

#Take5 #151 Stories as Evidence

April 2, 2026 / 12 minutes of reading

Human-Centred Approaches to Understanding Student Partnerships' Impact

Setting the Scene: Who the Changemakers Are

This #Take5 blog is brought to you from a team of **Changemakers** at the London College of Communication (LCC), part of the University of the Arts London (UAL). Guided by their lead, Kevin J. Brazant – Senior Educational Developer at the college – they work on projects in collaboration with staff, students and external partners, to advance social and racial justice within the university, with a focus on curricula and pedagogies. Their programme has been developed through the **students-as-partners** model from Advance HE.

This blog explores how student voices, advocacy, and impact visibility are being heard and understood in new ways within the Changemaker programme and across the wider institution. Through the development of an innovative self-reflective evaluation framework, the Changemakers are offering a new way to listen: replacing the image of evaluation as a scan — dry, cold, and silent — with a process that is alive with colour, dialogue, and connection.

Reimagining Roles: Students, Staff, and Shared Power

The Changemaker programme began at LCC, which has employed successive cohorts of student and graduate Changemakers since April 2020. Since then, the model has expanded, with other colleges across UAL creating their own Changemakers teams.

LCC Changemakers are undergraduate, postgraduate, or recently graduated students who are employed through ArtsTemps—UAL’s social enterprise recruitment agency—on a fixed-term, part-time contract for the academic year. Each year, nine Changemakers are appointed, with one aligned to each programme at the college. Their role is to collaborate with staff and the wider student community on initiatives aimed at embedding racial and social justice into curricula and pedagogies.

The social justice-driven initiatives that they take part of involve them in hybrid staff-student roles; they are paid for their time, work and expertise, but are also part of an educational programme that includes training and requires current or recent experience as students.

Hybrid roles such the Changemakers blur lines between student and staff, challenging traditional hierarchies and offering new models of participation and co-ownership of the learning experience. This comes with emotional labour and institutional tension, aspects that are too often overlooked by traditional evaluation methods.

In many institutional settings, evaluation and feedback still follow a **vertical logic**: students give input, staff interpret it, and the process ends there. Following Paulo Freire’s belief that **learning is co-created** (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970), the Changemakers reimagined this relationship by turning reflection into a *creative and dialogic exploration* rather than *data calculation and reporting*.

From Feedback to Framework: Rethinking How We Listen

The Changemakers team, composed by recent MA graduates Chiara Portinari and Saranya Sathesh and BA student Jiayi Wu, was tasked with creating an evaluation framework to explore the impact of the Changemakers programme on its stakeholders, on the institution and beyond.

One of the biggest challenges for the programme has been how to measure impact in a way that reflects lived experiences. Traditional evaluation tools rarely capture the emotional, relational, and identity-based dimensions of social justice work. The team wanted something that could hold both the *numbers* and the *narratives* that the programme was generating.

Through a series of prototyping and testing sessions, the team co-designed what is now called the *Situated Evaluation Framework* (SEF): a combination of individual, group and one-to-one supervision activities, embedded across the programme’s timeline.

Some activities are simple: mapping **project journeys** through the year, noting moments of connection or tension, or analysing **short feedback forms** completed by stakeholders. Others are more experimental: using **body mapping** to explore how identity and experience shape the work, or **participation ladders** to visualise how engagement changes over time.

Drawing on arts-based approaches, the framework encourages participants to express and explore experience in creative and sensory ways: what Patricia Leavy describes as making visible “the emotional, sensory, and relational dimensions of inquiry” (2009).

The **toolkit** consists of two sets of tools, one digital and one physical.

The digital set includes:

- Word templates that the coordinator completes during one-to-one supervisions with each Changemaker
- Collaborative spaces such as Padlet, designed for online dialogic reflection and completed autonomously by Changemakers
- A short survey to be completed by the Changemakers who have been appointed as project leaders for specific initiatives
- An even shorter survey to be completed by external collaborators

The physical set, which is far more exciting and entirely run by the Changemakers cohort autonomously, includes instructions and materials for three self-reflective sessions where the Changemakers engage in:

- individual on-paper body mapping
- engagement mapping
- individual and collective journey mapping
- group sharing
- open discussions

These **diverse toolkits** shrink the *heart-less survey* to its tolerable minimum and infuses evaluation with **trauma-informed creativity, feminist thinking** and **non-Eurocentric methods** — a practice that, as Kevin J. Brazant reminds us in *Disrupting the Discourse* (2023), invites reflection on the power and positionality embedded in every act of teaching and learning: “Proponents of critical pedagogy reject the idea that knowledge, as presented within the curriculum, is politically neutral, it often serves the social and economic interests of the dominant classes and groups within society and therefore teaching is an inherently political act, whether consciously done or not. Issues of social justice, power, and democracy are not distinct from acts of learning and teaching.”

Dialogue sits at the heart of the framework as an essential medium for peer feedback, mutual support, and community-building. As Freire (1970) states, “founding itself upon love, humility and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the participants is the logical consequence.”

The **iterative process** reflects on participants’ past, present, and future actions through other forms of dialogue such as comparison and cross-analysis. In this way, the framework reimagines evaluation as a shared, living practice, turning traditionally vertical power dynamics into horizontal spaces for growth, solidarity, and celebration.

What Changemakers Learned Along the Way

One of the clearest insights from developing and testing the framework was how strongly the Changemakers’ work **advocates for and amplifies the participation of other students**. In the first trial of the Participation Ladder — an engagement mapping tool adapted from Barbara Molony-Oates’ *Involvement Engagement Ladder* (2024) — the group visualised where students sit on the scale that goes from passive participant to co-owner of projects, and noted practical actions to support movement upward. By reflecting together on what it takes to climb “one rung higher,” the Changemakers recognised their role not only in analysing engagement but in actively elevating it. This ladder exercise is easily adaptable and can be a powerful tool for learning developers and educators seeking to visualise and strengthen engagement within their communities.

Through this process, the team also found a space to **make their day-to-day efforts and challenges visible**. The emotional work of confronting social justice issues, the frustration of sometimes being unable to advocate for others, and the satisfaction of shared or personal milestones are now easier to articulate and translate, whether in their manager’s reports, staff-facing events, or their own professional profiles.

The findings reaffirmed the Changemakers programme’s purpose of **leveraging and celebrating individual differences** to create positive change. Moreover, the framework added a new layer of understanding to this idea: not only do academic backgrounds and areas of study shape each Changemaker’s approach, but personal skills, lived experiences, and identities also play a central role. Positionality does matter.

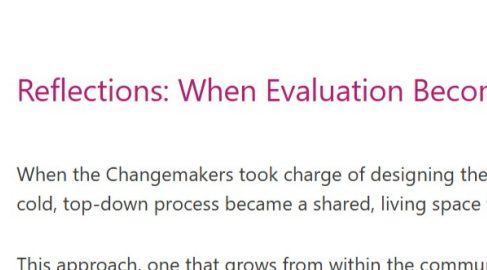
Perhaps the most significant learning has been that **evaluation can itself be an act of change**. By making space for conversation, reflection, and self-awareness, the framework doesn’t just record progress, it nurtures it. It reminds the team that meaningful change requires the willingness to *pause, listen, and learn together*.

Celebrating Impact

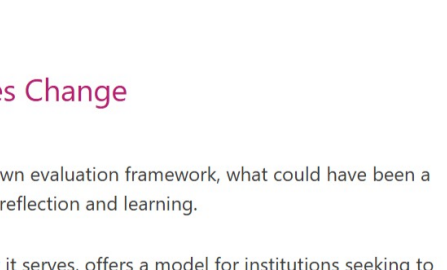
The co-creation of the *Situated Evaluation Framework* forms part of a series of collaborative initiatives involving the LCC Changemakers, which are collected and showcased on the **LCC Changemakers Cargo** site. Their commitment and work bring knowledge and lived experience to spaces that have not traditionally included them — from institutional boards and staff conferences to curricula design and the College’s own physical spaces.

In 2025, this collective contribution was formally recognised with two major awards: the UAL People’s Prize Knowledge Exchange Staff Award (2025), celebrating the team’s wider impact across the institution, and the ALDinHE Tom Burns Memorial Award (2025), which specifically honours their work in student partnership and pedagogical change.

Reflections on the **Tom Burns Memorial Award**, in particular, speak to the deep personal and collective meaning of this recognition. For Kevin J. Brazant, LCC Changemakers lead, the award honours “not just a methodology, but a movement, where storytelling, student voice, and radical pedagogy converge to reimagine education.” For the Changemakers themselves, it affirmed the importance of the often-invisible emotional labour behind social justice work, the “small, often unseen gestures of care that shape transformative learning.”



Picture: Kevin J. Brazant receiving the UAL Knowledge Exchange Peoples’ Award for Equity and Diversity. (2025).



Picture: The ALDinHE Tom Burns Memorial Award 2025.

Reflections: When Evaluation Becomes Change

When the Changemakers took a share of designing their own evaluation framework, what could have been a cold, top-down process became a charged, living space for reflection and learning.

This approach, one that grows from within the community it serves, offers a model for institutions seeking to weave social justice into the fabric of everyday evaluation and decision-making.

But genuine change requires reciprocity: this bottom-up energy must be met with active listening, care, and the courage to act. Only then can reflection truly lead to transformation in student experience, staff-student relationships, and the culture of learning itself.

Looking Ahead: Growing the Conversation

The 2025–26 Changemakers cohort has entered the *Situated Evaluation Framework* (SEF) with enthusiasm and commitment, and early feedback indicates enhanced self-confidence, a stronger sense of belonging, and growing ownership of their learning journey.

Several applications for funding have been submitted to support the piloting beyond the four hours per week allocated to changemaking work, deepen grounding, further development and analysis of the insights emerging from the SEF. Professionals across UAL — including the IP Education Specialist — are already in contact to collaborate and help elevate the work achieved by the Changemakers team.

A technological twist will be given by the exploration of an **AI (VR) body mapping** activity, prototyped by former Changemaker, SEF team member and BA Immersive Media and Mixed Realities student Jiayi Wu.

Building on this momentum, the next phase will include the creation of case studies, conference presentations, and co-authored papers and blogs (such as this one) to share findings and amplify impact. Many Changemakers are also applying the knowledge and skills developed through the co-creation and facilitation of the SEF in their professional practice, whether as associate lecturers, innovation consultants, or creative practitioners, extending the framework’s reach beyond LCC.

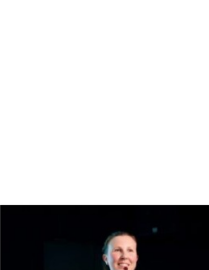
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Bio’s

Kevin J Brazant, SFHEA:

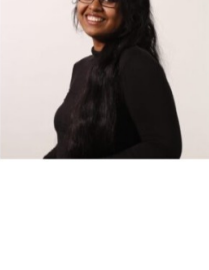
Kevin J Brazant is a Senior Educational Developer at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts London, (UAL). His work involves collaborating with schools to address the ethnicity degree awarding gap at the college level. He is a researcher in disruptive pedagogies and practices ‘facilitating learning from the margins’, which foregrounds co-creation in enabling marginalised student voices through decolonising, anti-racism and social justice as part of pedagogy. He authored *Disrupting the Discourse: A Co-creation Framework for Centering Racial Justice in Higher Education*. He manages the Changemakers, a student partner initiative working with students to embed racial and social justice principles as part of the curriculum. Kevin also uses storytelling, podcasting and digital content creation as part of his platform Lounge Academics, and collaborates with companies and brands committed to social justice as part of knowledge exchange activities and consultancy.



Portfolio: <https://linktr.ee/loungeacademics>

Chiara Portinari, FHEA (she/they):

Chiara is a current Changemaker and has recently been appointed Associate Lecturer at LCC. They work at the intersection of participatory evaluation, inclusive design and social imagination. Their practice centres care, accessibility and co-creation, supporting students, staff and communities to explore how spaces, processes and practices can be more equitable and meaningful.

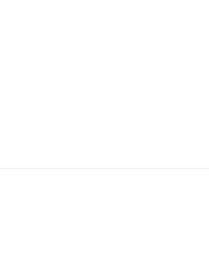


Through collective curation, they create opportunities for groups to *imagine together*, shaping exhibitions, workshops and shared processes that bring multiple voices into dialogue and into experience design.

Portfolio: clairespot.com

Saranya Sathesh

Former LCC Changemaker, Saranya is a design researcher with an interdisciplinary background in experience design and engineering. She reimagines research as a form of appreciation, drawing on anti-colonial, feminist and regenerative approaches to explore lived experiences.



As a graduate UX Researcher at Wise, Saranya is interested in how creative, reflective, and systems-oriented research practices can surface the cultural, emotional and contextual nuances that shapes how people engage with financial systems globally.

Her vision is to design practices and experiences that center care, co-creation, and critical reflection to bring meaningful change.

Portfolio: saranyaxd.framer.website/

Jiayi Wu

Former LCC Changemaker, Jiayi is an interdisciplinary artist and designer working at the intersection of immersive media sensor-based interaction, and social storytelling. Her practice explores how digital systems can reflect, challenge, and reframe emotional and bodily experience.

Drawing from motion capture, VR, and haptic feedback, she develops interactive environments that respond to gesture, presence, and memory. Jiayi’s work is driven by a curiosity about how humans inhabit technological spaces—particularly in contexts shaped by constraint, disconnection, or resistance. Through each project, she asks how emerging media can expand our ways of sensing, sharing, and feeling together.

Portfolio: breakfast012.com

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