



STUDENTS AS CO-CREATORS

A Curriculum Design Collaboration

Student: Thamid Khan

Academics: Moonisah Usman, Eleanor Roseblade

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Communications
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Students as Co-Creators: Working in Partnership Report

Project Overview

This curriculum development project explored podcast-based assessment on the Westminster Foundation Pathways, focusing on the core module Critical Thinking in a Changing World where all students complete a podcast as part of their assessment diet. The project aimed to understand how this format influenced Foundation students' engagement, independent study habits, understanding of the subject, digital skills, and overall assessment experience, using a small-scale evaluation co-designed with a student collaborator.

Working with one highly engaged Foundation student as a co-creator, the team designed and implemented a short survey combining Likert-scale and open-ended questions about the podcast task. The resulting data, although limited in scale, provided detailed insight into how students experience podcast assessment at transition level and highlighted the kinds of practical support required for them to benefit fully from this approach.

Project Artefacts

- Student-produced podcasts created for the Critical Thinking in a Changing World assessment on the Foundation Pathways – currently being evaluated for wider dissemination via Westminster Waves.
- A co-designed evaluation survey exploring engagement, independent study time, enjoyment, understanding, enthusiasm, and skills development linked to the podcast task.
- An internal results summary capturing key trends in students' responses and outlining recommendations for future podcast-based assessment on the Foundation course (see attached)
- A result poster (see attached)
- Conference paper delivered at **ExperiencED Festival 2026** (pdf of slides attached)
- Academic blog paper being published 16th September in <https://thesedablog.wordpress.com/> (see attached)

Where did the inspiration to do the project come from?

The project originated from existing practice on the Foundation Pathways, where podcasting had been introduced as an authentic and creative alternative to traditional written coursework in *Critical Thinking in a Changing World*. Staff noticed that the format appeared to increase engagement and draw on students' everyday media habits, but there had been no systematic evaluation of how it affected learning, confidence, or digital literacy.

At the same time, there was a wider institutional interest in inclusive, innovative assessment and in understanding how digital media tasks support students who are just beginning their university journeys. The project was therefore inspired by a desire to listen more closely to Foundation students' experiences, involve them in shaping the evaluation, and generate evidence that could inform future use of podcasts both on the Foundation course and across other programmes.

What did you set out to achieve?

The main aim was to evaluate the impact of podcast assessment on Foundation students' learning experiences and to use student-led evaluation to inform future module design. Specifically, the project set out to:

- Investigate whether podcast assessment affects the amount and nature of independent study time students devote to their coursework.
- Explore whether creating a podcast improves students' understanding of the subject matter compared with more traditional assessments.
- Examine how podcasting influences students' enjoyment of assessment, their enthusiasm for learning, and their confidence in communicating ideas.
- Identify the digital and transferable skills students felt they developed through the task, such as editing, planning, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Although the original plan was to work with a group of student co-creators and a larger response set, the final project focused on deep collaboration with one student and a small cohort, providing a starting point for future, larger-scale cycles.

How did students and staff work together on this project?

Students and staff worked together as partners to design and carry out the evaluation of the podcast assessment. The academic lead defined the overall research questions and ensured ethical procedures were followed, while the student co-creator contributed directly to the wording, sequencing, and emphasis of the survey questions. The co-creator and academic discussed drafts, identified gaps, and considered how best to capture peers' views on workload, stress, enjoyment, and perceived learning. After the survey was run, the responses were analysed and a summary of results created. Results were then used to create a display poster by the co-creator. Further dissemination of the results came through conference presentations.

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

The project indicates that podcast-based assessment can be a powerful way to engage

Foundation students, deepen their understanding of course content, and develop digital and transferable skills, but that it also introduces additional workload and technical demands that must be carefully supported. Students reported spending more time on the podcast task than on written coursework, often describing the assessment as creative and enjoyable, and many felt that having to explain ideas aloud improved their grasp of the subject.

These insights will inform the redesign of the Foundation module, particularly through strengthening practical scaffolding (for example, clearer guidance, workshops, and access to equipment) and making the relevance of podcasting to future study and careers more explicit.

Any lessons learned from working in partnership?

Several lessons emerged about partnership working in a Foundation context. First, the project showed that even a single highly engaged co-creator can significantly improve the relevance and sensitivity of evaluation tools, but relying on one student means that some perspectives will inevitably be missing.

Many Foundation students are still adjusting to university expectations and may not yet see the value of engaging in research about their assessments on top of their core workload, which can limit participation in co-creation activities and so the project highlighted the need to design partnership opportunities that are realistic for Foundation students, for example by integrating co-creation into timetabled sessions or assessment rather than expecting extensive extra-curricular commitment.

Finally, the experience reinforced that partnership is most effective when it is clearly framed, supported, and reciprocal: students need to see how their input will shape future teaching and assessment, and staff need to be prepared to adjust practice in response to what students say, even when this involves acknowledging practical challenges around time, technology, and confidence.