arching categories which correspond with the main work IC does with regards to students: the impact of IC student sessions as part of course programmes, units and projects; the impact of IC experiences of student and alumni 'ambassadors'; and the impact of IC projects such as the Language-Art Project.

3.1 The impact of IC student sessions as part of course programmes, units and projects

I found that IC student sessions as part of course programmes, units and projects such as with Graduate Diploma Graphic Design (GDGD) at Chelsea Art College, the Collaborative Challenge Unit across all Postgraduate courses at London College of Fashion (LCF) and the IC pilot series with the Culture & Enterprise Programme at Central Saint Martins (CSM) have had a positive and significant impact on students who gave feedback. Comments relate to improved (intercultural) communication, collaboration and critical thinking skills, a greater appreciation of difference, the building of confidence in expressing one's views, a sense of validation, belonging and community, and, generally, an enhanced course and university experience. I also found that the course, unit and programme leaders I spoke to have noticed this positive impact, arguing that IC student sessions should be more embedded as part of course programmes, units and projects. This section of the report is organised into four parts, with the first three relating to the aforementioned programmes, units and projects, and the fourth relating to a variety of other courses.

3.1.1 IC sessions as part of Graduate Diploma Graphic Design at Chelsea

Laura Knight, current course leader of MA Communicating Complexity at CSM, was course leader of Graduate Diploma in Graphic Design (GDGD) at Chelsea Arts College between 2018/19 and 2021/22. When starting her new role in 2018, she recognised immediately that her course would benefit from IC student sessions. Not only she did feel that students would benefit from discussions around more philosophical concepts, but she also felt that some support for teaching an international cohort with very different cultural backgrounds would be beneficial. She had become aware of IC student sessions through the Academic Enhancement Team and approached Adam Ramejkis for workshops. This turned into a 4-year collaboration, with standard and bespoke IC sessions (e.g. Talking about Thinking, Open Source English: The design of language for a better future) completely embedded into the course. Here Laura describes her experience of working with IC:

Adam's workshops often facilitated discussions I wouldn't have felt confident facilitating myself, asking students to talk about big ideas such as what Thinking is, or Culture, or Language. At first, students seemed befuddled, wondering why they were asked to talk about these big ideas but after a while I could really see they were getting huge value from having these discussions. The good thing was that it was equally befuddling to the home students as it was to the international students and that

created that nice leveller because it wasn't privileging any kind of understanding or viewpoint. By using texts from philosophers from western and non-western cultures, students saw how different people had thought about the same topics. Entering a new discipline and new education system in a new geographical location, students inevitably feel the weight of everything they think they don't understand. Those IC sessions empowered them to see the value and relevance of their own knowledges, experiences and cultures. This really validated their position as knowers.

There was also this power of making things visual because it helps you to talk about things you can see. It just became immediately obvious how transferrable IC student sessions were for the Graphic students and how they represented content that I was in no position to teach myself. IC sessions became a strand of the curriculum and working with Adam was what an academic partnership should be. It was true collaboration: we would discuss and design each workshop together and then we would reflect on how it went and think about what we could do differently. Adam became a very valued member of the team.

Laura and Adam also worked on projects together, with one standing out: a collaboration with Conway Hall Ethical Society in 2019. For the unit *In Response*, GDGD students engaged with Victorian pamphlets from Conway Hall's Victorian Blogging Collection about social issues. In response to these themes, students created visual essays relating the themes to current times. For this project, IC sessions became completely embedded in the course, with the sessions shaping the curriculum and the Graphic Design input written around them. This project ended in the students' first ever exhibition (at Conway Hall), a co-written article (see [In Response](#)) and joint conference presentations (see [In Response](#) and [Drawing on Ideas](#)). Below, Laura summarises her experience of working with IC:

I would say IC is one of few departments in the university that can actually model what it means to teach an intercultural group critically. Working with IC brings some understanding and depth around some big issues. Working with IC and the students was critical pedagogy, with Adam being a really valuable critical friend. When two or more people with completely different bodies of knowledge come together, it is really powerful.* There is so much stuff about teaching at university that's not about the discipline but about something bigger. I had so much to learn from observing Adam's IC sessions and I think many more courses could benefit from IC.

* Laura also referred to her close collaboration with a Language Development Tutor.



Image 9: At the exhibition opening event of *In Response* at Conway Hall, February 2020. Photos: Anita Strasser.

Feedback from GDGD students was collected between 2019 and 2022 via online and paper feedback forms, post-session reflections on Workflow and Padlet, and testimonials. A workshop was planned for the 21/22 cohort at the end of November 2023 but had to be cancelled due to Covid. Unfortunately, it was impossible to reschedule due to incompatible timetables. The first set of comments relate to the workshop entitled *Talking about Values*, where students explored values held by themselves and their peers, with a particular focus on understanding and working with difference. As part of this workshop, student groups recorded their interactions by visualising the interactions on a piece of paper. After realising from this visual record that always the same students were speaking, interactions started changing to involve all students. This is testament to how Laura Knight and Adam Ramejkis collaborated and adapted workshop formats to make the workshops as effective as possible. It is also testament to the power of visual materials.

The comments below were made as part of a post-session reflection task on Workflow. They refer to how the task of drawing interactions made discussions more inclusive and democratic and how important it is to value difference and other people's perspectives:

I think that when we were in the group discussion, it was a great inspiration to record the trajectory of each person by drawing lines on paper. Often we ignore everyone's participation in group discussions, and this approach makes everyone's speech visible.

From recording the discussions on paper, I found our discussions quite democratic. Since each one of us always shared our views first before debating freely, which gives equal opportunity to all the group members, and no one would lose the opportunity to express their opinions because they were shy.

The workshop gave me an insight how I behave in a group. It was very interesting as what I learnt about my behaviour was very different from what I thought of myself before. It also helped me understand the importance of paying attention to how much the others are contributing while working in groups and help people who are finding it hard to open up.

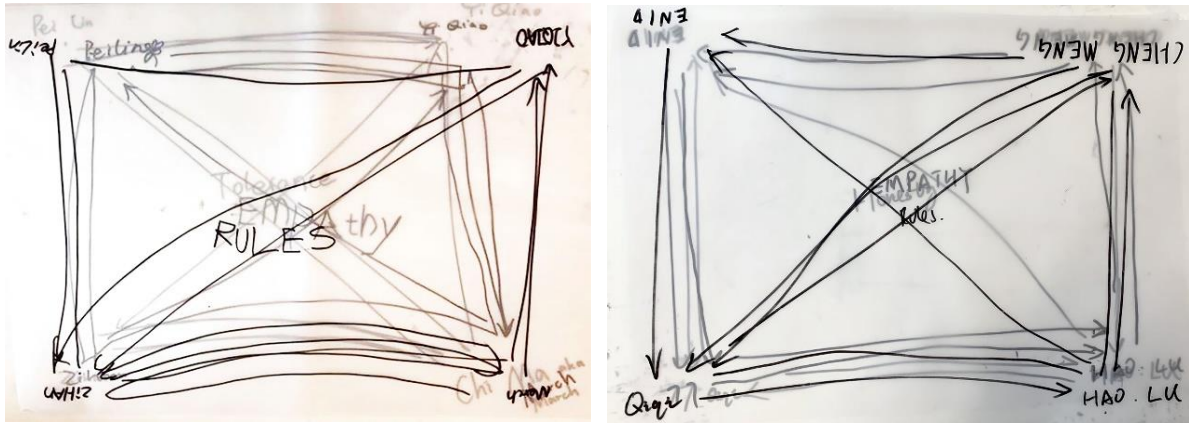


Image 10: Visual records of student interactions. Images from students' Workflow pages, used with permission.

The discussions were very enriching. For me, the most interesting thing was to once more realize, that the understanding and interpretation of values can differ a lot, even for people who live in relatively similar circumstances.

I found this workshop extremely interesting as it fuelled lots of intellectual and opinionated discussion and we were introduced to the way different cultures approach values. The workshop also helped me realize how the culture that you were brought up by influenced your personal values and your way of expressing them.

During the group discussion, it was interesting that although everyone comes from different countries and cultures, we still have so many similar values. Due to these common points, I feel that we know each other more.

The second set of quotes relates to the whole series of IC sessions embedded in the course. These comments were collected via anonymous online feedback forms, with many students commenting on having improved their communication skills, their ability to think more critically and the need to be more open to different views:

I can learn a lot of different understandings, hear a lot of different voices, rethink a lot of problems, and generate a lot of new ideas from the process.

I think it helps us to improve our critical and creative thinking when we talk about the same topic, because what are the different insights that we can hear, and then constantly rethink the question of more possibilities.

The workshop helped me to change my own mind and alter my thoughts as I was speaking. This skill is very important as it allows me to be mindful and critical in the moment. This class has taught me to think critically on the spot and communicate my thoughts in real time.

It was helpful and refreshing to learn the difference between critical, creative, reflective and divergent thinking. I will forever think about these ways of thinking in my work and use the techniques that I learnt in Adam's workshop to work through problems.

The workshop helped me develop my collaboration skills, even when it is challenging to collaborate when everyone had such different views. The workshops have taught me to be open and understanding of everyone regardless of where they are from or what they think. I think listening is an important skill and hearing what other people have to say can be a big learning lesson for me.

The zine workshop about Asian stereotypes helped a lot of us who were facing the same problem, realize and share experiences about what we all had in common.

It was mainly the process of discussion with the students and the collaborative exercises that gave us the opportunity to share our ideas and learn about each other's stories and values.

This improved the understanding between students from all over the world and in a way contributed to a sense of belonging on the course.

3.1.2 IC as part of the Collaborative Challenge at LCF

Tiff Radmore is unit leader of the Collaborative Challenge, a unit across all postgraduate courses at London College of Fashion (LCF). This unit was set up in 2014 in response to demand from the fashion industry and students to connect more with industry partners. It encourages students to 'collaborate across disciplines to address challenges, provocations and concepts affecting the fashion landscape by engaging with current research and technologies, industry partners, alumnus and academic partners' ([LCF website](#)). Tiff explains that the underlying idea is to strengthen, alongside academic skills, students' soft skills set such as engaging in collaborative practices, negotiation skills and teamwork. Industry

partners, alumnus and/or research partners are invited to write project brief, with projects usually managed by LCF Researchers who act as project lead and teacher. Students then undertake a chosen project in multidisciplinary teams, followed by an assessed group presentation and written reflections, where students are required to draw on the [Creative Attributes Framework](#). In 2019/20, the unit collaborated with [Rosetta Arts](#), a Newham-based arts organisation which offers creative courses, workshops and experiences for people in east London, who have little access to the arts and education. It was during this project entitled 'Folklife' that IC was called upon to run the workshop 'Talking about Values', followed by a practical workshop to help students prepare for their project, which in discussion with the students and Rosetta Arts was renamed 'Fashioning stories'. Tiff explains:

The Rosetta Arts brief was brought in by the Cultural Partnerships team at LCF without any LCF project lead or liaison attached. We then noticed that there seemed to be a real chasm between the values that we have in a college and what students read into the brief and what Rosetta Arts, who set the brief, actually wanted. We realised there were issues regarding communication and that the project required a better lead liaison, so myself and Gabi Miller negotiated more hours for her to manage the project. We then asked Adam from IC, to whom I had recently been introduced, to come and bridge the divide by supporting students to understand how to communicate those values better and help us as a college to make sure students didn't have misconceptions of what Newham is about. Coming from a community arts background, I am fully aware that we are releasing students, often from international and/or privileged backgrounds, into areas they don't know and this does need careful and considerate management, addressing things like communication, bias, misinterpretation but also confidence. Students started losing their confidence as a result of not understanding what was asked of them, and hearing that you're not going about things in the right way is difficult to hear. Once they gained clarity through the IC sessions, their work progressed beautifully, they drew together better as a team and understood that the form of communication they were undertaking was to be very thoughtful. It also really boosted their confidence and their skill set.

Tiff's observations are corroborated by students' anonymous feedback collected after the Rosetta Arts project in 2020 (There is also a podcast with participating students discussing their experiences of working on this project on the [LCF website](#) under the rubric 'Case study podcast 2019/20: Fashioning Stories'):

As a collaborative project, I guess Intercultural communication was the most helpful workshop towards working together and co-valuing the project. With the value card interaction, I really had a great experience with how to engage in the collaborative conversation and evaluate the value system for the teamwork.

All of the workshops were critical in developing our workshop with Rosetta Arts. Each provided a different facet to our understanding, allowing us to develop a more nuanced approach to our work, but also allowing us to grow and develop as a team. Because the four of us did not know each other before the project began, these workshops gave us the opportunity to learn and grow together. This gave us a stronger group dynamic which was incredibly important, especially once we were separated during Covid-19 restrictions and had to carry out our work as a team across an ocean.

The [Intercultural Communication] workshop was an important moment in the development of our team as a unit. I think the intention of the workshop was to develop our empathy and awareness skills for the community at Rosetta Arts, but I think it really helped us to develop this awareness amongst our group. The stronger the group is, the easier it is to create an open space for others to join. The development of our values turned out to be a very important part of our project.

When working with Rosetta Arts, we were always lead by the four values we got from the Intercultural Communication workshop. With belonging, we tried to make everyone feel comfortable and engaging when taking part in the workshop. With appreciation and empathy, we treasured the diversities that emerged from the interaction and kept ourselves having curiosity. And with flexibility, we were open-minded with every challenge and uncertainty. Especially with the impact of the coronavirus, the flexibility value inspired by the Intercultural Communication workshop helped us to overcome the restriction of the communication channels in the physical environment.



Image 11: T-shirt showing the group's agreed core values for working together on the Rosetta Arts project, created during the 'Talking about Values' workshop.

Since the Rosetta Arts project in 2019/20, IC sessions have been requested for the unit each year. Tiff says that asking students to work with local communities and young people needs some bridge building and explains that IC interventions like the one described above are helpful when problems with communication arise during a project (which happens on occasion). However, IC sessions have also been incorporated into projects without there necessarily being problems but more in general as a way of preparing students for community projects. Working together is also a wonderful form of *knowledge exchange* between the project supervisor and the IC trainer – another positive impact of cross-departmental collaborations which she witnessed in a project run in 2023. Tiff says that LCF Researchers have incredible long-term relationships with their partners and are sensitive to the needs and requirements of all partners and recipients so collaborations between LCF Researchers and the IC team can be an enriching experience for all. The impact of such knowledge exchange would be an important research project to undertake. Overall, Tiff's recommendation would be that rather than taking an interventionist approach, a better way to work with IC is to utilise it straight from the start of the unit. Firstly, she says, a strong project lead needs to be recruited who undertakes clear negotiation with partners that sets

out an agreement and expectations in advance. After that, the IC trainer is introduced to the project lead and the brief and its intentions to then work with students at the beginning to avoid problems arising. Tiff explains:

Firstly, the IC workshops really draw out the values of what students bring to a challenge and how they interpret that through a brief. It helps them understand how they work in a team and approach a project. Another focus is to really challenge things such as bias, even among students and their teams but also within a wider context especially with people they work with be it partners and professional partners or anyone they work with. Students need to understand how they draw those values into their practice. And thirdly, I think they help students to be more thoughtful when working in a team and communicating with others. I think the workshops really get them to stop and think and be more mindful and slow down the process a little bit.

What I would like to do in future is invite Adam in from the very start to look at those values with students as a means of looking at collaboration as a whole and getting them to build up those values and understand what it means to work in teams, to look at a brief and really interpret that and how to move forward with mindful focus on what students actually need to do. If we're doing collaborative practice and are working in environments such as we are now, embedding IC sessions from the start is the way forward.

At the end of our conversation, Tiff tells me that resources such as IC (and Language Development which she also works with) are very valuable and that they need better visibility. She suggests short videos showcasing examples of collaborations such as IC and the Collaborative Challenge and informing the viewer what IC does, how it works, what the impact is and how collaborations can be organised. She also suggests fun staff inductions where members of different departments can meet and network and become more familiar with what is on offer across the university. This might stimulate more cross-departmental collaborations.

3.1.3 IC as part of the Culture & Enterprise Programme at CSM

Richie Manu is Programme Director of the Culture & Enterprise Programme at CSM. The programme currently consists of six courses: MA Applied Imagination, MA Innovation Management, MA Arts and Cultural Enterprise (a partnership with Hong Kong HKU SPACE) an MBA (a partnership with Birkbeck), and BA and MA Culture, Criticism and Curation.

Richie's academic practice spans over 20 years with lecturer posts at London College of Communication and London College of Fashion. For over 10 years Richie taught on MA Applied Imagination as Course Tutor. During this period, Richie took an interest in the synergies and associations of courses within the Culture & Enterprise Programme (C&E) and was involved in numerous cross-course activities and events which realised and encouraged cross-course engagement.

In 2020, Richie won the UAL Teaching Scholars Award for his vision to foster cross-course collaboration and investigation to develop interventions, activities and events that enable students from within programmes to connect, learn and engage. In 2020, Richie was appointed Programme Director for C&E where he also noticed a real appetite for cross-course and intercultural connections among students so he created a space, an infrastructure, where such interactions could be facilitated. These were channelled through activities such as symposia, programme socials, conferences and cross-programme talks.

When Adam Ramejkis from IC, with whom he used to work on the MA Applied Imagination, approached him with a pilot series of IC student sessions, Richie immediately agreed to run it as an extra-curricular activity within the C&E Programme. The pilot series *Communicating through Intercultural Lenses* comprised seven student sessions: 1) Different "cultures", 2) Identity/identities and intercultural competences, 3) Visualising collaboration, 4) Pause to reflect..., 5) Talking about values, 6) Open-source English, and 7) An as yet undefined space... (this became a visit to the British Academy Summer Showcase). It was run in 2022 over the course of a few months. Below Richie explains what interested him about these sessions and why he thought they were important:

The minute Adam gave me this brilliant outline of seven sessions I thought we have to get this into our programme. What interested me was, for example, that the first session was designed for students to really try to understand different understandings of culture and being able to unpack, by their own definition, what the different perspectives of culture are and how all this might apply to their academic studies. What I also found so interesting was the workshop on intercultural competencies and the skills, attitudes and behaviours that enable us to consider identities. I'm really interested in this whole idea of identity, in the singular – who you are as an individual – and identities in the plural – how you identify when you are part of a group. For example, when working on a project involving outside professionals, do you identify as a student, a professional, an entrepreneur? And we need to be mindful of imposed

identities. When it's your first time in the UK or the first time you've been in a university, or you might be a first-generation student, there are arguable socio-economic and cultural elements to encounter. So with the IC sessions, I was really interested in competencies and identities, how you identify and what the skills are to become an intercultural communicator.

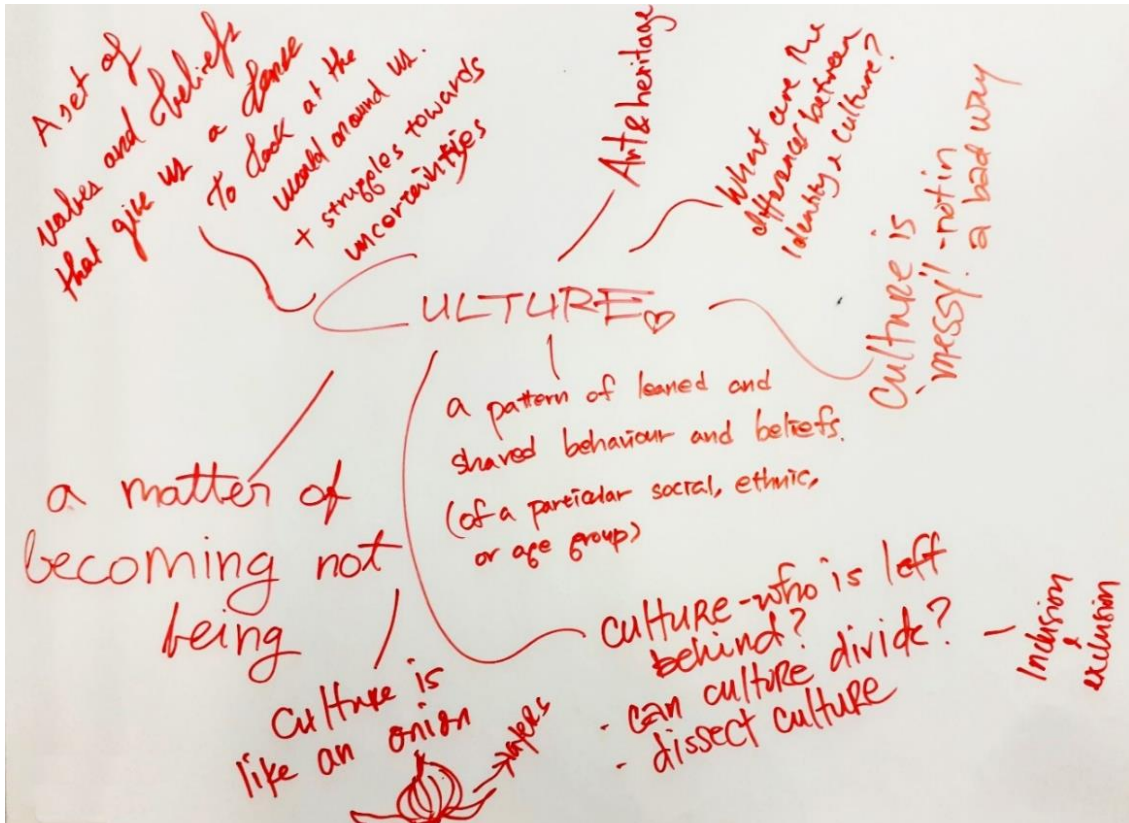


Image 12: Collaborative mind map of culture(s) made during the first session of the IC pilot series as part of the Culture & Enterprise Programme at CSM. Photo: Adam Ramejkis, 2022.

Talking about Values and the importance of unpacking values – what's important to you as an individual and to us in this group setting, was another important workshop. Unpacking that from the beginning of a project with simple questions like: What do you want to get out of this? What does it mean to you? And culturally, what are you bringing to this? is really important for students to understand what really matters to them. And about halfway through, Adam gave students the chance to reflect, to be able to get a retrospective on what they learnt and what it meant to them. I think that's really important and we need to do more on that.

Another component that was offered to the students was on collaboration, and what it means for the students to be in a space they're perhaps not used to. With many

courses across the university now embarking on collaborative projects, understanding what the cultural differentials are around collaboration is going to be really important. For example, I see myself very much as a collaborator or co-designer with students, but some students are less comfortable with the idea of me being part of their conversations because they come from a very teacher-centric education culture with the teacher standing at the front. These new forms of collaboration need to be introduced to indicate it's ok to have these discussions. So, visioning what collaboration looks like is great but we also need to understand what the cultural limitations or expectations on collaboration are. I think a compressed version of this Intercultural Communication series at the beginning of a collaboration would be useful to give students time to really understand who they are working with.

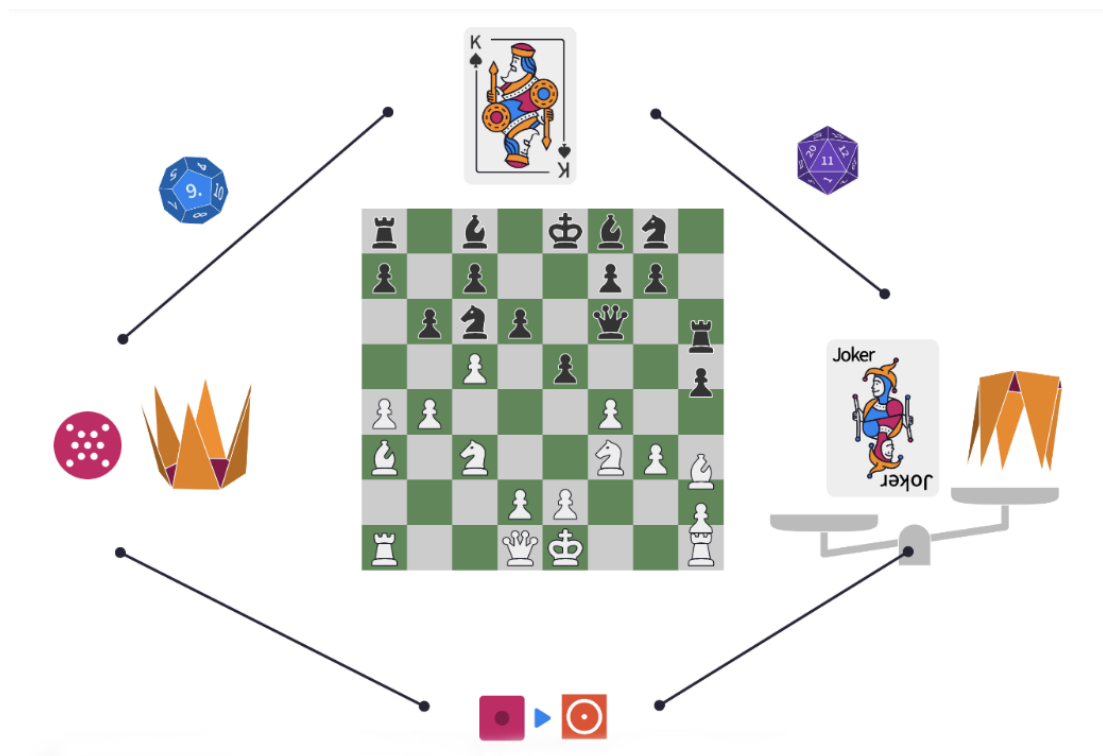


Image 13: Image created using Polypad in a 'Visualising collaboration' workshop as part of the pilot series.

Richie tells me that the sessions were very well perceived by students, who felt the sessions were very valuable, particularly the sessions on 'Different "cultures"' and 'Talking about values'. Many students, particularly those who attended each session, even questioned why the sessions weren't part of the curriculum, saying they wanted them to be consolidated into the curriculum, so that the whole cohort would be focusing on intercultural communication. This feedback was also given in anonymous feedback forms, along with comments relating

to the non-hierarchical workshop format that allowed students to take part on their own terms and as equal conversation partners and that the workshops enabled a space where conflict and difficulties could be talked through safely:

There series of workshops and conversations have provided a very relevant foundation to many of the ideas we are discussing and practicing on our MA course. Several of us who attended have talked about how wished this curriculum was part of the course in some way.

Beginning with the deep dive into the concept of Cultures, that workshop included discussions between varying groups of people... seated, standing, drawing and a fluidity that meant we got to engage with people's lived experiences and theoretical ideas in deep, meaningful ways. The level of participation was exciting.

The way we have approached and discussed what the terms culture, identity, gender etc mean to different people from different backgrounds, has helped in arriving at a common definition which thus helps perspectives being shared from the same tangent of thought.

As a non-native speaker, even from the language barrier to comfortably and respectfully disagreeing with each other in a group were quite challenging for me on my main course so far. However through this workshop, I recognized the value of difference and the constant need for considerate communication pushing the language barrier.

Meeting other course students was an unforgettable moment. It was a great time when I was able to feel free to share the difficulties I experienced and comfort each other.

We were encouraged to introduce ourselves and take a space to voice our experiences to connect with the topics better. These sessions are diluting the hierarchy between teachers and students, it felt very horizontal, we feel accommodated and safe within this space where active listening happens naturally between students and facilitators.

These sessions were our space to have open discussions.

After a theoretical overview of elements of collaboration, we could discuss strategies of collaboration and components that made up our individual preferences. We all expressed a sense of relief to be given some scaffolding to think about the process of collaboration rather than being thrust into collaborative projects to figure out these dynamics on our own.

However, Richie says he would also like to hear from students who did/do not attend IC sessions. He wonders what the expectations and maybe the misconceptions are around Intercultural Communication, particularly among some home students, and how we can prepare them for transitioning from their BA courses to MA courses which are predominantly international. He highlights the need to ensure that Intercultural Communication caters for everyone's needs by widening its scope and reach. Richie also raises some other important points, particularly around continuing intercultural dialogues beyond the university:

I think one of the competencies I'd like to see developed is that confidence and ability to keep those conversations going. So, whilst the workshops were really important over a period of time, how can you ensure that you're embedding a practice that becomes part of everyone's daily life? I don't have an answer to that but the most rewarding thing for me to see is when intercultural dialogue develops into friendships, partnerships and connections outside the university. I wonder how much work around Intercultural Communication has a place after students finish their studies. Obviously, it needs a certain infrastructure in place to make that happen. One example of such an infrastructure is the [UAL Alumni of Colour Association](#), of which I am Vice President, and the connections we've made by bringing recent graduates together with people who graduated 20, 30 years ago. Generally, alumni play a huge role in keeping the dialogue going and we regularly invite former students back to share their stories and how their studies impacted their lives. So, I think continuity is really important.

Perhaps the work IC has been doing with the student and alumni 'ambassadors', training them up to co-facilitate IC workshops and supporting them with self-devised workshops and projects is a step towards this sense of continuity. As Section 3.2 will highlight, this initiative has not only helped form connections among people who might otherwise not have communicated, but it also offers students and recent graduates opportunities to pass on acquired intercultural knowledge and communication skills to other students. There was also an IC follow-up session a year after the pilot series, with three students reflecting on the sessions, how they experienced them (see Image 14 below), how the sessions impacted them and how they could be developed in the future (e.g. have them earlier in the course; include them in the curriculum or promote more to encourage more students to attend; invite staff sometimes as participants). Furthermore, I have been following up on some students' journeys since they attended IC sessions and below is a case study of one student who attended the pilot series at CSM.



Image 14: One-page zine made in 2023 as part of a reflection session one year after participating in the IC series piloted with the Culture & Enterprise Programme. Photo by a student with permission for use.

Case Study I: Poojitha Lal

Poojitha Lal is a recent graduate from the Culture & Enterprise Programme at CSM. Whilst doing her MA, Poojitha attended the IC pilot series and following this became a student ‘ambassador’, co-facilitating IC workshops. Poojitha also got involved in events and projects such as the Academic Support Conference and a [Changemakers](#) project, whose seeds, she says, were sown during IC discussions. Here, Poojitha tells of her experience of participating in IC sessions.

“I come from an educational background which fostered cross-course collaborations, which really shaped the foundation of the design practitioner I am today. Design never works in isolation; you are constantly learning from different disciplines, and working with so many different people in my previous educational experience was crucial for my development as a practitioner. When I started my Masters at UAL, I was hoping for similar opportunities but found that there was no real interaction between courses and between students from different courses. I also found that most interactions between students and lecturers were passive: presentations by lecturers with five minutes for questions at the end. Having presentation after presentation throughout the week without having that space to process and discuss things with each other is hard. You need that decompression space where you can reflect and learn from each other. So I was on a mission to find opportunities for interactions with people outside my course, and when the email came about the IC pilot sessions I joined. The briefs sent out by IC spoke about a lot of things which I was looking forward to learn and sessions were described as interactive and you being able to bring yourself and having discussions about programme-related topics in an open format. It was that which really invited me to be a part of it.

There was something in the dynamic in the class and the style of facilitation which worked really well for me. They were open discussions where we could just share how we felt at that point and grow from there based on our discussions. It seemed like a safe space to discuss thoughts and where you’re not afraid to share what you feel and where you build upon each other and even if you’re wrong, it’s ok to share and learn and come out on the other side. I think that was really enriching and just having people from different courses being there because they wanted to be there and learn from each other. And critiquing things together really helps you shape your own opinions, which is really important.

A lot of opportunities came out of the first IC session, opportunities to interact with students beyond your course. The first thing was that some of us formed this WhatsApp group, which became our safe space to ask and discuss things, and just to have that group of people who are facing similar problems. And this gave rise to initiatives. For me personally, I became an IC ‘ambassador’, did a Changemakers project, and collaborated with my friend Nora whom I met during IC sessions. Most of us attending the pilot series felt there was a lack of opportunity to work with students on other courses. There’s a lot of possibilities to collaborate and see research on similar topics but using different mediums. So, me and Nora sketched out the level of interactions we wanted and presented this at the [Academic Support Conference Who Do We Think We Are](#) to staff. We started by saying what collaboration is and how our collaboration came out of the IC sessions. We then explained why the IC sessions worked for us and how this open form of discussion was missing in our experiences as students. We then highlighted the gap in the learning structure, saying why is it important to have a space to collaborate, especially after returning to in-person learning in 2022 after the isolating experience of the pandemic. We even did a small activity just to make people conscious that they were sitting in a room with people around them. The whole thing felt a bit daunting but over the course of time I have learnt that students are welcome to share their perspectives and opinions. And I really feel that both sides, staff and students, really want to collaborate. It’s just how much space and time

there is, how the system facilitates or supports it. After, we continued to collaborate and also did [a workshop on the core principles of collaboration for Academic Support](#) but my engagement reduced when I took on Changemakers and had less time available.

The seeds for my Changemakers project were also sown in IC discussions. At the beginning of my studies, I was facing this problem that I didn't know where things were in the university, like Student Support Services for example. IC sessions and discussions with other students really helped me understand this wasn't just my problem but a larger problem that needed to be addressed. Also later, when co-facilitating zine sessions as an ambassador, I saw that this was a gap that often came up. Then, in the second year, I had the opportunity to act on this. I came upon Changemakers also because I was looking for more opportunities to add value to my own learning journey. And during our first meeting, the difficulty of locating things in the university also came up. So I started mapping out what is there, looking at the UAL website following all those links and pages and realising how vast the system is. So I had to completely deconstruct what was on the website, show it to students for feedback, add more things and then cluster and re-group information according to student understanding. Essentially, it was about information organisation, because everything was there, it's just that you didn't know you have access. So the project was about finding what was there and organising it from a student understanding and making it into a booklet with QR Codes for easy navigation (see booklet in Appendix A and sample pages below).

The feedback was very positive from a lot of students, course reps and all the people who interact with students. Those who signpost students to things like course support have bookmarked the resource, saying they find the resource really useful. Even people like members of the College Executive Board, Senior Stakeholders and the STAR Group: Student Transition And Retention, really appreciated the project. But I faced challenges when it came to printing the booklet. The booklets were supposed to be part of the Welcome Fair but arrived too late so they ended up being parked in the Student Union office. Having worked on this initiative for a year, I didn't want them to just sit there so I had to distribute the booklets myself. In the end, it reached all six colleges and the Postgraduate Newsletter, where it was one of the most interacted-with feature. So I think it has definitely made an impact on easing some students' journeys and I do feel proud to have made a difference.

Being trained up to co-facilitate IC student workshops also helps to make a difference because students interacting with other students in the Welcome Week is so important. When you come in as an international student, you have to fill in a ton of forms, so you just want your first week to be welcoming, interacting with other students, processing things. So, zine sessions in the Welcome Week are really useful for students coming in for the first time but also for students coming back. It creates a no-pressure environment for interaction where students are reflecting on their journeys and making connections with each other. To have that space where you meet a recent graduate from another college or your course, I think that's invaluable.

Overall, IC gave us a space to start initiatives, research and projects by giving us a chance to interact with each other on a regular basis and to keep conversations ongoing. A lot of people ask me about my Masters experience and for me, opportunities like IC and Changemakers were as important as my course because they added so much value to my learning experience. IC has given me a lot of chances to develop skills and behaviours that are useful in the job world like conducting workshops, once with over 100 students in the room, interacting and speaking with people beyond your own bubble, making an effort to communicate. These are a lot of intangible skills that you need to facilitate communication in a session. These intangible skills are now a big part of my CV and will help me build on my own practice."































Money and finances		Spaced based resources	
	Immigration and visas Assistance and advice to understand your visa type and apply for it		 Lost and found Reclaim your lost belongings conveniently
	Student funding services Opportunities to fund your studies and advice on your fees & finances		 Lockers Every student can get access to secure storage solutions in the campus
	Bursaries Discover the wide range of scholarships, bursaries and awards		 Photo studios Dedicated spaces for professional product or portfolio photography
	Money management Advice on funding, managing money and getting paid work		 And more Click on the college to find more services specific to campus buildings
			Camberwell  Chelsea  CSM  LCC  LCF  Wimbledon 
Students union		Utility support	
	Student communities Create and run student groups based on sports, interests and more		 How to print? Find out how to print, scan and copy at UAL
	Student voice For students by students, a space to share, as we are listening!		 Need IT help? We provide IT systems and support to the UAL community
	Accommodation Support in finding a place, checking contracts and more		 Need to borrow equipment? Wide range of loan equipment to support learning and making
	Visit the Arts SU website for more Appeal support, student campaigns, opportunities & more		 Looking for workshops spaces? Access technical advice and book workshop sessions

Image 15: Sample pages of Poojitha's student guide *UAL support ecosystem*. Included here with permission.

3.1.4 IC as part of other courses

Feedback was also gathered anonymously via online and paper forms from students on other courses IC has worked with since 2018. Courses include Graduate Diploma Textile Design at Chelsea Art College, BA Graphic Design Camberwell, BA Graphic Design Communication at Chelsea, BA Theatre Design Wimbledon, MA Innovation Management CSM, BA Fashion Buying and Merchandising LCF, BA Photography LCC and others, with workshops delivered by different IC team members. Although these IC sessions have been requested at a less regular and embedded basis, feedback is nevertheless overwhelmingly positive. It comments predominantly on the need to value difference, question one's own perspectives and build community.

The workshop Visualising Communication helped me understand more about what communication is, how does it work, what can cause miscommunication and more.

It made me realise how vast the term culture is and how differently everyone views it. I think I'll approach things with a wider perspective remembering that there is always many many ways to look at something.

It was really cool seeing what perspectives everyone had on culture and communication. I felt I learnt a lot about my class and enjoyed understanding them better. I'd like to do better and gain a less English/Colonial understanding of culture and Adam's session helped me to see outside of that more in a more kinesthetic way.

The workshop was really helpful because it is so important to think about how our work could be perceived by others and how we can try to minimize the amount of miscommunication that can form from bad design.

When we discuss together, we can see all kinds of opinions. If my opinion is different from mine [others], I will think about it.

It allowed me to analyse my own thinking process and acknowledge that it's okay to ask questions.

It was very helpful hearing my peers' interpretations of a common theme. It has broadened my outlook and I feel that I am more welcome to ambiguity rather than seeking an objective answer.

3.2 The impact of IC student sessions on student and alumni ‘ambassadors’



Image 17: Zine-making workshop co-facilitated by student and alumni ‘ambassadors’ at the Big Welcome at LCC in October 2023. Photo: Anita Strasser.

IC student and alumni ‘ambassadors’ are registered with Arts Temps and co-facilitate IC student sessions. This is to offer paid work opportunities for students/graduates so they can develop their confidence and employability skills, pass on their acquired knowledge of university life and (intercultural) communication skills to other students and transition more gradually from university life to professional life. In October 2023 I ran a participative workshop with seven student and alumni ‘ambassadors’ to get feedback on how participating in and co-facilitating IC student sessions impacted them. The workshop involved a focus group discussion based on prompts from previously collected feedback (words such as ‘belonging’, ‘self-confidence’ and ‘pressure-free learning’ and phrases such as ‘transition from being a student to workshop facilitator’ and ‘not comfortable sharing in a group setting to being comfortable raising issues’). This was followed by an individual mapping exercise and a collaborative visualisation of the impact of IC sessions. The students were a mix of home and international students from BA and MA courses. Three students had become ‘ambassadors’ after joining the pilot series at CSM (Section 3.1.3), two after regularly attending zine-making sessions at LCC and two after the Language-Art Project (Section 3.3).

The feedback on experiencing IC sessions as a participant was overwhelmingly positive. For these students, “one of the most important aspects of attending IC student sessions was having that common and safe space which enabled a cross-pollination of ideas and practices”. They commented on the fact that “the open discussion format”, “the pressure-free and non-hierarchical environment” and the perception of IC sessions being a “safe space” enabled discussions on difficult topics with participants unafraid to voice their views and change perspectives. They also helped shy students gain more confidence to speak up, gave participants time and space to digest and reflect on course content, fostered creative ideas which students implemented into their course projects, assignments and projects outside university, gave rise to collaborations and friendships with people beyond their courses, disciplines and the university. Many students said that those sessions added a lot of value to their learning experience, crediting IC rather than their courses with their positive UAL experience as in this quote: “If anybody were to ask me what’s the biggest value I got from this whole experience, I could hardly think of the course or a course project but I think about IC.” Furthermore, students commented on the fact that these sessions helped them come to terms with being different. One student, for example, said: “In China, we feel conflicted or afraid of being different and during those discussions [IC] I sort of accepted the difference. Everyone is different and everyone in the room was ok with the differences. So that’s the most important part for me in IC.” And another student, who referred to herself as being autistic, said that the pressure-free learning atmosphere, the hands-on element of making and the conversations have definitely helped her “learn better” and “expand her whole self”.

Although the comments above convey the emotional aspect of the participants’ experience of IC student sessions, the collaborative visualisation in Image 18 is much more indicative of the profound impact IC has had on those students’ well-being and learning journeys. The visualisation shows a variety of cats playing with wool, indicating that IC was playful and students’ development interwoven and wholesome, starting from a point of isolation and confusion (top left) and ending at a point of connection, growth and comfort (bottom right). Overall, it symbolises the development of ‘The Cat Group’ – the name the group of ‘ambassadors’ gave itself (and their Instagram group chat) after one student made a joke about speaking cat language when realising she was the only one in the group who only spoke one language aside from English (see Case Study II). Since then, whenever a new student joins, they are asked: “Do you speak cat?” This is significant in the sense that ‘ambassadors’ have become a distinct group of friends, a community that is built on a shared dialogue which has its foundation in IC student sessions. As such, IC sessions arguably foster intercultural dialogues and community-building in and beyond the university.

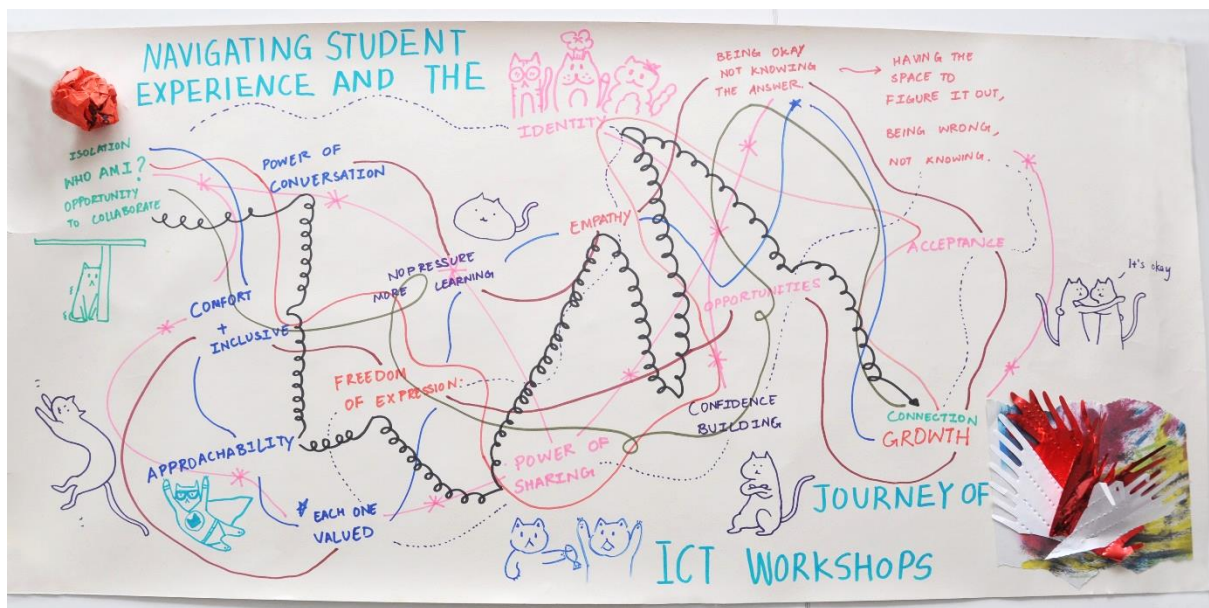


Image 18: Collaborative visualisation of the impact of IC sessions made during the participative workshop with student and alumni ‘ambassadors’, October 2023. Photo: Anita Strasser.

This sense of continuity was also expressed when participants talked about being co-facilitators of IC student workshops and later running their own projects and workshops with the support from IC. Participants commented on the fact that it seemed surprisingly easy to transition from being a workshop participant to being a co-facilitator, with one student saying: “It kind of just happened, it was magical”. Another said that “becoming a workshop facilitator goes hand in hand with developing my own creative practice. The skill of doing workshops, working within a group and interacting with people has been super beneficial for me, whether that’s talking to placement providers or just to have the confidence to initiate my own workshops”. The improved employability skills were also commented on by Poojitha Lal (Case Study I), Catherine Yuhui Li (Case Study II) and Sheen Che (Case Study III), with them saying the skills developed through co-facilitating IC workshops have helped them improve their CVs and employability and have given them more confidence in applying for jobs. As such, IC is offering ‘access to employability learning and development opportunities across the institution’ (Richard Sant in *Draft Baseline Employability Offer for UAL (BA) students*, April 2024).

There was also general agreement that students felt quite empowered by being able to offer something to other people, not just to students who seem to appreciate workshops being run by (former) students but also to other people. One example is [UAL’s first Zine Exchange and Publishing Fair](#) at Peckham Levels in 2023, which brought together students and alumni, independent publishers and printers and local residents. ‘Ambassadors’ were not only

involved in supporting the smooth running of the fair, but they were also able to showcase their own zines and make connections. Finally, a significant comment was that working as an alumni ‘ambassador’ offers a continued sense of belonging: “These sessions are kind of the only connection I now have with UAL and this gives me grounds.” The experiences and sentiments expressed during this evaluation workshop are also echoed in feedback comments sent to IC by email (with permission for use):

Letting students and graduates help and facilitate sessions, we can see new approaches and ideas are coming up – the construction of workshops and learning sessions in various ways could give the previously fixed education system more possibilities and creativity, as well as promote the sharing of educational resources. Building an alternative student-to-student platform alongside the traditional education system not only improves the accessibility for wider audiences, but also strengthens the communication and collaboration among different courses and disciplines in UAL.

I cherish the opportunity Adam gave for students to host and deliver workshops and events.

From my perspective as a post-student, I seek, through the platform we are together building, to achieve mutual help. I could see the development of making UAL a root/community/harbour where people can always refer back, and where creativities and collaborations happen. Thank you for all these meaningful and significant ideas, and our common ground on ‘making it better’ among the differences.



Image 19: At the Zine Exchange at Peckham Levels November 2023. Photo: Anita Strasser.

This kind of experience was also made visible in the mapping exercise I asked workshop participants to complete individually, which, once again, offer additional and perhaps deeper insights into the emotional aspect of IC. Images 20, 21 and 22 are examples of such maps and although self-explanatory, Image 20 is followed by the students' insightful explanation:

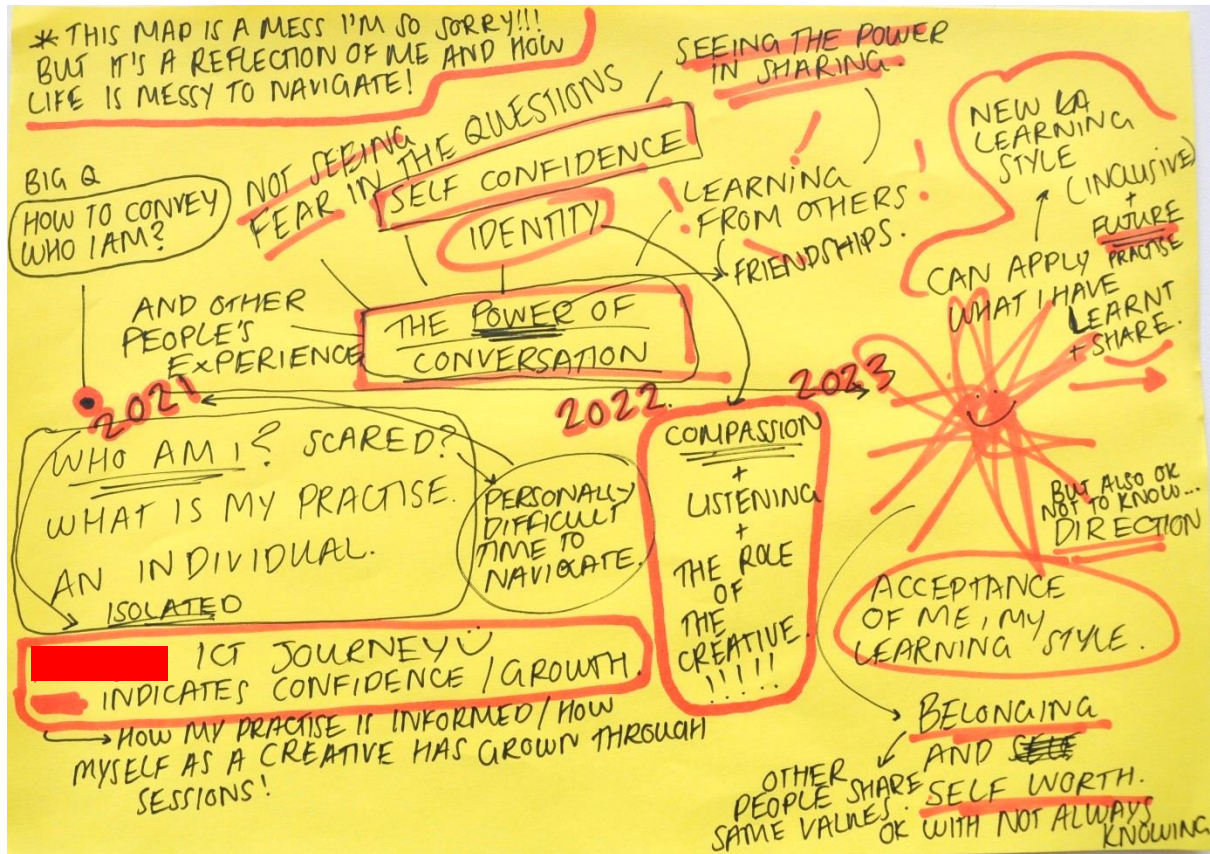


Image 20: A participant's map of their IC experience made during a participative workshop in October 2023.

Being part of IC workshops has really helped me discover more about my creative practice. The workshops are always centred around the idea of 'doing' and 'creating' in response to a problem put forward or theme, which I find super helpful being a neurodiverse individual. IC workshops have given me the confidence to identify how best I work when responding to briefs (practically/hands-on), and to not compare myself to others who work more theoretically. Being part of these workshops has also reinforced the importance of compassion and listening when it comes to the role of the creative. I'm a strong believer in the best way to learn is through the stories and experiences of others, and this has been an ethos shared within our IC community. The importance of 'active listening' has been reiterated in these workshops, and a skill I'm forever grateful for learning more about. I honestly believe this one skill applied to any conflict (corporate or wider) has the ability to make the world a much better place.

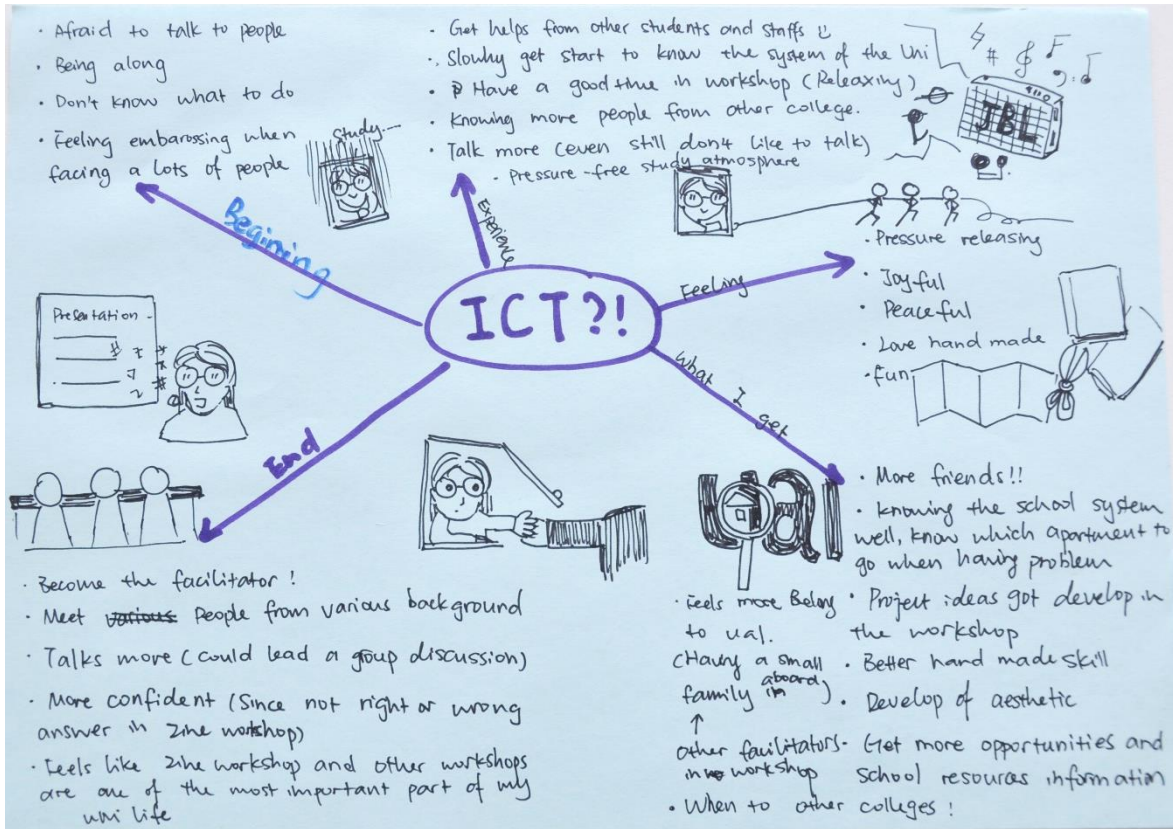


Image 21: A participant's map of their IC experience made during a participative workshop in October 2023.

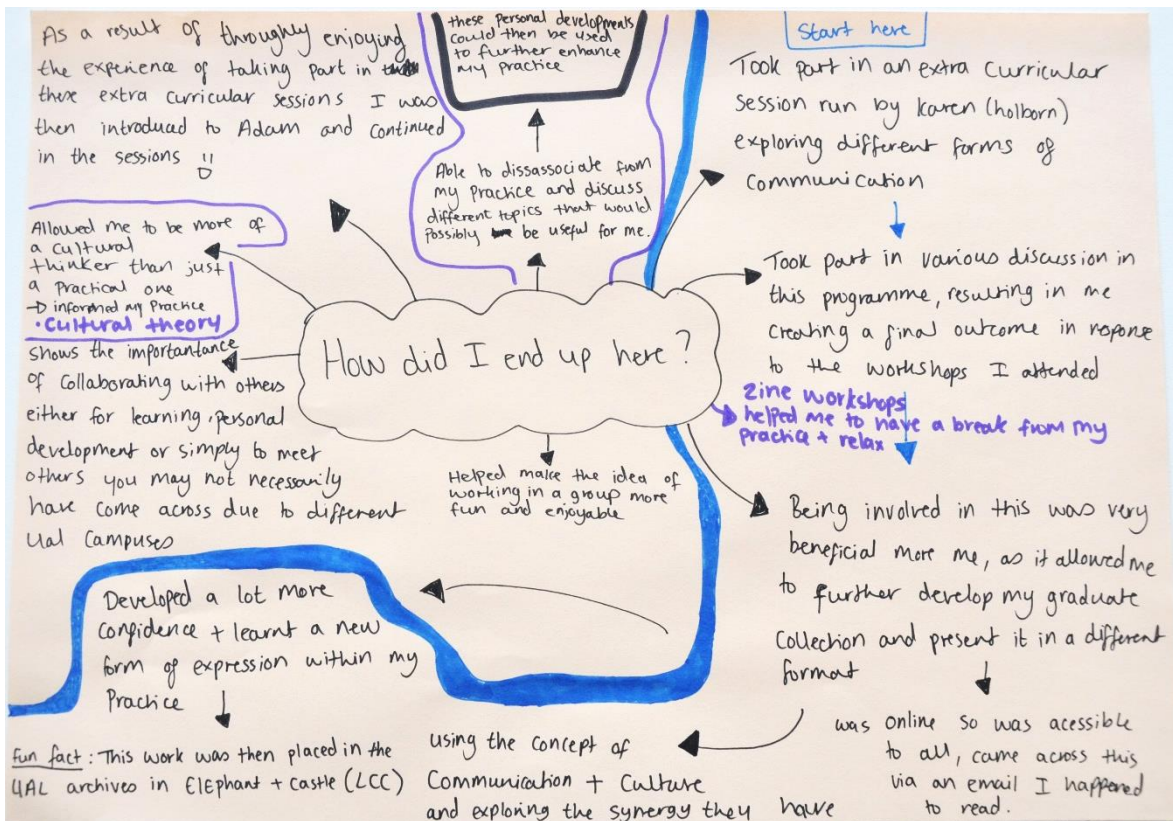


Image 22: A participant's map of their IC experience made during a participative workshop in October 2023.

Case Study II: Catherine Yuhui Li

Catherine Yuhui Li is Space Assistant at Peckham Levels, supporting UAL arts and design undergraduate and postgraduate students to help them work independently on their projects. Catherine is also an independent curator, having graduated from the MA Culture, Criticism and Curation at CSM in 2022. During her time at CSM, she attended two sessions of the IC pilot series and became an IC 'ambassador' shortly afterwards. With the support of IC, Catherine also ran her own workshop. She says that getting involved with IC has helped her build confidence, feel belonging at UAL, improve her CV and get the job at Peckham Levels. Here, Catherine tells of the impact participating in IC sessions has had on her:

"I attended the 'Talking about values' workshop and I don't think I experienced anything like this on my Masters course, you know, making up and sharing collective stories with the value cards and building instant connections with people around me. I didn't feel like an equal participant on my course because I found it difficult to fit in. The sudden jump from one language system to another was hard and even though I spoke out in group discussions, it felt awkward, like I'd said something wrong. The IC workshops made me feel much more comfortable because there, everybody had a chance to speak and was listened to, and because I could speak about my personal history and culture, I didn't have to worry about saying something wrong. We heard really interesting viewpoints and could break some stereotype of some cultures. And it was about making something together, thinking and making together and not just showing off academic knowledge. I gained more confidence in terms of talking without fear, fear of saying something wrong or choosing the wrong vocabulary, so this helped me be and express myself and not try to fit into a system.

After the British Academy visit (the last IC session), I received an invitation to be trained up as workshop facilitator for Big Welcome zine sessions. That's when we established our 'Cat Group'. During our training session, we were talking about languages, and I felt quite sorry for myself because I could only speak Chinese and not very good English whereas others could speak three or more languages. So I just said I speak Cat Language because sometimes I find it easier to connect with my cat through body language. I wanted to try and break our understanding of what language is, that it is not just literal and human language but also the language of nature, animals and other ways of communicating. I found it quite difficult and intimidating to learn English in another country, so I was just thinking about connecting with people in another, more accessible way. So that's how the 'Cat Group' was born.

I'm really interested in the idea of participation and when somebody initiates something and gathers people from all over the world from all different backgrounds together to see what will happen. The IC workshops are good participatory workshops and for students who are searching for alternative ways of communicating and build confidence in talking, sharing and expressing themselves. As students we can access lots of 'public' spaces like the canteen and library but they don't make us feel we belong. For that, we need a 'common' space, a space that is ours, a space we share and have the power to modify. Like the communal table for a zine or Lego® workshop. For 2 hours, this is our common space where we are allowed to make and talk about whatever we want, where we feel we own something like the story in our zine or the topic of conversation. The IC workshops are a very good method to give people belonging.

Facilitating these participatory workshops and observing students encountering a multi-lingual environment, making something like zines or Lego® models and then share and collaborate with each other, was a good opportunity for me. Curatorial concepts, for example, are very abstract

so you have to be good at telling a story through a show to attract people in. I was attracted to the making of things to then talk about them in these workshops. Facilitating sessions was also important because after graduating, me and a friend felt quite lost. We struggled with applying for jobs so every time the opportunity to work came up, we took it. But before I started I was wondering whether I was capable of facilitating workshops and providing a service to students. I was a student myself, struggling with language and I'd seen very few staff from China or other Asian countries providing services to students. But when the students realised I was a recent student they were so excited because they could ask me about everything and I knew exactly what they were worrying about and where they could find certain information. I realised that I was needed, that I had knowledge and information that could help new students solve little problems and reduce their anxiety. So, it's a really nice equal system; there is no gap between the people needing help and the people providing help. And I really don't think there is a second person like Adam who gives those opportunities to students and recent graduates. He simply trusts us to run those workshops and I find his trust really touching.

When still on the course, me and my friend had already been talking about *Sketchibition* – a role-playing game that would bring artists, curators and gallerists together to sketch out an exhibition as if in real life. During our course, we felt quite isolated and disconnected from other students, particularly artists. As curators we need to be able to communicate with artists to really understand what they want from a curator but there was this lack of communication and collaboration at the university, also with established professionals such as gallerists. So we came up with this role-play about curating an exhibition, where participants have to take on a different role and fully immerse themselves into this unknown identity. We discussed exhibition themes, created the different roles and designed sets of cards with scenarios taken from real life to which people had to respond. Some were to do with practical/technical solutions, others with positive or challenging situations. We just wanted to practice responding to real-life situations. We wanted to do this workshop as part of our course but it wasn't approved due to time constraints.

We then suggested it to Adam and he was very supportive and helped us realise it through organisational and financial help. We developed a proposal to say how it fits into IC because it was about intercultural communication: people with different backgrounds and professions communicating, trying to understand the power dynamics in the artworld. But it was also about professional development because those real-life scenarios push you to think about how to act on them and to have contingency plans. Adam then booked a space and, as it was a test, we invited 12 people we knew: friends, friends of friends, current students, members of the Cat Group, recent graduates and some even outside UAL. It was a very successful workshop with really interesting reactions to the scenarios and very positive feedback, including suggestions. It ran really smoothly and without awkward moments. We also had a backup plan. Doing all the work with IC and working with so many different people in different workshops really helped us design our own workshop. And the fact that I was able to invite 12 people also made me realise the network of people I had built up through IC and my individual projects. I'm only sad to say that we only did the workshop this once and I wish we had done it more often.

This experience with IC definitely helped me get the job as Space Assistant at Peckham Levels. Designing and running the workshops and the whole practical experience of communicating with students and providing instant in-person student service added value to my CV because in this job I also need to provide responsive, instant and helpful support for students and also talk to them about personal things. And because I'm also an independent curator, they ask me for help or suggestions when organising a show. I know what students need when working in this kind of off-campus space because I've been there."

3.3 The impact of the Language-Art Project



Image 23: Poster for the LAP 2023 exhibition. Photo: Yana Kasa.

I found that the Language-Art Project (LAP) has also had a significant impact on participating students who gave feedback. Comments relate to improved (intercultural) communication and creative skills, a greater appreciation of difference, the building of confidence and employability skills, as well as an increased sense of well-being and belonging at UAL and, generally, an enhanced course and university experience. Additionally, participating in LAP has increased many students' interest in language not only as a means of communication but also as a cultural and philosophical concept, feeding into artistic work post LAP. This feedback relates to both the participating artists and the Curation students curating LAP exhibitions. This section of the report is organised into two parts, with the first reporting on the impact of LAP on participating artists and the second on the LAP exhibition curators.

3.3.1 The Language-Art Project from the perspective of participating artists

As this section contains two case studies, I want to begin here with one case study to highlight just how important participating in LAP can be for students and the profound impact this can have on a student's personal and creative development. Not only did this student feel imbued with respect and value, participating in LAP and other IC activities also enticed her to develop her own project and made her student experience at UAL more enjoyable.

Case Study III: Sheen Che

Sheen is a recent graduate from Camberwell who participated in the Many Languages Poetry Club (an off-shoot project of the Language-Art Project) and, as a result, developed her own project entitled 'Junk Poetry'. Sheen also participated in the Language-Art Project, IC workshops, the 'ambassador' scheme and did some research for the Language Centre on AI Translation Tools. Here, Sheen tells of her IC journey and the impact this has had on her.

"The first term at UAL was a very dark time for me. I had just arrived in a new country, using unfamiliar language and trying to make a normal life and getting used to a new routine, and there were so many activities and things to do at university, it was a bit too much. And on the course, we were given an exploration project, a sort of nice introduction to the course with few limitations on the theme. But when I tried to explain my theme to my tutor, they said my English isn't good enough and I should do something else. I didn't have enough courage to say that I can do it and instead spent a lot of time self-questioning and wondering what to do – follow my heart and insist on my theme or be obedient. I followed my heart and got D. I didn't complain because I thought it was my fault but when I worked on a different project with a different tutor, I got an A. It was only then that I realised getting a D on my first project was not my fault. I also realised I was not the only one with that experience. A lot of other Chinese students said they experienced the same. That's the time when I made the decision to do anything I can to participate in Intercultural Communication, just to get involved in change.

I had already joined the Many Languages Poetry Club in my first month at UAL and I really enjoyed that because it was so relaxed. Karen was the first person who respected me for who I am and didn't push anyone to speak or turn on the camera (at the time it was all online). She also had really interesting information to share about English Art and Literature and I really enjoyed that feeling of just listening to her. We met regularly and after some time Karen asked us to write our own poems. That was a big deal for me because up until then I thought I was just a plant in the corner. I never thought I'd write or share anything and it was really difficult for me to write poetry in English. I wasn't confident in the language and writing poetry isn't easy. So I came up with the idea of 'Junk Poetry', although I didn't have that name at the time. I just thought I need words and sentences but I don't have the language skills so I wondered, can I just write poetry stealing other people's words? Then I noticed the junk newspapers on the tube, where politicians show off their sophisticated language skills but just speak nonsense. So I started cutting up bits of language from these newspapers and created a poem with intentional grammar mistakes to free myself from the worry of using correct English. I took it to the next poetry meeting and as I didn't have the courage to read it out, I asked if somebody else would read it. A native speaker volunteered and I expected them to read it smoothly but they didn't. It was so interesting to hear how they stopped in weird places because they were confused by the grammar. I thought it was quite simple, they are native speakers, they can read it better than me but then I realised it's not like that and I suddenly felt we were equals. There was no gap between me and native speakers. This made me feel more confident, and I thought I could develop this into a workshop to help other Chinese students develop confidence and not worry about gaps. (You can [watch Sheen's workshop explanation on youtube](#)).

I tested the workshop [Exploring the art of junk poetry: context and composition](#) as part of a [series of workshops on sketchbooks organised by IC and UAL-wide Academic Support](#). The inspiring thing was that only native speakers came. This was quite unexpected as the workshop was designed for non-native speakers but it was really inspiring because I could see things native speakers couldn't and the other way round. I started seeing other possibilities for the project so afterwards I tried to make it more open where it doesn't matter whether you are a

native or non-native speaker. It also gave me confidence that I was holding a workshop for native speakers without fear, so this was a nice twist. (For a detailed workshop evaluation, you can watch Sheen's [video on youtube](#)).

I also took part in an exhibition for the Language-Art Project. I'd made an illustrated book in which I explored how expressive images could be without words, how to create an artistic and poetic narrative through images. After that exhibition, Karen emailed me asking if I'd like to be trained up to co-facilitate IC zine workshops and I agreed. I had attended a zine session with Adam before and, like Karen, he doesn't put pressure on people to speak but somehow manages to get everyone involved. I and other Chinese students were silent at the beginning but we knew it was ok, you feel it. But I remember I spoke a lot in that session so I thought maybe this workshop format works somehow. I have some language teaching experience from before, preparing Chinese students for the IELTS exam. But that's a different way of teaching and after attending IC workshops, I don't like the word 'teach' anymore. It's more about what I want to 'share' with others. And by co-facilitating zine workshops I could make another difference because new students feel at ease when they walk into a workshop and there are people who look similar. I feel quite lucky to meet all these people at IC and have the chance to talk to students. They might have questions, they might have difficulties or they might just want to share something with me, and they trust me because I'm from the same ethnic group.

I also got involved in a research project for the Language Centre about AI Translation tools because many non-native students are using translation tools when writing their essays and some staff are worrying about this trend. I was part of a focus group with two other Chinese students and it was interesting because one student was on the rejection side, another on the positive side and I am in between. So it was an interesting discussion which also involved Adam and Helen. We then shared a questionnaire with other Chinese students, asking what translation tools they are using, why they're using them and what they feel about them. We had a follow-up discussion with some of those students and then submitted our report to IC. I would be interested in continuing this research.

Working with IC is great and it was the people I met through IC who made my time at UAL valuable. IC is quite an open environment and people are respectful to each other. I would say it's the best place you can imagine to start working for the first time. It's much milder than the real competitive working environment and it really helped me to get better prepared for all the job interviews I did recently (Sheen has also been offered a job). Being involved in IC also helped me practise my presentation, communication and language skills and now I'm not so worried about making grammar mistakes. I had the chance to communicate and work with so many different people who all have different ways of thinking and different social skills and I learnt how to interact with people and understand the subtleties of language like humour, irony, etc. IC is definitely a necessary part of the university and they need to expand and invite more people to take part. The university has a responsibility to contribute to the whole of society and for foreigners especially, IC is a chance to be valued and respected."

Below are comments collected after LAP 2021, when the whole project including the exhibition took place online. Some feedback relates to the positive impact participating in LAP has had on students' sense of connectedness to UAL and other students in times of online learning, stressing their appreciation of collaborating with students across various courses, disciplines and colleges. Other feedback relates to the safe, warm and welcoming

environment LAP offers, enabling fruitful conversations and surprising artistic outcomes. Students also commented on how participating in LAP helped them develop their creative practice and cultural awareness of other languages and ways of communicating. Much of the feedback comments on a variety of effects and are worth quoting at length.

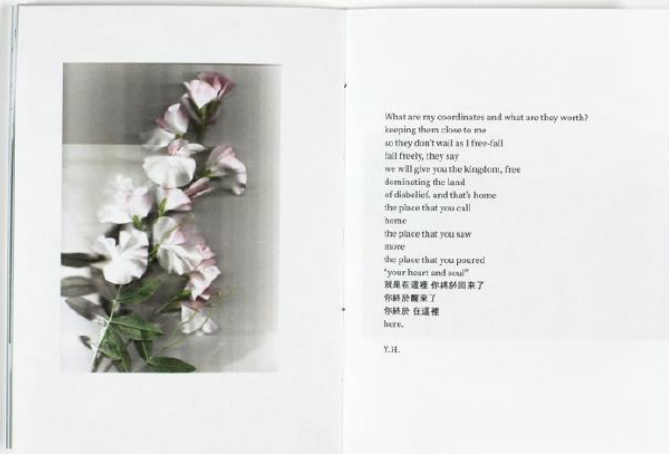
Being a part of the Language-Art Exhibition was really exciting. I loved working with a group of people, all from different countries and backgrounds, and all with different experiences surrounding language. I don't necessarily speak a foreign language, however hearing people's ideas and seeing people's work that had language at the centre of it was really inspiring. You can tell a lot about a person based on the language they use, and I think that idea also applies to larger scale communities. Gen Z, like many other generations, has picked up certain words and phrases that only we would understand or relate to. From pop culture references to vernacular, Gen Z I feel has created its own language, and I really wanted to try and capture that in this piece. I don't think I would've thought to have made a sculpture if it wasn't for the exhibition and current circumstances. Now leaving the project, I've noticed I'm already thinking about ideas and concepts that were brought up in group discussions, and I'm happy the exhibition is having an influence on my own practice and artwork, even after its showcasing date.

I have been extremely grateful for joining the language art project this year. Karen has set a very safe, warm and creative atmosphere to talk and wonder about the wide meaning, consequence and potential of language today. The project has influenced my whole practice and perspective as an artist. As someone who has lived and worked in many different countries I have begun to recognise the power a language has in the codes and norms of a given culture. I have become aware of how learning a foreign language is a sort of code to breaking the enigma of people and behavioural patterns. The language art project has made me wonder about the thresholds between languages, and the subtle, yet important differences that occur in the translation from one language to another. The project has then helped me place myself in between the different languages that I live, and that I have lived in the past years. By reading through my personal diaries since 2018, I am understanding that our identities are directly bound up on how we express ourselves, or actually: how we can express ourselves. In my case I am living - thinking and dreaming - through many different languages, and would not feel whole without each of them. All though I might not master any of them fully, let alone my mother tongue, the connection between them make up who I am. So how can I show myself fully to someone who does not master the same languages as I do? How do we overcome the barriers of language? These are some of the questions that I have dealt with throughout this project, and hope to discuss together.

I took part in the language art project last year as well, and was very excited to take part again this year - one of the main reasons I think this project is so exciting is the potential to collaborate across the many courses within UAL, with no limitations of whether it's a foundation, BA, MA course, everyone is welcome so the diversity is amazing, I think this is something we greatly need in the university, this ability to collaborate across different disciplines under a common interest. For example, I was able to create this poetry book with D. this year who studies MA Publishing at LCC, which I never could have done without her expertise...and it was also very inspiring to work with a bigger group with four other people and create a three dimensional [online] exhibition space which again I didn't have a clue how to set up, and yeah so I learnt a lot through this process. A wonderful thing that came from the project is how wide ranging each of our interest that lies in the huge realm of 'language' can be shared and overlapped. I really appreciate the online meetings that were held by Karen where we were able to share ideas we had amongst ourselves and openly discuss the nuances and beauty of language. It has definitely opened my eyes to different cultures and topics such as lost languages or the digital language that we encounter so much today. The collaboration aspect is, of course great especially in these times and it is so exciting to get a glimpse of each other's practices - and I love the openness of being able to submit your own solo piece as well. I think there is something wonderful about surrounding yourself with this discourse around language and offering your individual piece as a response to the interactions and overall project. So, yeah, I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of it and I always gain so much from it - I'm definitely going to participate again next time!

When I first started my project on language and art, I was struck by the fact that people who had participated in this exhibition in previous years not only returned to do the same exhibition, but they brought all their friends along. I love the meetings. Sometimes we report free, sometimes we talked, sometimes we didn't do very much at all. But I always came away feeling very, very relaxed. It's a sharing of intention, sharing of inspiration, sharing of moments ... and being connected with another being. So I decided to start my project on a silent communication, and using art as a starting point, and send pictures to colleagues and friends and even strangers during lockdown. And I commence a dialogue, and soon the dialogue itself became the artwork; the artwork itself was subsidiary. So thank you Karen, I've really loved this experience and learned a lot from this project.

Language - Art Project 2020-21



Déborá Caro Reyes, Yulin Huang, 'Somewhere in the flyway' MA Publishing at LCC, MA Fine Art at CSM, UAL | Language Art Project 2020/21

More than just meaning

Alberte Agerskov
Shivani Mathur
Nibras Al-Salman
Nina Žuk
Roberta Borroni.

[See projects →](#)
More than just meaning



Nibras Al-Salman - 'Facing my history', BA Ceramic Design, Central Saint Martins, Language Art Project 2020/21, UAL



Memory, storytelling, testimony

Alberte Agerskov
Ona Telos (Tanya Hlavatskykh/ Glavatskix)
Zichen Wang
Donna Poingdestre.

[See projects →](#)
Memory, storytelling, testimony

Image 24: Screenshots of LAP 2021 online gallery.

In February 2024 I ran a participative reflection workshop with three students who participated in LAP 2023. The workshop involved individual note-taking in response to three questions before discussing the questions with the group. The three questions were: 1) Why did you participate in LAP? 2) How did you experience the process of LAP – your feelings, conversations, ideas on language, etc.? 3) What has been the impact of taking part in LAP? These activities were followed by a collaborative visualisation of the participants' LAP experience. While anonymity was offered to all students, two participants in this workshop requested to be named and for their LAP projects to be linked to their stories.

The section begins with a student who took an interest in LAP because “for some reason at UAL it became really poignant that I was not British”. This student did not grow up in the country of their nationality (a country in South Asia) and did not fully learn to speak their mother tongue. Instead, they grew up speaking English and going to an international school in a country whose language they also learnt. In sum, English is their first language. Growing up with others in similar situations, their “complex” upbringing was never given much thought. In fact, it was perceived as a positive experience, being able to share cultural and linguistic experiences with others from culturally diverse backgrounds. Coming to Britain, however, “forced” the student to consider their identity as they suddenly found themselves confronted almost daily with questions around their identity, nationality and culture, as well as their linguistic competence with their mother tongue and first language (e.g. fluency, accuracy, accent, etc.). This led to what the student termed an “identity crisis”, making them feel very upset. When they joined LAP, they were planning on making something to express their distress, writing long paragraphs in their notebooks to explain what each art piece was going to be about. However, the process of developing work for LAP made them think more about their positive experience of growing up in an international context. Through conversations with people with similar experiences, especially their sister and old friends, thus revisiting their childhood, watching familiar films in a familiar language and “going down memory lane”, the student was able to channel their anger into celebrating their access to multiple languages. This resulted in “happier art pieces” for LAP.

Although the student feels they did not experiment enough artistically, the whole process of participating in LAP has had a huge impact on them with regards to their identity. “The conversations I had with my sister and old friends helped me settle in my identity and see the positive side again. However, it’s also made me think about how I want to identify myself as an artist. In the creative world, there is this aspect of advertising yourself and how you present yourself. If I advertise myself as an artist with my nationality, this raises certain expectations of me that I don’t fulfil as I didn’t take in a lot of that culture. There are more

culturally engrained artists with that nationality that have better ties to the country than I have. Identifying as South Asian is also problematic because my upbringing has been so different to the South Asian artists I know. So I don't think I bring to the table what others expect from these identifications and so it is still running through my mind today how I can identify myself in the artworld." The student joined LAP again for the 2024 project, wanting to delve deeper into this topic but also wanting to be more experimental with the creative output. Having seen the artistic output of other LAP projects, the student felt inspired to give it another go.

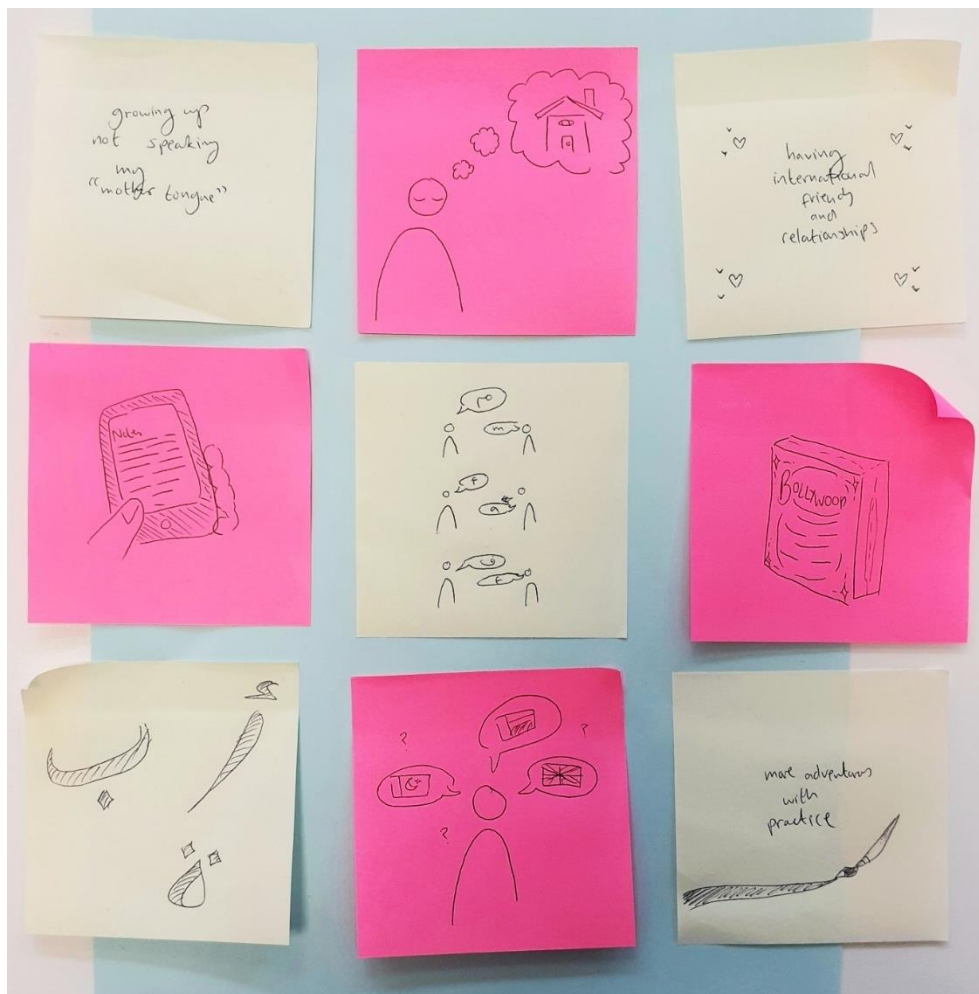


Image 25: Notes taken by the student in response to the three questions.

Shangda Li joined LAP 2023 because of his interest in culture and communication. Shangda is particularly keen on bringing his cultural heritage to other students and the world and on learning from other students and cultures too. Although Shangda studies Graphic Design, he saw LAP as a chance to experiment with different media such as poetry, music, photography and film-making, trying to convey different vibes and emotions he has experienced. As part

of his LAP work, he created six A3 images and a film entitled 奔 (R), which can be viewed on the [LAP website](#). Shangda worked with a friend who's a film-making student who helped him invaluable on technical parts. "It's really important to work technically professionally and I learnt a lot about taking photographs and film editing. It's been a big step for me as a graphic designer to do some film-making and I'm really amazed at the video." Shangda also feels really proud of bringing Chinese culture to the international stage, as this is an important part of his artistic practice: "It was also amazing to share the beauty of Chinese culture with people around. Even though some people don't understand the Chinese characters, I translated my poems into English so people can still feel the beauty of the poems and the visual." Shangda says that participating in LAP has been a "fabulous" experience. Not only did it give him the chance to experiment with different media, he also found it "interesting to see how different languages can work together in different shapes, colours, backgrounds and forms of communication. Every language and culture has its beauty and the Language-Art Project brings all these beauties together. Through this project, I have learnt something new and new techniques to work professionally with new and old friends to develop a beautiful cultural project."

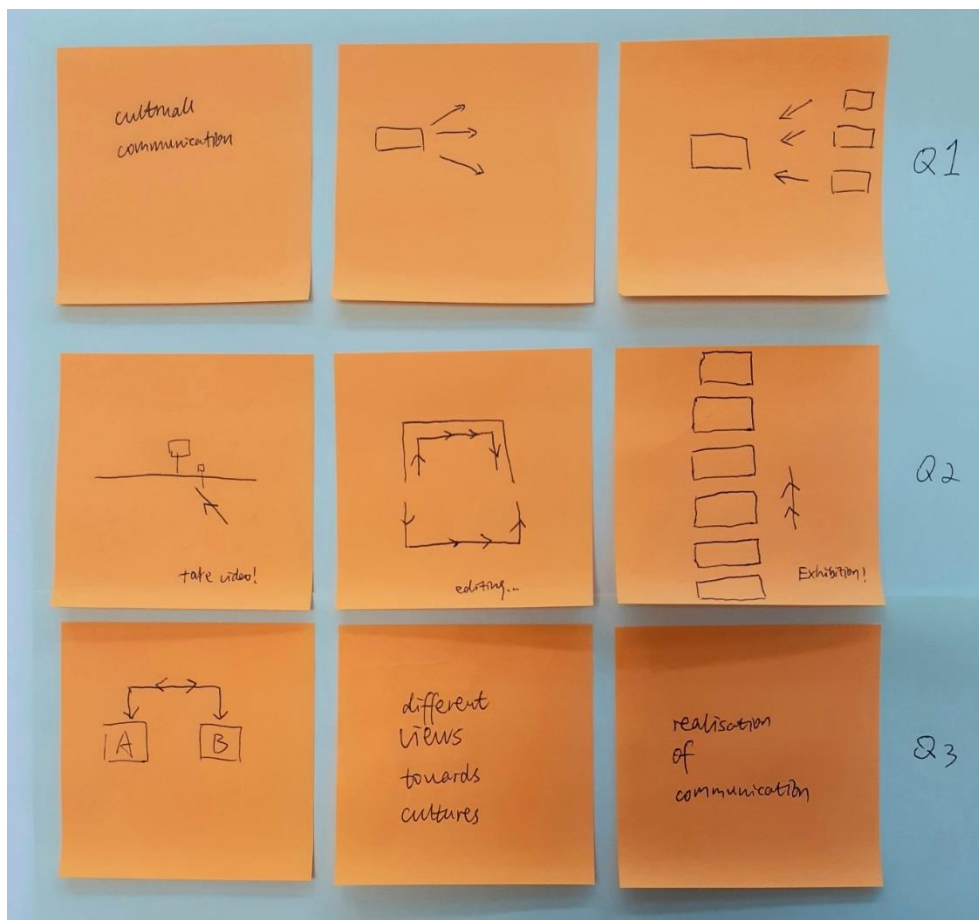


Image 26: Notes taken by Shangda Li in response to the three questions.

Flora Lu is a 3rd year Illustration and Visual Media student at LCC and joined LAP during her DPS year (Diploma in Professional Studies – an experiential learning experience in Year 3). She came across the email advertising LAP while she was looking for a DPS placement and was immediately intrigued. “I found it quite different from what I usually do at uni. It was this aspect of language which interested me. In China we have a very strong language system so I wanted to bring my cultural heritage to the project and I wanted to do some hand-drawing.” Flora created a hand-drawn storytelling booklet entitled *The Evolution of Ancient Chinese Oracles to Modern Chinese Characters*, together with *Moving image of Chinese Oracle* and *Chinese Zodiac Oracles* fold zine. Her artwork can be viewed on the [LAP website](#) and sample pages of her booklet can be seen below.

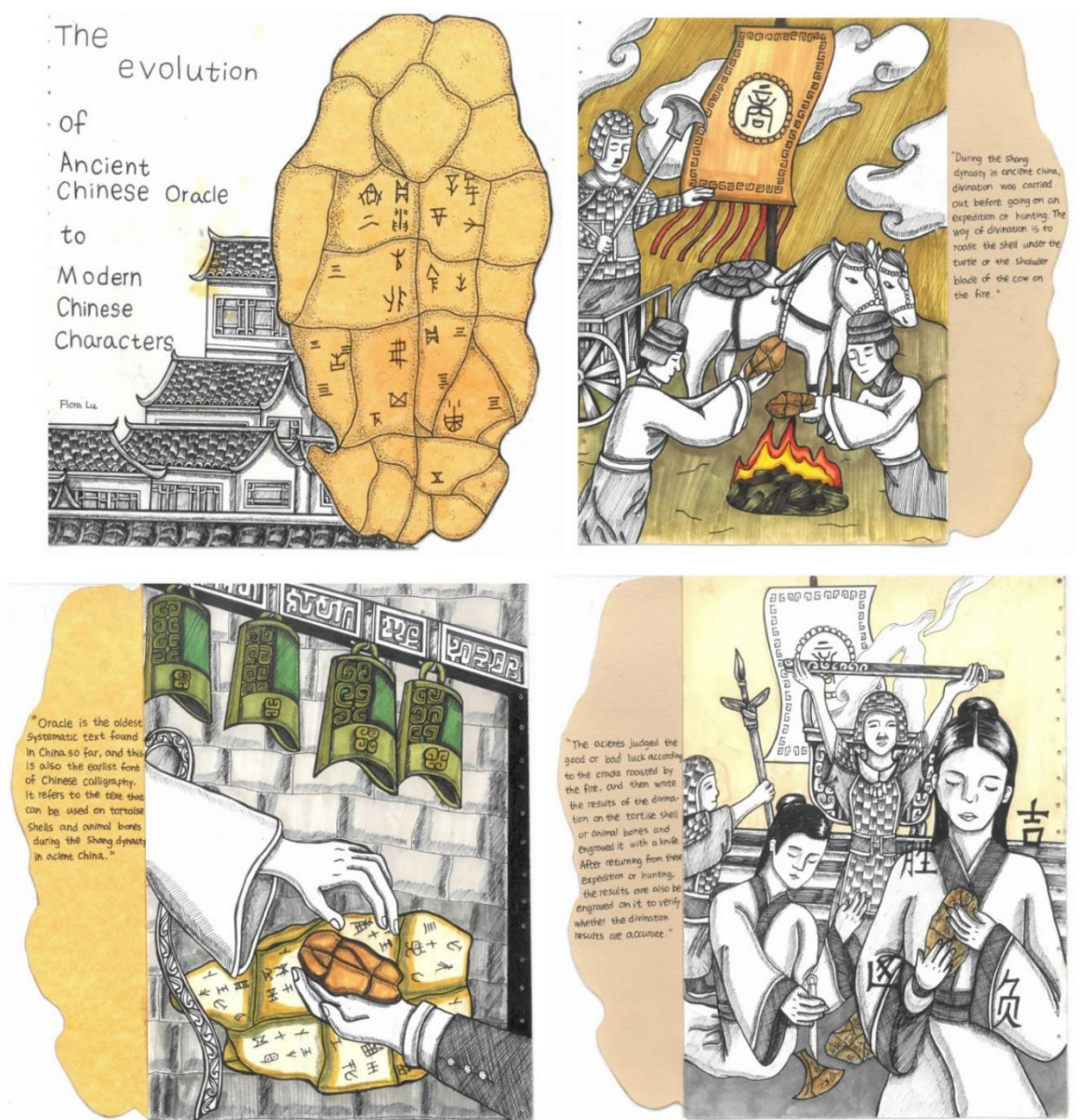


Image 27: Sample pages of Flora Lu’s hand-drawn storytelling booklet *The Evolution of Ancient Chinese Oracles to Modern Chinese Characters*, with kind permission to publish it here.

“I went to an international school where we didn’t learn anything about Chinese history or the Chinese language system. I wanted to address this knowledge gap and learn more about Chinese history. I really enjoyed the process of communicating and researching the evolution of the Chinese characters, drawing the storytelling frames by hand and making a storyline from the starting point to the end of the book. It was a pleasure for me to present cultural heritage from China to Britain.” Unfortunately, Flora couldn’t make it to the exhibition as she was abroad, but she received wonderful feedback about the popularity of her work and how the audiences interacted with it. At that point, however, she didn’t quite realise what an impact her LAP project would have. When she returned to UAL, she went to the Language Centre to collect her artwork. “That’s when I met Helen (McAllister), the head of the Language Centre, and she was quite impressed by the project and wanted some digital copies to go into the library. So now I have my own publication in UAL. Then Karen [Harris] asked me if I wanted to hold an event to talk about the evolution of Chinese characters and my project. I said yes and then Karen sent the information to the whole UAL community. My tutors are really proud of me. This makes me carry on to explore and discover about the Chinese culture because I found people really love it. So for me, LAP is a really good experience. I saw the different opportunities for my future career as an emerging illustrator and I saw that I can do it. I came here in 2019 and started with the Foundation course and I really enjoyed the experience of being a student at UAL and help to run something at uni. I feel like my hard work is paying off.”

At the end of the workshop, the students created a visualisation of their LAP experience and working processes, chatting, laughing and sharing experiences as they were drawing.

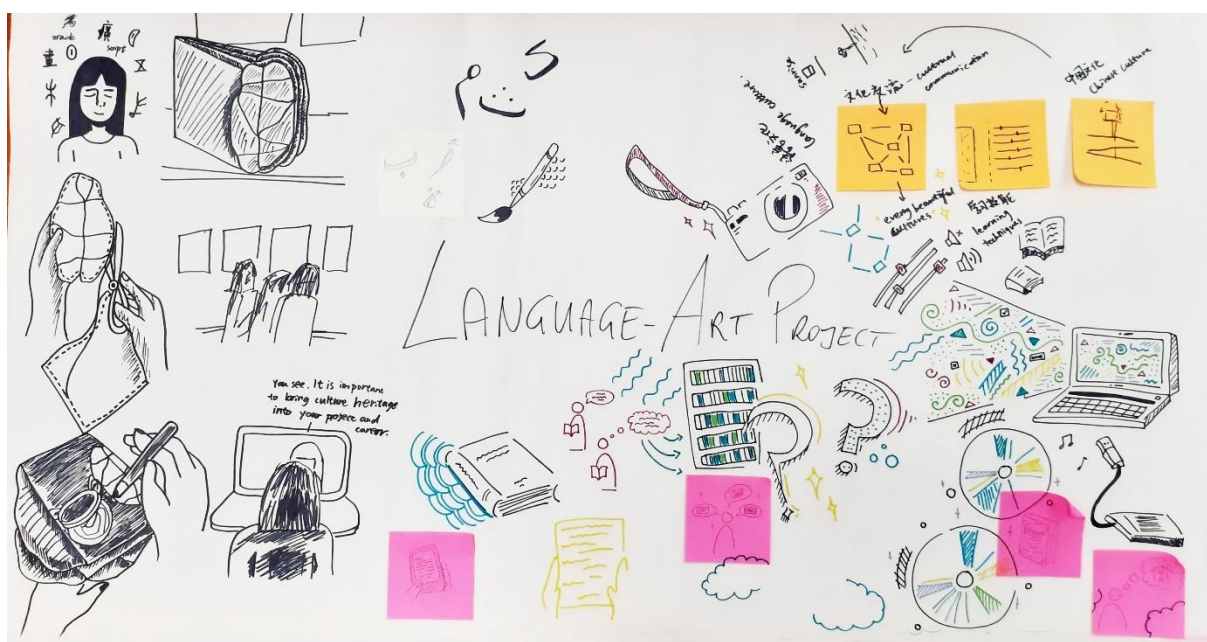


Image 28: Collaborative visualisation of the students’ LAP working process. Photo: Anita Strasser.

Case Study IV: Kemi Ajose

Kemi recently graduated with a BA in Textile Design at Central Saint Martins (2022). During her final year of study, she participated in LAP (Language-Arts Project), where she created a headpiece that was later bought by LCC Special Collections. She credits LAP with having had a profound impact on her practice as a knitwear designer, saying that the range of different briefs to choose from and the conversations that she had as part of the project have made her delve deeper into the concepts of language, culture, and identity in her work.

“I came across a UAL email about the Language-Arts Project, a cross-site extra-curricular programme exploring language and the different forms of communication through poetry and literature. I was working on developing my graduate collection at the time, expressing my cultural identity through textile craftsmanship in knitwear. Recognising language as a vital component of culture, I saw an opportunity to enrich my practice by participating in this project, where I could learn how to integrate language seamlessly into my work, adding layers of depth and meaning to my creative expression.

As a British-born West African, my cultural background has played a subtle yet significant role in shaping my identity. However, being part of the diaspora has also left me with a sense of detachment, as I've never had the chance to visit my ancestral homeland. In my creative practice, I aim to bridge this gap by presenting West African culture through a British lens, sharing my journey of self-discovery in the process.

While I hold a deep admiration for the artistry of West African textiles, I aim to redefine the perception of textile craftsmanship in a new and original way through the construction of contemporary knitwear, as there is a gap in the market for this. I'm creating garments and accessories that celebrate the beauty and uniqueness of West African textiles while surpassing cultural stereotypes and associations. These designs are not just for me; I envision them being embraced by individuals from diverse backgrounds. My goal is to promote inclusivity and encourage connections through my work, providing a platform for people like me who have navigated cultural differences in their upbringing. I hope to create a space where individuals can celebrate their multifaceted identities with pride.

In my final year, as I prepared for the graduate collection and the degree show, I refined the connection between my cultural background and my designs. Understanding that my work would be showcased to a wide audience prompted me to recognise the importance of creating something distinct, memorable, and genuine. Previously, my inspirations had been more casual, looking at architecture, exhibitions, and other artists' works to inform my knitwear outcomes. I was very focused on the practical aspects of making, but to produce impactful work, I knew that my cultural identity needed to become the driving force behind my designs. Participating in the Language-Arts Project played a pivotal role in shaping this shift, as it helped me understand how to translate complex cultural aspects such as language, identity, and craft into materials, colours, and patterns.

During group discussions, people would talk about language and the challenges of translation. People shared their experiences of writing poems in their native language and then translating them into English, highlighting how subtle distinctions can be lost in translation. It was interesting to see that not all communication relies solely on words; there are alternative forms of expression, which I came across when looking at the different outcomes that people previously submitted for the Language-Arts Project.

It was nice to see how people told stories not only through words but a range of different mediums. For example, a student painted Chinese symbols onto clothes and used the body language of the wearer to tell a story, showing that you can use the material to illustrate communication. This idea got me thinking more about how language fits into my creative work, inspiring me to create an additional but separate piece for my graduate collection. I made a headpiece called Finding the Connection, using wool and electrical cables to translate the language of traditional craftsmanship of basketry and African hairstyles into a sculptural piece, using a technique called coiling.

There were many interesting paths that people explored, showing the different ways language can be interpreted and expressed. What made this project fun was the choice between having a solo exhibition or joining a group, as well as meeting a range of different students from other UAL campuses and learning about their individual practices and perspectives.

The majority of the research I gathered for the Language-Arts Project and my graduate collection was through photography, exhibition visits, and books. To gather first-hand primary research, I would visit local neighbourhoods with vibrant African communities, like Peckham, Deptford, and Woolwich. There I would explore shops, capturing images of materials, foods, and textiles. These pictures were the foundation for my creative process, inspiring drawings and collages that sparked new ideas and outcomes. I also drew inspiration from other artists' works and exhibitions I had attended.

The inspiration for my headpiece came from seeing Joanne Petit-Frère's work that had been captured beautifully by Delphine Diallo at the 'Black Venus' Exhibition. She is an artist known for making sculptures out of synthetic hair, often showcasing her work through performance art. With hair being an important part of how I present myself, I wanted to express this narrative in a new way. I looked into different ways to style hair that I already knew about. Coiling is a technique that I use as a protective style for my hair and is also used in basketry to make interesting textures and shapes. I thought this technique would work well for my headpiece as I wanted my outcome to be sculptural.

I used materials that I had at home such as wool, and electrical cables, using the concept of resourcefulness and sustainability to narrate a story of culture and identity. It was separate from my graduate collection but part of the same idea, so I exhibited it alongside my graduate collection at the degree show (see work on the [LAP website](#) and below). Working on this piece helped me see how materials and craft skills can tell detailed stories without needing words.

As a result of exhibiting the headpiece, LCC Special Collections bought it for their archive. How this happens is that recent students who have their work in the archive or a person from the archive team would visit different degree shows across UAL to source work to purchase. The work is then kept and used for referencing or display purposes. During my degree show, a member of the UAL archive team reached out to me to say that they were interested in buying my work. I sent them photographs and the prices of all the work that I had created. As a result of this, I was then asked to go to the Chelsea degree show and recommend some works that I thought they should purchase. It's amazing how my involvement in LAP led to this opportunity, ensuring that my work will be preserved for good in the archive. Plus, I got to help pick out other students' work for the archive, which was a real confidence boost. It just shows how important these degree shows are, as you never know who might come across your work.

I was also approached by industry professionals who wrote publications about my work, which can be viewed on [Knitting Industry Creative](#) and the [Fashion Crossover website](#). Additionally, my

work was featured in Elle magazine, which was a big milestone for me. Winning multiple awards was also a huge deal and gave my work even more recognition in the fashion world.

Thanks to Karen Harris, I had the opportunity to showcase my work at the 'Who Do We Think We Are?' conference in Chelsea, organized by Academic Support. This was a valuable experience for me, as it allowed me to present my work in a different setting and engage with fellow students and lecturers from UAL. At the conference, Karen introduced me to Adam, who leads zine workshops and intercultural workshops across UAL. I later became a co-facilitator for these workshops, which provided me with further opportunities for involvement beyond LAP. Engaging in these extra-curricular activities allowed me to connect with teachers, lecturers, and students from various disciplines and courses, creating a sense of belonging within the wider UAL community. Even after graduating, co-facilitating workshops has enabled me to stay connected to the university, meet new people, and continue nurturing the creative connections I established during my studies.

Participating in the Language-Art Project has encouraged me to approach things from new angles and to reflect more on my cultural heritage. It has heightened my awareness of cultural diversity, identities, and narratives, and how to incorporate these aspects into my designs. As a result, my work has gained more depth and become more relatable on a personal level.

Talking about my work with students from different cultural backgrounds and exchanging ideas has improved my ability to explain my work using cultural references and theories. LAP has been instrumental in bringing together people from various universities whom I hadn't met before. Engaging in discussions on meaningful topics and sharing experiences has provided me with a broader perspective on the expressive forms of language and culture. This has greatly influenced my artistic practice and how I approach creating new work."

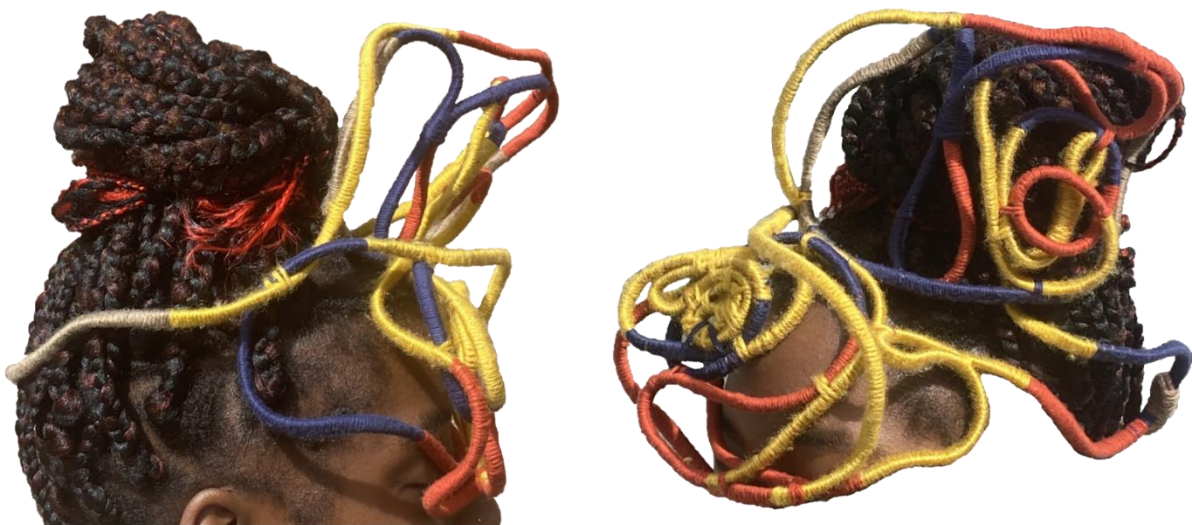


Image 29: Kemi Ajose's headpiece *Finding the Connection*. Photos: Karen Harris.

3.3.2 The Language-Art Project from the perspective of LAP curators



Image 30: Opening event of the Language-Art Project exhibition at LCC in 2023. Photo: Yana Kasa.

LAP has been working in collaboration with Curation students since 2022 for the annual LAP exhibition. What started with one student offering help with the curation of the online show in 2022 turned into a collaboration between three students to curate the online and physical LAP shows in 2023. The students are Hal Warren and Jasmine Rawlinson from BA Culture, Criticism and Curation (CSM) and Haoyue Chen from MA Curating and Collections (Chelsea), and as with student and alumni ‘ambassadors’, the Curation students are registered and paid through Arts Temps. In January 2024 I ran a participative workshop with the curators to get feedback on how curating the LAP exhibitions has impacted them. The workshop involved a focus group discussion and a collaborative visualisation of their curation experience. The overall feedback is that the students really appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with students and teams across UAL and to gain work experience, developing their communication skills, employability skills and creative attributes and a sense of validation and community.

It all started with Hal attending the Many Languages Poetry Club in 2022, where he became aware of LAP. As he liked the project, he offered help in curating the LAP show, saying that being interested in language and poetry and combining it with curatorial experience enticed

him to get involved. As the show had to be online, Workflow was chosen as a platform. With both Hal and Karen (Harris) unfamiliar with Workflow at the time, they worked and learnt together to make it happen, with Hal saying that the process of staff and student learning together was particularly enjoyable. The year after, when the show returned to a physical exhibition (as well as an online one), Hal asked his friend and fellow student Jasmine if she would like to get involved in the curation. Together they approached Karen, and it was agreed they would curate the shows. When attending the first meeting with the signed-up artists, they met Haoyue, another Curation student from a different college who, without prior knowledge of Hal and Jasmine's roles, expressed an interest in curating the exhibition. Although they didn't know each other, it was decided then that the three would collaborate on the curation of the LAP 2023 show.



Image 31: Detail of the LAP exhibition in 2023. Photo: Karen Harris.

The reasons for taking on the curation were multiple, with one being a combined interest in language and curation as mentioned above. Another important point was the fact that it was an opportunity to practice what is being taught on Curation courses for a real project rather than an assignment. Students feel that “there is a distinct lack of potential hands-on

experience and cross-collaboration with other students in the college”, with one adding: “It’s just so enriching to be involved in things outside the course and with people from other colleges. We never really get that opportunity but it’s so important and so underdone.” One curator also highlighted the need for curators to know and communicate with artists, saying: “If you don’t have artists to collaborate with then you’re nothing!”

The curators really enjoyed collaborating with artists and staff across the colleges, with the experience of working with the staff at LCC Print Studios a particular favourite. In general, collaborating with people beyond one’s course was not only seen enriching in terms of learning necessary practical skills but also in terms of community-building and belonging, as in this comment: “Working with a completely different team was really cool. I feel like we all have different approaches when we come from these different courses, which we can all bring to the table. Engaging with these different spaces made me feel a bit more connected within the UAL community. Going to university in London can make you feel a bit lost sometimes, so this project was a really lovely connecting point.”



Image 32: Detail of the LAP exhibition in 2023. Photo: Karen Harris.

The three curators really enjoyed the process of collaboratively curating the show, saying that the experience was “**extremely valuable**” in many ways. Firstly, they really appreciated the hands-on and first-hand experience they gained in putting up the installation, which they

say has also increased their employability skills. One student, for example, said: “Although we study Curation, we don’t necessarily pick up those skills in the same way. With the LAP show, we were involved from start to finish of the whole exhibition process and this experience has solidified the thing I am really interested in. And knowing that I really enjoy the role of curator has increased my confidence and helped me get work outside uni.” In fact, this particular student has been offered a gallery internship where the skills learnt during the LAP curation can be applied in a more professional setting. Another student also commented on how the experience, particularly the communication with artists and resulting networks, has had benefits beyond university. This student was involved in curating an exhibition in a south-east London gallery followed by getting accepted as a curator for a show after responding to an open call. In conclusion, it can be said that the LAP curation experience has improved their CVs and employability.

What was also really appreciated was “the creative agency” the students were given in building the show despite their lack of experience in curating. “Our voices were definitely heard throughout the process and it was encouraged that we think independently to drive forward the project. Because it’s been a project that’s been realised a few times before, but it was about developing and progressing it, and bringing it back into a physical space, so that all felt really exciting.” Students also commented on Karen and Adam’s openness and willingness to listen (Adam also helped with the curation). “Karen was like a sponge, and she was always open to our ideas. If there was something that we felt was exciting or needed to be explored, we felt we could go down that route. And it was the same with Adam, we could always go down that route. This made us feel really valued.”

There was consensus among the curators that the collaboration worked really well and was an enriching experience. A particularly valuable experience was the successful working through differences of opinion. “It was really amazing to be able to successfully work through some creative tensions. We came to a point where we started actively listening to each other and finding that middle ground, which, in the end, brought us closer together. A few years ago, I didn’t know how to work through conflict so that was almost one of the biggest successes, that we had that kind of connection as a team.” The curators conclude that playing out real life scenarios in a fairly safe and low stakes environment is a really great opportunity to become better communicators when difficult situations arise. They also said that it prepares you for working in a highly competitive industry.

Another big takeaway from this experience was that students felt more connected to their courses. One student put it very succinctly in terms of the complementarity of curating the

LAP show and the course: “I felt more equipped for curating the LAP show by the course and I subsequently felt more equipped for the course by curating the LAP show”. The students also said that getting hands-on experience of curating a show and the technological and practical experience that comes with it prepared them better for life after university.



Image 33: Detail of the LAP exhibition in 2023. Photo: Karen Harris.

A final takeaway from this experience was that it stimulated an increased interest in language. One student says that seeing one person’s artwork made her see the beauty in her mother tongue and another felt intrigued by the theme ‘Language beyond words’: “I feel like this really made me think about how art can stand in for language and that language which isn’t defined so clearly can still be used for effective communication.”

In the meantime, the three curators have already been thinking about the LAP 2024 show, which will take place in summer in the window gallery of the Lethaby Gallery at CSM. Conscious of the LAP show being an annual event, they were reflecting throughout the curation process of 2023 on how things could be done differently next time, and with a different and smaller space in 2024, they will have to rethink how to curate the show.

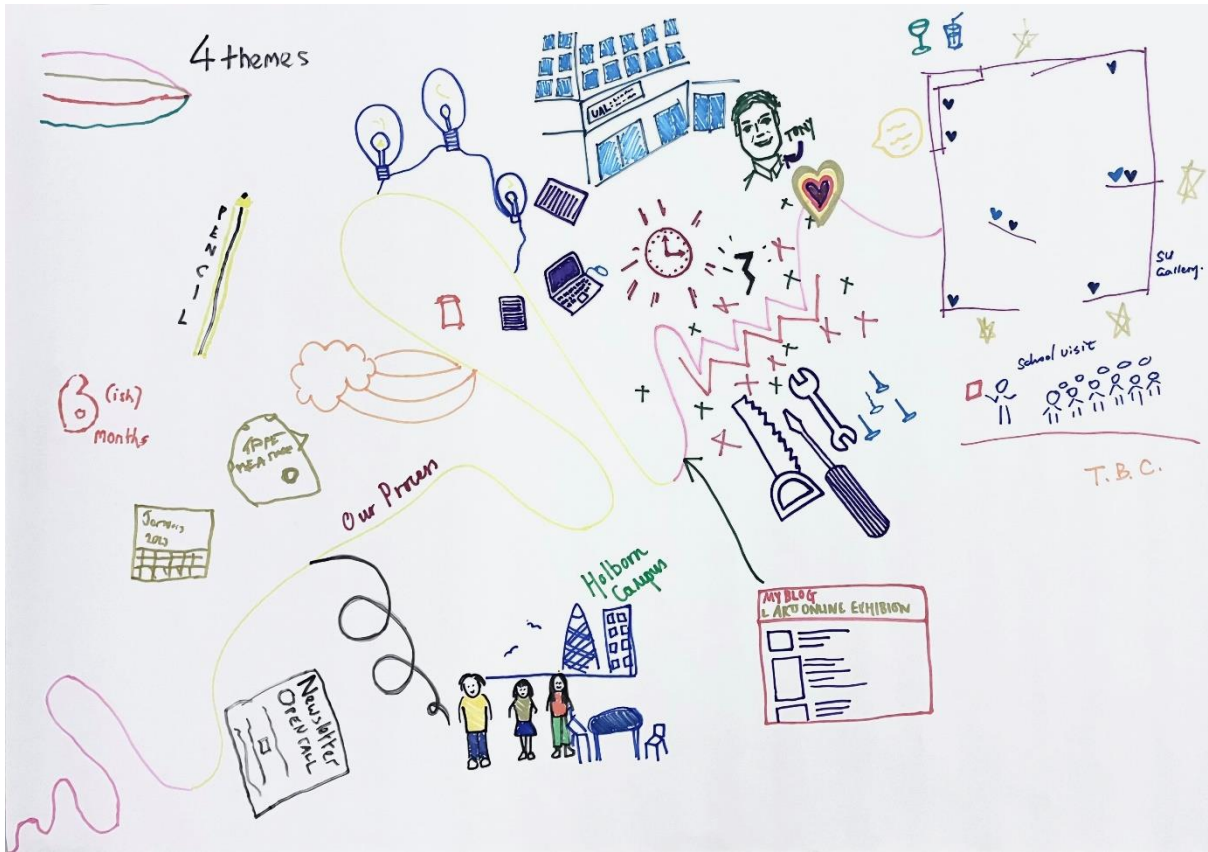


Image 34: Collaborative Visualisation of the curation process for the LAP 2023 show. Photo: Anita Strasser.

4. Conclusion:

This report has provided significant evidence that the alternative learning spaces created through IC student sessions have a profound impact on students' personal and professional development. As a result of participating in IC student sessions, students have reported an enhanced sense of self-confidence, belonging and well-being, improving their overall student experience at UAL. The fact that IC works with students across disciplines, courses, levels and colleges, opens spaces where students can take ownership of discussions, projects and creative output and offers a pressure-free, non-hierarchical, safe and culturally democratic environment has, according to student feedback, made students feel valued and validated and has added significant value to their study experience at UAL. Students have also reported having developed a greater appreciation of difference, gaining a deeper understanding of cultural and personal differences and improving their intercultural communication skills, thus feeling more equipped to embark on collaborative projects with people from different backgrounds. This is particularly important considering that more and more UAL courses are embarking on collaborative projects with industry partners, community organisations and charities, where intercultural competence is of the essence. IC

student sessions have also had an impact on students' creative practices, with students feeding back that they started looking at (inter)cultural aspects and concepts not considered before (e.g. culture, language) and/or working with different media, materials and artistic processes to produce surprising and meaningful outcomes. Finally, participating in IC sessions has also helped students cope with course pressures, with the open IC discussions about various topics helping students digest and safely talk through complex topics and differing perspectives, some of which have fed into students' course and project work.

The student feedback was reiterated by course/unit/programme leaders participating in this research, with the additional comment that also staff benefit and learn from collaborating with IC. Those collaborating with IC have expressed the need to embed IC sessions more in courses and/or have sessions at the beginning of courses and collaborations to prepare students adequately for working with people within their cohorts and outside their courses, such as industry partners and local communities. They also said that working with IC student sessions can be beneficial for staff too. Not only has it helped some staff with teaching and supporting more diverse cohorts, but it has also shown to be a fruitful and valuable knowledge exchange between staff from different departments.

With reference to the work opportunities IC has offered students, there is a clear correlation between gaining experience as a workshop (co-)facilitator or curator and getting a job outside university. Students working with IC have reported that their IC work experience has improved their (intercultural) communication skills, self-confidence, sense of validation and ability to manage conflict, adding value to their CVs and boosting their confidence in applying for jobs and attending job interviews. Many have also reported being offered a job or a different opportunity (e.g. curating a show) outside university as a result of their IC work experience. As such, working with IC arguably improves students' employability skills and acts as a bridge to help students transition from student life to life after university.

Overall, there is strong evidence that the work IC does with regards to student sessions aligns with UAL's Social Purpose agenda, and its promise to enhance students' study experience and their employability and creative attributes. It thus also offers potential to address issues reported in NSS feedback, e.g. 2022/23, which has highlighted a lack of opportunities for connections and collaborations across UAL, students not feeling part of a UAL community, and not having gained the necessary skills, experience and confidence to transition into working life.

A final point to make here is that many students taking part in in-person sessions for this research (workshops, focus group discussions and individual interviews) have commented how the opportunity to reflect and talk about their experiences has made them realise how much they have accomplished during their time at UAL. Some had forgotten the chronology or other details of their journeys and/or hadn't fully realised the impact their engagements have had on their own professional, personal and creative development. Many commented that being able to talk about and visualise their IC experience and the opportunities that followed as a result has helped them consolidate their achievements. This is a noteworthy "side effect" of participative, creative and visual research that opens a space for reflection.

5. Recommendations:

The feedback received, including anonymous comments, was entirely positive and in support of IC student sessions. Suggestions made were only concerned with the need to widen the IC offer, making more sessions available to more students, embedding them in courses and/or having them earlier on in courses so that students feel better equipped for study at an international university and for collaborative projects. Overall, due to the fact that UAL is an international university with very diverse student cohorts and where intercultural competence is vital, together with the positive experience of students and staff participating in IC student sessions, there seems to be an urgent need **to enhance the visibility of IC to raise greater awareness among teaching staff of its offer and positive impact.** This can be achieved through **sharing this report with teaching staff and through publishing articles on Canvas and other UAL publishing platforms.** It can also be done through **short information and/or case study videos** (as Tiff Radmore suggested). With the IC department fairly small, many courses/unit/programme leaders are not yet aware of it and **raising this awareness among more staff** who might then request IC sessions for their courses might also help with **communicating the purpose of IC to non-participating students.**

However, I also want to reiterate Richie Manu's suggestions to **gather feedback from students who do not attend IC sessions as understanding the reasons for not attending can help the IC team improve their communications** to reach out to these students. As Richie commented, there might be some misconceptions around who and what IC is for, so a **very clear definition of what IC mean by intercultural communication and who/what their sessions are for is also really important** (i.e. IC is for all students, including home students).

Appendix A: Poojitha Lal's student guide

UAL support ecosystem

Click on title or scan QR to find out more about each service

Academic resources



Academic support online

Workshops, resources and even 1:1 tutorials for academic guidance



Language development

English language skills to be successful on your course



LinkedIn learning

Access resources for professional development



Career & Employability



Library services

Study, access resources & support for research



Materials collection

Curated collection of innovative materials and resources



Museum and study collection

Archives that illustrate the diverse landscapes of art and design



Applying for ECs

Support to navigate unexpected challenges in your study



ual: arts temps

Arts Temps

Exciting paid opportunities at UAL and creative industries



UAL Careers Toolkit

Learning resources aimed at developing your career skills



Looking for a Job?

We can help you roles for every stage of your career



Creative opportunities

The go-to jobs board for creative students and graduates



Money and finances



Immigration and visas

Assistance and advice to understand your visa type and apply for it



Student funding services

Opportunities to fund your studies and advice on your fees & finances



Bursaries

Discover the wide range of scholarships, bursaries and awards



Money management

Advice on funding, managing money and getting paid work



Spaced based resources



Lost and found

Reclaim your lost belongings conveniently

Camberwell



Lockers

Every student can get access to secure storage solutions in the campus

Chelsea



Photo studios

Dedicated spaces for professional product or portfolio photography

CSM



LCC



And more

[Click on the college](#) to find more services specific to campus buildings

LCF



Wimbledon



Students union



Student communities

Create and run student groups based on sports, interests and more



Student voice

For students by students, a space to share, as we are listening!



Accommodation

Support in finding a place, checking contracts and more



Visit the Arts SU website for more

Appeal support, student campaigns, opportunities & more



Utility support



How to print?

Find out how to print, scan and copy at UAL



Need IT help?

We provide IT systems and support to the UAL community



Need to borrow equipment?

Wide range of loan equipment to support learning and making



Looking for workshops spaces?

Access technical advice and book workshop sessions



Wellbeing & Support



Disability and dyslexia

This service arranges adjustments and support for disabled students



Counseling

Support with problems that may impact your academic journey.



Health advice

Advice on any aspect of health and well-being



Chaplaincy

Pastoral and spiritual care to students



Tell someone

There is no place for any harassment, report incidents & get support



Register a complaint

Need to make a formal complaint about something



Support for care leavers

Support for who've been in local authority care



The leaflet is CSM Changemakers's project

Curated by Poojitha Lal

Designed by Zainab Goriawala