



STUDENTS AS CO-CREATORS

Disciplinary Research Collaborations

Animating the Airwaves A Creative Sandpit for Interdisciplinary Research

Students: Xingyu Brurapon Artprasit; Vladislav Bolshakov;
Omari Edwards; Ligia-Petra Prejbeanu; Wei Wen Chang;
Kunther Chith; Ritika Gurung; Kaneda Dawson; Amani Hanif

Academics: Eleanor Roseblade, Stephen Ryley
Professional Services: Jason Rosam
Community Partner: Westminster Waves

**School of Media and Communications
Academic Year 2025-26**

Project Overview

Animating the Airwaves: A Creative Sandpit for Interdisciplinary Research explored how animation, a discipline not traditionally associated with radio, could contribute meaningfully to a live broadcasting platform through collaborative practice and co-created research.

Rather than beginning with a predetermined output, the project was designed as an open creative sandpit where animation students, Westminster Waves staff, and animation academics collectively explored the possibilities of visual identity, audience engagement, branding, and experimental media within a radio context.

Students were invited to challenge assumptions about both animation and radio, generating ideas that ranged from animated station identities and visualisers to conceptual approaches inspired by internet culture and ambient streaming aesthetics. These ideas were documented collaboratively through a shared Padlet before selected concepts progressed to development.

One concept in particular, a low-fi dragon character inspired by the visual language of "lo-fi girl" study streams, was commissioned for further development and subsequently became the basis of a larger Innovation Fund application, demonstrating the project's ability to generate sustainable interdisciplinary collaboration beyond its original scope.

Project Artefacts

- Collaborative sandpit workshops between Westminster Waves and Animation staff and students.
- Shared Padlet documenting student-generated concepts and discussion.
https://padlet.com/university_of_westminster/westminster-waves-animators-as-co-creators-2026-itr83gvwy4ncz92
- Commissioned "Low-Fi Dragon" animation concept.



- Innovation Fund application to expand the project into a larger interdisciplinary initiative.

Where did the inspiration to do the project come from?

The project originated from a simple question: *How can disciplines that appear to have no obvious relationship with radio contribute meaningfully to a live broadcasting platform?*

Westminster Waves wanted to become a creative space for experimentation rather than simply a student radio station. This presented an opportunity to invite animation students into an unfamiliar context and explore what might emerge when visual practitioners engage with an audio medium.

Rather than asking students to produce conventional promotional materials, the project deliberately encouraged speculative thinking. Animation was chosen precisely because it offered an opportunity to rethink assumptions about branding, audience engagement, digital identity, and creative storytelling.

The project was inspired by the belief that interdisciplinary collaboration creates richer learning experiences and that students should play an active role in defining how creative disciplines intersect.

What did you set out to achieve?

The project aimed to investigate whether animation could become an active contributor to the identity and culture of Westminster Waves while simultaneously providing animation students with opportunities to engage in collaborative research and practice.

Objectives included:

- creating a shared creative environment where students and staff could generate ideas together;
- exploring unexpected relationships between visual culture and radio broadcasting;
- developing prototype concepts that could be tested and evaluated;
- encouraging students to lead discussions and propose creative directions;
- identifying ideas with potential for long-term development.

Rather than producing a single predetermined outcome, success was measured through experimentation, discussion, and the generation of innovative possibilities.

The collaborative process ultimately produced a range of concepts, with the "Low-Fi Dragon" emerging as a particularly strong proposal. Inspired by the familiar aesthetics of continuous lo-fi streaming channels, the character offered a distinctive and playful visual identity capable of supporting Westminster Waves across social media, promotional materials, and live digital environments.

Its potential extended beyond the original project, leading directly to the submission of an Innovation Fund proposal to further develop the concept and explore wider interdisciplinary applications.

How did students and staff work together on this project?

The project adopted a genuinely collaborative sandpit model rather than a traditional staff-led design process.

An initial briefing brought together Westminster Waves staff, animation academics, and students to introduce the radio platform, discuss its audience and purpose, and identify opportunities for creative intervention.

Open discussion formed the basis of the project, with every participant encouraged to contribute ideas regardless of technical feasibility or previous experience. Rather than narrowing possibilities early, the emphasis was placed on exploration and collective creativity.

Ideas generated during the workshops were documented on a shared Padlet, allowing students to build upon one another's suggestions and continue discussions beyond the physical sessions. This democratic process ensured that concepts evolved collaboratively rather than being directed solely by staff.

Following discussion and review, students were commissioned to develop selected ideas into more refined concepts. The development of the Low-Fi Dragon exemplified this approach, with staff acting primarily as facilitators while students retained creative ownership of the work.

What kind of impact do you anticipate your work may have on learning and teaching going forward?

The project demonstrated that disciplines with no obvious connection can create valuable educational partnerships when brought together through collaborative practice.

The most significant impact was the project's ability to generate future opportunities. The Low-Fi Dragon concept became the foundation for a subsequent Innovation Fund application, illustrating how small-scale co-created research activities can evolve into larger institutional initiatives.

The project also provides a transferable model for future collaborations with disciplines that might not traditionally engage with broadcasting, positioning Westminster Waves as a platform for experimentation, creative research, and interdisciplinary teaching innovation.

Any lessons learned from working in partnership?

- Open-ended creative briefs encourage more original thinking than tightly prescribed outcomes.
- Students were most engaged when they were given genuine ownership of ideas rather than asked to respond to staff-generated solutions.
- The sandpit format created a low-risk environment that encouraged experimentation and reduced concerns about producing the "right" answer.
- Collaborative digital spaces, such as the shared Padlet, enabled ideas to develop collectively and ensured that every participant could contribute throughout the process.
- Small-scale co-creation activities can generate outcomes with significant long-term value.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration is most successful when participants are encouraged to contribute from the perspective of their own discipline rather than attempting to imitate another. The strongest ideas emerged precisely because animation students approached radio as outsiders, bringing fresh visual and conceptual thinking to an established platform.

The project has established a sustainable model for future interdisciplinary collaborations and demonstrated that creative experimentation can become a catalyst for curriculum innovation, research development, and wider community engagement.