

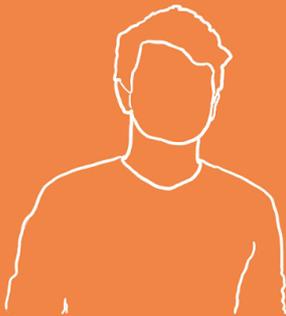
CLIMATE STUDIO SESSIONS REPORT

Students as Co-Creators

CLIMATE STUDIO SESSIONS

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP FOR STUDENTS AND TUTORS

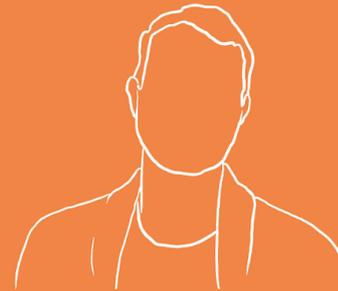
INTRODUCING OUR SPEAKERS!



Scott McAulay



Nana Biamah-Ofosu



Ross O'Ceallaigh

Project Team:

Student Collaborators:

Maisie Spencer, Vilde Stadtler Myrhaug, Gabriela MacAllister, Helen Windsor, Finlay Johnson

Academic Collaborators:

Ben Pollock, Paolo Zadie



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RESEARCH SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The current architectural curriculum does not teach climate literacy to a standard that matches the severity of the climate emergency, leaving students feeling ill-equipped to design in the face of the climate crisis. This research project explores a method of rapid integration of climate literacy into the design studio module. Through empowering students and tutors alike with the knowledge and insight to design within the climate emergency, this proposal aims to broaden the scope of climate discussions across all courses within the University of Westminster School of Architecture and Cities. The collaborators curated an interactive workshop, inviting industry professionals from a range of disciplines to present issues surrounding the climate emergency: a 'Climate Studio Session'. The workshop tested a hybrid lecture format where students and tutors were given the opportunity to discuss the themes presented with attendees in an inclusive, nonhierarchical setting within breakout room groups. Each group developed questions to ask the speakers during a Q&A session, providing a platform for open, critical discussion between students and educators. Breakout rooms sparked imperative conversations surrounding the climate emergency, whilst encouraging interactive engagement. This interaction is paramount in the 'new-normal' digital world to relieve feelings of isolation, and helps to bridge the gap between education and industry.

OUTCOME

Participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire before and after the event, which revealed that 92% of the respondents thought the lecture structure positively impacted their learning experience and 96% said they would like to see more of this type of discussion format in their modules. Both students and tutors felt better equipped to implement climate discussions in their design work after the session, demonstrating the efficacy of this format for implementing immediate climate literacy action. The 'Climate Studio Sessions' sets a precedent for future workshops, where the dialog between students, educators and industry professionals can be continued within the university and beyond.

PROJECT TEAM

The research project was run by members of WestCAN - The University of Westminster's Climate Action Network. The team consists of two academic partners: Ben Pollock and Paolo Zaide, and five student partners: three from BA Architecture (Maisie Spencer, Gabriela Mac'Allister, and Vilde Stadtler Myrhaug), and two from MArch (Helen Windsor and Finlay Johnson).

RESEARCH METHOD

PROJECT AIMS

The aim of the research project was to increase student engagement in conversations surrounding the climate emergency so that sustainability is more integrated in design studio work.

As an externally certified course, any structural change to the curriculum would need to be led by the RIBA and ARB, which can mean current architectural issues are slow to gain traction within university curriculum. Therefore, this study tested a way of immediately including climate literacy in the curriculum by altering the traditional lecture format.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

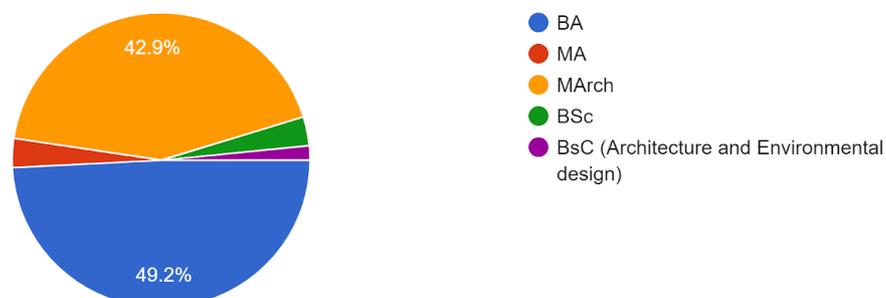
WestCAN's proposal for the students as co-creators initiative prompted this research. In February 2021, Sam Turner from ACAN and newly founded WestCAN, held a lecture for students at the University of Westminster's School of Architecture and Cities. The lecture had over 250 attendees, and over 100 students became members of WestCAN, demonstrating that the climate crisis is an issue which students are keen to actively engage with.

Inspired by the Architects Climate Action Network (ACAN), students from the MArch course started WestCAN; a society that provides an open platform for collaborative discussion between tutors and students, and advocates for action regarding climate literacy in the School of Architecture and Cities. This context inspired the Co-Creators group to organise this study as part of the WestCAN agenda.

The response to WestCAN has shown there is a demand for an improved design curriculum that ensures students can apply design principles relevant to the climate crisis. In a survey about how well the course teaches sustainable design in the context of the climate emergency, 56% of students answered 'inadequately', revealing a gap in our education (see figure 1).

Which course are you on?

63 responses



How well does your course teach you sustainable design in the context of the climate crisis?

63 responses

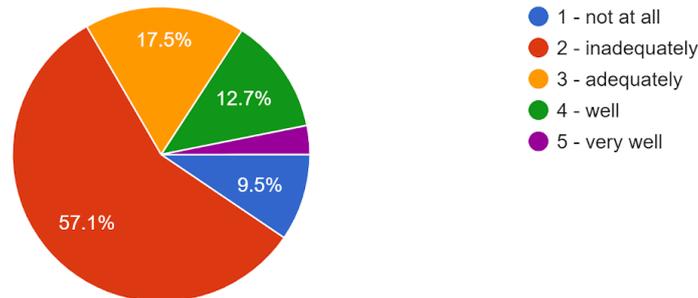


Figure 1 - graphs showing the results of 63 students from various courses at Westminster.

Lectures addressing the climate emergency are not included in the curriculum, and those introducing sustainable practices are insufficient at Westminster. Current lectures that address sustainable practices are part of the technical module and students are not taught how to practically apply the practices to other course modules. The lack of in-person lectures and studio culture has prevented important conversations about the climate crisis and sustainability across all modules.

This initiative started during the COVID-19 pandemic, where all teaching was transferred online. Through discussions, it was found that students felt it was difficult to fully engage with the content in online lectures and often felt uncomfortable asking questions to the speaker. Since remote learning prevents natural discussions before, during or after lectures amongst students and educators, encouraging dialogue became particularly important for the study; especially when discussing the climate emergency and the need for change within the industry.

When attending in-person lectures, students and educators naturally discuss topics and questions before, during and after the lectures, an essential part of learning that has been lost in the online lecture formats. The team found that these discussions are where the most knowledge can be generated and exchanged; therefore, encouraging discussions became a central part of the project. Sharing knowledge and ideas is especially important when discussing the climate crisis, as there are many approaches and topics that need to be considered.

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

WestCAN

The idea for this project came from our initial WestCAN meetings in February of this year. There was a general feeling that the university and our school wasn't taking the climate emergency as seriously as it should, and the group wanted to improve this.

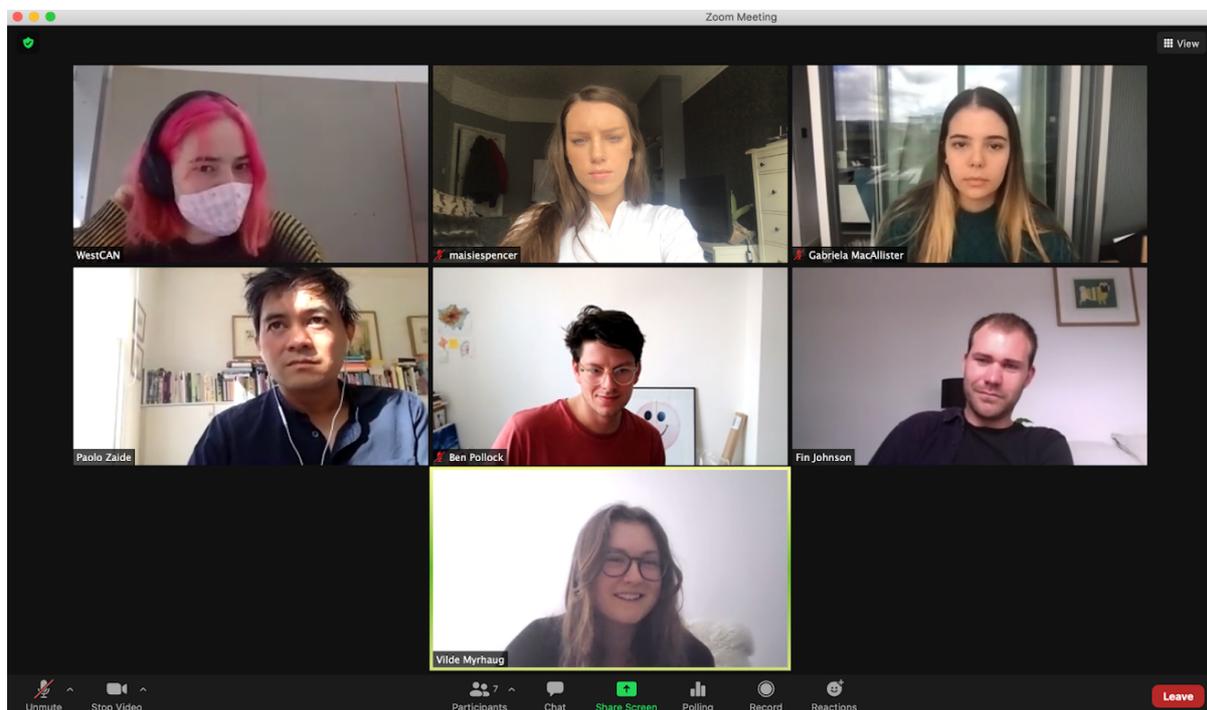
THE STUDENTS CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK LAUNCH EVENT

The format of the event was inspired by the StuCAN (branch of ACAN) launch event on the 2nd of March this year. The launch featured three speakers who talked about the climate emergency from their own specialism and suggested ways in which students can take immediate action. The event reinforced the urgency of the situation by expanding on topics surrounding the climate emergency but related to other disciplines. During the launch event the attendees were assigned to breakout rooms where they were encouraged to discuss the talks, which opened up the space for students and tutors to reflect on the topics.

The team thought it would be a good idea to include this in the test lecture format, however there were limitations to the StuCAN format that would have to be improved upon. For example, some people felt uncomfortable participating in the discussion and there was no opportunity to bring questions to the speakers after discussing. For our event, we therefore wanted to develop this layout.

COLLABORATION

Given that the co-creators project developed during a year of digital learning, students and tutors could efficiently and easily communicate online to organise and carry out our project. Both students and tutors contributed to the organisation of the event, and used their respective connections to assemble guest speakers and invite students and educators in the School of Architecture and Cities to the event. We used active Google documents to collectively collate information and regular Zoom meetings to discuss our event and research (see figure 2).



COLLABORATION

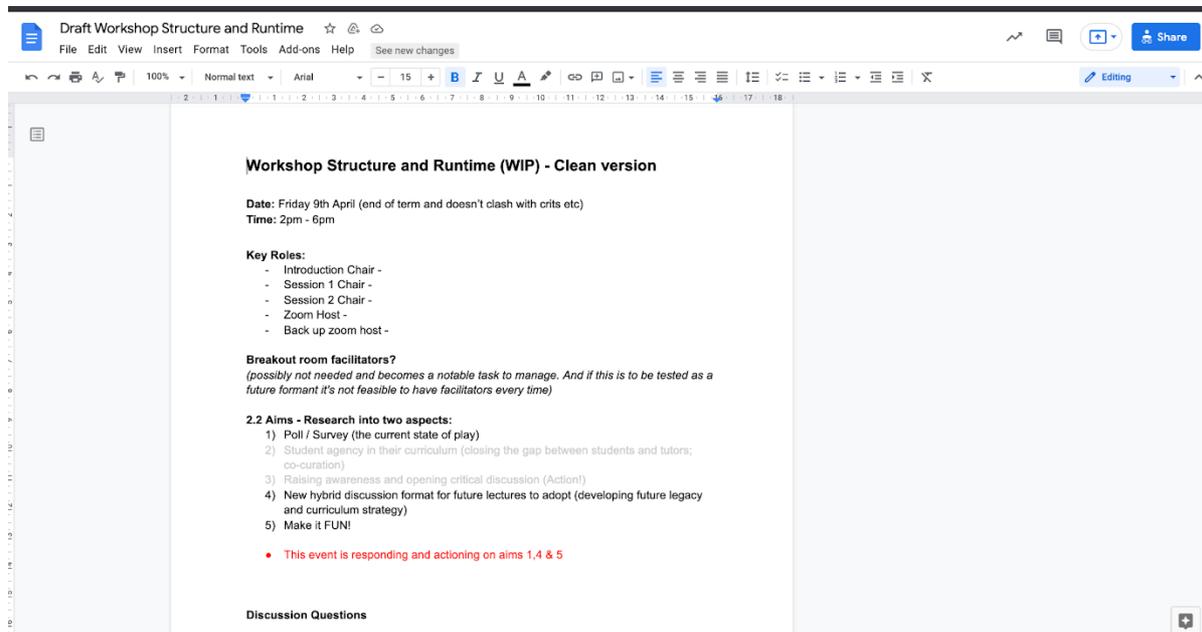
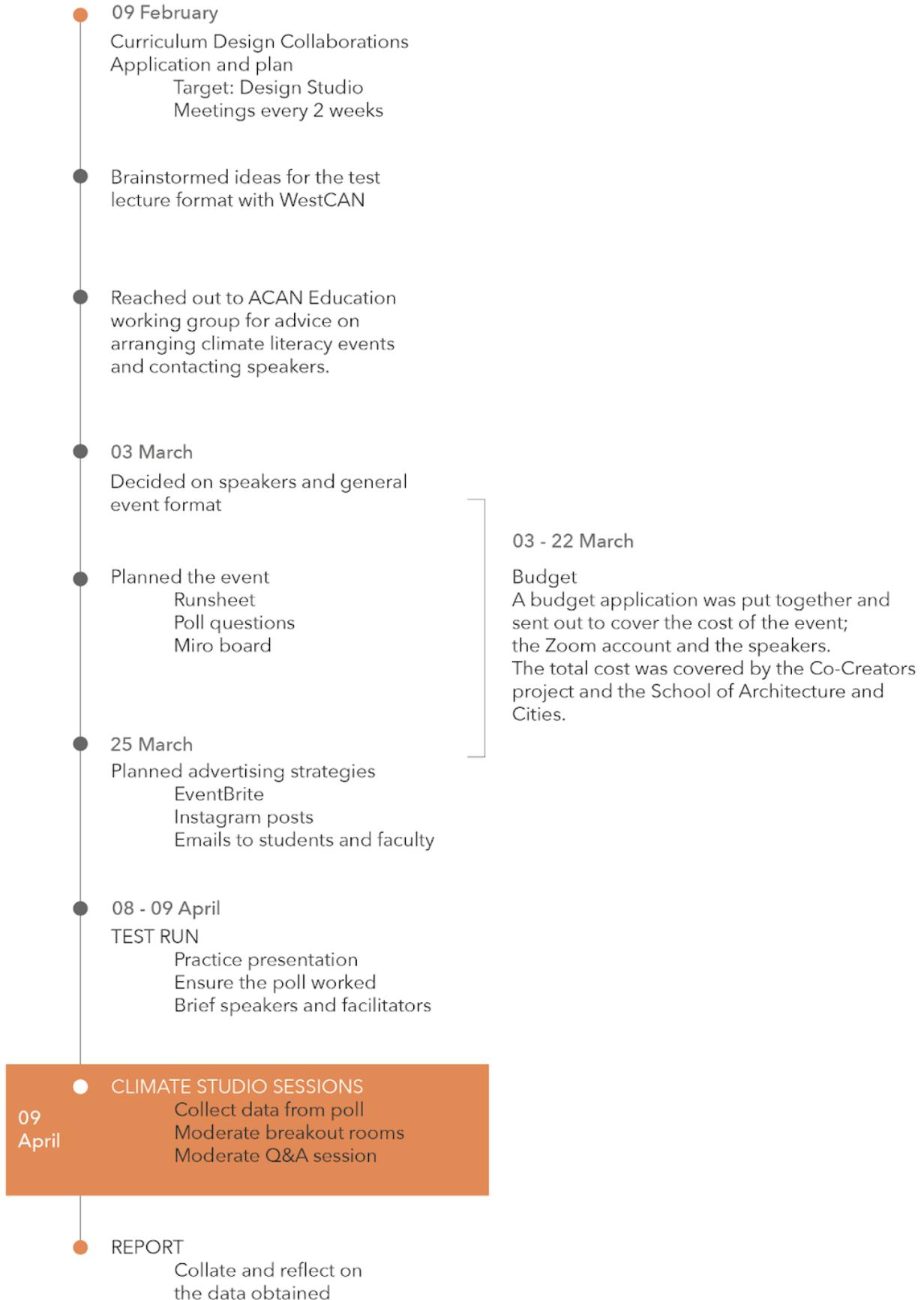


Figure 2 - Methods of collaboration; [Image on previous page] - Group zoom meeting, [above image] - Screenshot of a collaborative Google document.

PROJECT TIMELINE



THE EVENT ATTRIBUTES

Climate Studio Sessions - 09/04/2021

THE SPEAKERS

Scott McAulay

A recent RIBA Rising Star, Scott founded the Anthropocene Architecture School in 2019, a now internationally recognised climate emergency educational platform.

Nana Biamah-Ofori

Nana is an architect, lecturer, writer and a design studio tutor at the Kingston School of Art. Nana's writing has been published and exhibited internationally, and has previously hosted NAW's Architecture foundation takeover.

Ross O'Ceallaigh

Ross is a planner and urban designer based in London and is host of the 'green urbanist' a podcast for urbanists fighting climate change.

BREAKOUT ROOMS

Breakout rooms engaged participants in an open nonhierarchical conversation with peers, students and educators.

POLL QUESTIONS

Asking participants the same questions before and after the lecture enabled the research to have comparable results.

ADVERTISING + ENGAGEMENT

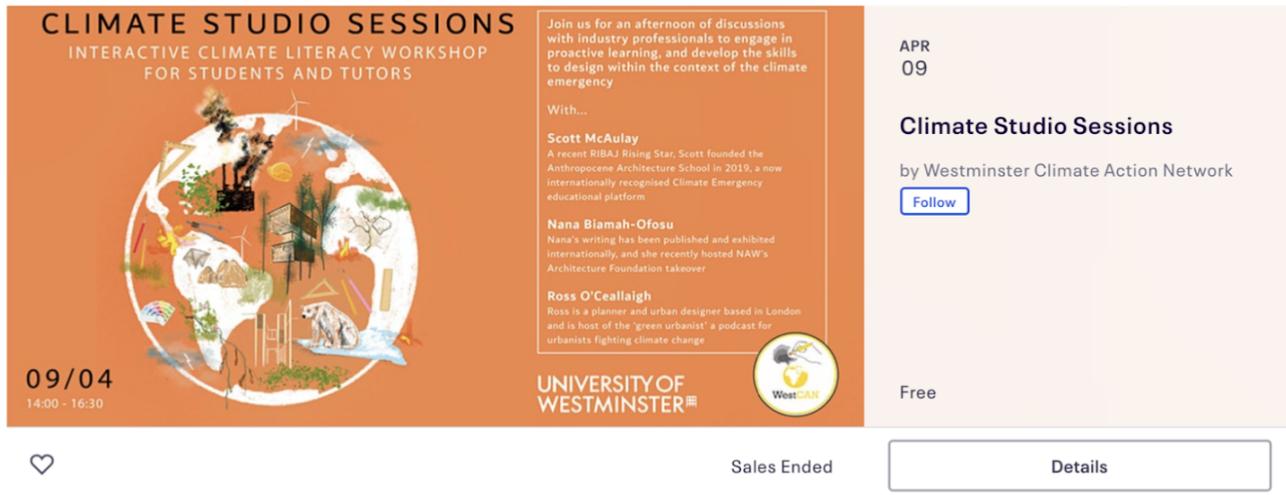
To engage participants, the team sent out emails to the student representatives and heads of year to send to all students and tutors. The team designed fun, creative imagery to post on the WestCAN and personal social media accounts.

Instagram Post Examples



Eventbrite Page Example

To gauge the number of participants, the team created an eventbrite page to send out the zoom link and manage attendees.



CLIMATE STUDIO SESSIONS
INTERACTIVE CLIMATE LITERACY WORKSHOP FOR STUDENTS AND TUTORS

Join us for an afternoon of discussions with industry professionals to engage in proactive learning, and develop the skills to design within the context of the climate emergency

With...

Scott McAulay
A recent RIBA Rising Star, Scott founded the Anthropocene Architecture School in 2019, a now internationally recognised Climate Emergency educational platform

Nana Biamah-Ofori
Nana's writing has been published and exhibited internationally, and she recently hosted NAW's Architecture Foundation takeover

Ross O'Ceallaigh
Ross is a planner and urban designer based in London and is host of the 'green urbanist' a podcast for urbanists fighting climate change

09/04
14:00 - 16:30

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

WestCAN

APR 09

Climate Studio Sessions
by Westminster Climate Action Network

Follow

Free

Heart icon

Sales Ended

Details

The students as co-creators from the University of Westminster are exploring a 'new normal' lecture structure focusing on the Climate Crisis

About this Event

Calling all students and educators at the University of Westminster!

Join us for an afternoon of discussions with industry professionals to engage in proactive learning, and develop the skills to design within the context of the climate emergency. We are exploring a new lecture structure, where students and educators are given the opportunity to discuss the topic amongst their peers, and form questions to ask the speaker directly in an open conversation. The session is curated to explore themes surrounding the climate emergency, equipping you with a deeper knowledge of climate literacy which can be applied to your design work, within the studio and beyond.

With...

Scott McAulay

A recent RIBA Rising Star, Scott founded the Anthropocene Architecture School in 2019, a now internationally recognised Climate Emergency educational platform

Nana Biamah-Ofori

Nana's writing has been published and exhibited internationally, and she recently hosted NAW's Architecture Foundation takeover

Ross O'Ceallaigh

Ross is a planner and urban designer based in London and is host of the 'green urbanist' a podcast for urbanists fighting climate change

Date And Time

Fri, 9 April 2021
14:00 - 16:30 BST
[Add to Calendar](#)

Location

Online Event

Already have a ticket?

[Access the event](#)

WORKSHOP RUNNING FORMAT

To ensure the workshop session ran smoothly, the team created this format and ensured all of the speakers knew when to join zoom, turn on cameras, share screen and begin.

3 guest speakers, 2 sessions 2 breakout sessions, 2 poll surveys.

Total Run Time: ~2.5H

SCHEDULE

1:45 - 2:00 (15 mins) - Join the Zoom meeting

2:00 - 2:10 (10 mins) - Event Start - WestCAN, Intro to research, poll survey (round 1)

2:10 - 2:40 (30 mins) - Scott McAuley

2:40 - 2:55 (15 mins) - Breakout Room

2:55 - 3:10 (15 mins) - Questions

3:10 - 3:15 (5 mins) - Break

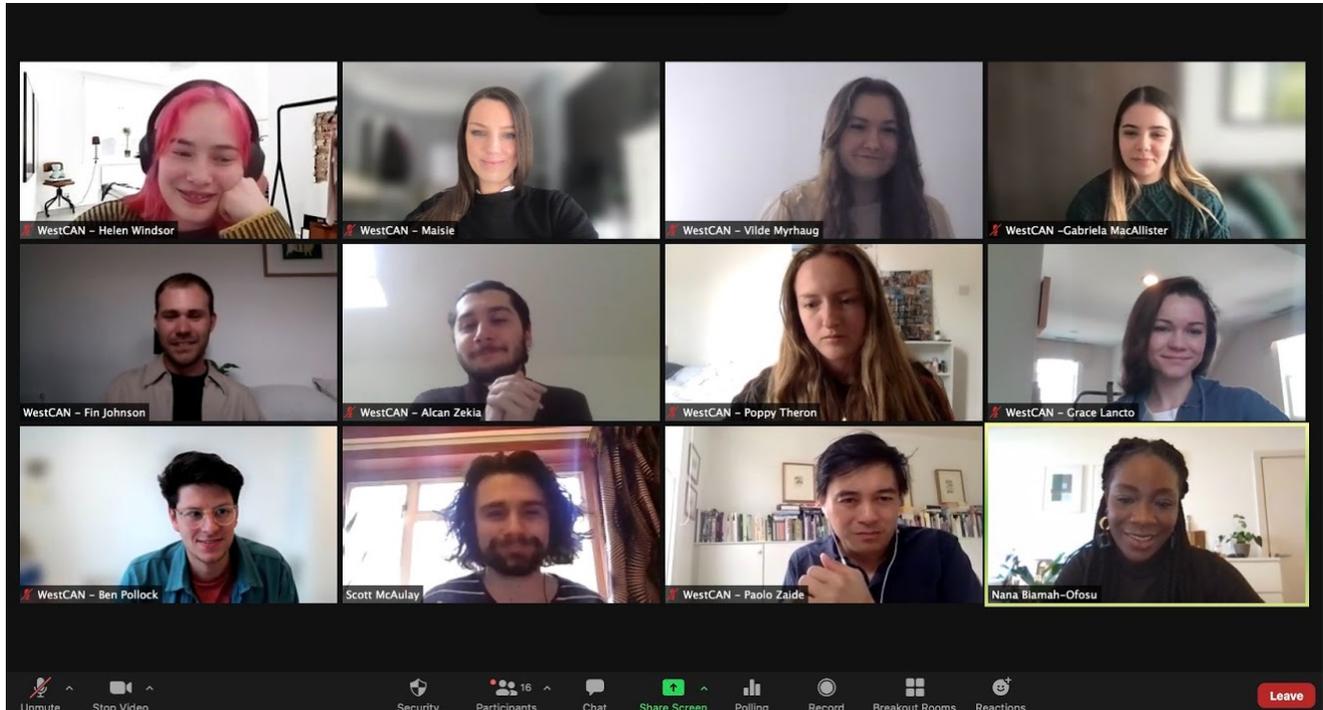
3:15 - 3:35 (20 mins) - Nana Biamah-Ofosu

3:35 - 3:55 (20 mins) - Ross O'Ceallaigh

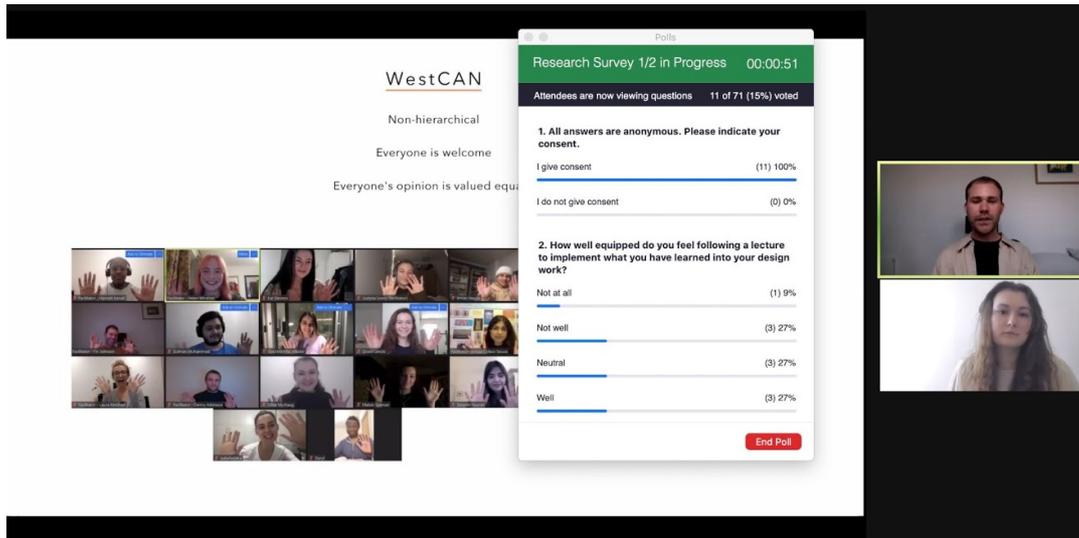
3:55 - 4:10 (15 mins) - Breakout Room

4:10 - 4:25 (15 mins) - Discussion

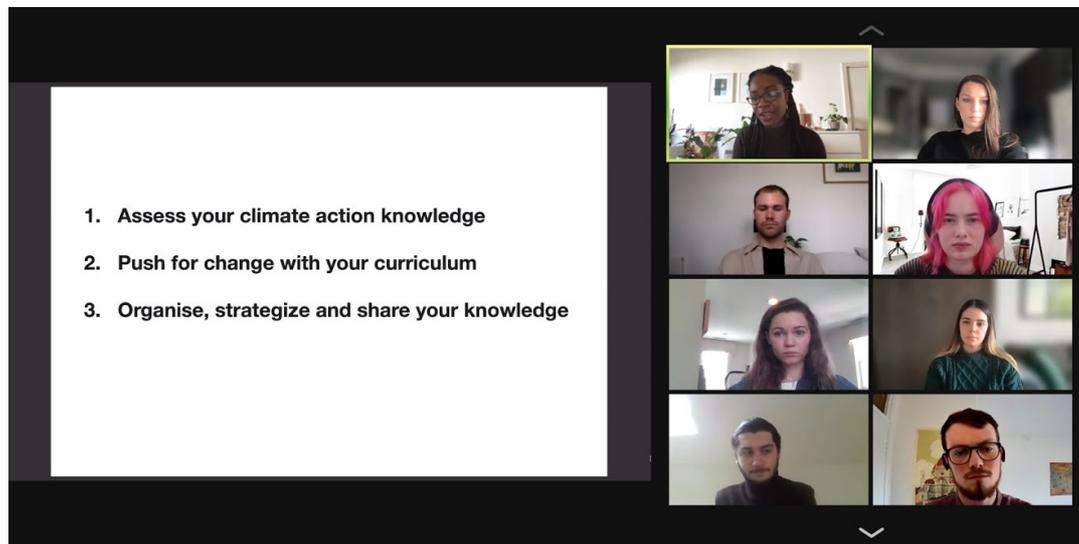
4:25 - 4:30 (5 mins) - End - poll survey (round 2)



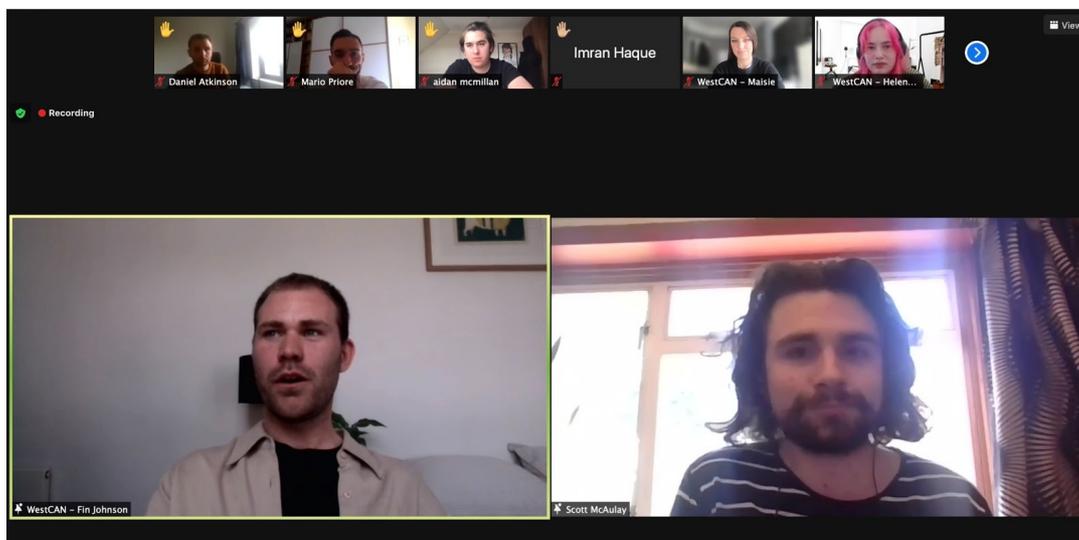
Meeting with the guest speakers and facilitators before the event.



The first poll during the session.



Nana's presentation.



Scott's Q&A session.

POLL RESULTS

Research Survey 01 (start) - 54 people

- Poll taken at the start of first talk (2:05pm up for 10-15 minutes)

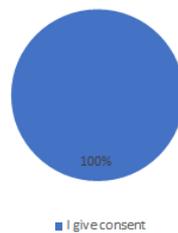
Research Survey 02 (end) - 26 people

- Poll taken at the end of the second speaker/Q&A (4:28pm up for >5mins)

Consent - 100% of participants consented to taking part in the survey.

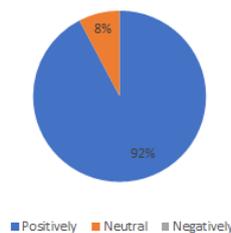
** Note: No one involved in the organisation of the event contributed to the poll and therefore feedback is from non-organisational participants only **

Q1 All answers are anonymous. Please indicate your consent.



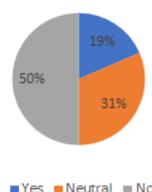
Attendees predominantly answered that this format positively improved their learning experience, with a much smaller proportion answering it had a neutral improvement.

Q1 How do you feel this structure of lecture has impacted your learning experience?



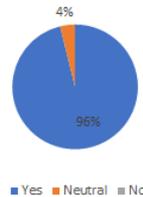
At the start, half of the participants answered that they did not feel current lectures left enough time for discussion to fully understand how to implement the topic into design studio work. Our proposed lecture format dedicated 15 minutes for peer discussion and 15 minutes to ask speakers questions, whereas usually speakers only have time at the end of their lectures to answer a few questions.

Q2 Do you feel current lectures leave enough time for peer discussion to properly understand the topic and how it is implemented into design studio projects?



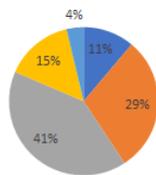
Following the new lecture format, 96% of poll participants said they wanted to see more of this type of lecture format in their course modules.

Q2 Do you think this event structuring and methodology (interactive breakout rooms) was successful and something you would like to see more of in your modules and typical lectures?



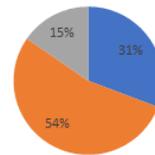
A higher percentage of attendees felt not well or not at all well equipped to implement topics from current lectures into their design work, whereas afterward all attendees answered that they felt neutral, well or very well equipped to do so after taking part in the new lecture format. This data suggests that students and educators felt better equipped to implement Scott, Nana and Ross’s lecture content into their design work after peer discussion and forming collective questions.

Q4 How well equipped do you feel following a lecture to implement what you have learned into your design work?



■ Very well ■ Well ■ Neutral ■ Not well ■ Not at all

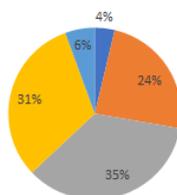
Q4 How well equipped do you feel after these lectures to implement what you have learned into your design work?



■ Very well ■ Well ■ Neutral ■ Not well ■ Not at all

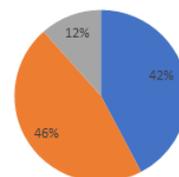
As well as this, attendees were much more likely to ask a question during a lecture following the new format, with all attendees feeling they were likely or very likely to ask a question in the second poll. This shows that people were more likely to ask a question using the new lecture format than current lectures. This may have been because people felt more comfortable to ask a question after a group discussion rather than on their own.

Q5 How likely are you to ask a question in a lecture?



■ Very likely ■ Likely ■ Neutral ■ Unlikely ■ Never

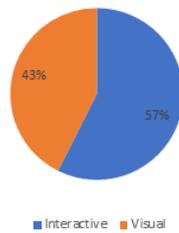
Q5 How likely are you to ask a question in a lecture using this format?



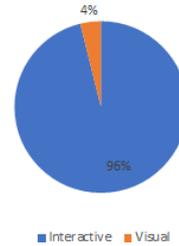
■ Very likely ■ Likely ■ Neutral ■ Unlikely ■ Never

Participants answered whether they felt they were more successful visual or interactive learners at the start and end of the new lecture format. Our results show that following the lecture, a higher percentage of participants felt they were more interactive learners than visual learners.

Q6 Do you feel you learn better through visual or interactive learning?



Q6 Do you feel you learn better through visual or interactive learning?



Overall we feel that these polls show the new lecture structure was successful in improving engagement and enhancing the lecture experience so that students and educators feel more equipped to tie these themes into their design work.

REFLECTION

POLLS

Polls worked really well and were a great way of engaging the audience and getting their feedback on current and the new lecture format. Asking the same or similar questions both at the start and end of the lectures allowed for easily comparative results. Although a greater number of people answered the first survey, it is evident that attendees are more likely to ask a question and engage using the new lecture format.

ACCURACY OF RESULTS

28 more people answered the first survey than the second survey. There is a certain level of accuracy to these results as they are only representative of the people who stayed for both lectures. In hindsight, this form of data collection would have been even more effective if a survey had been conducted at the start and end of each separate lecture. That way more people might potentially have answered the survey for more accurate results.

Other reasons why less people answered the second survey could be that there were too many questions, and that they felt like they didn't need to answer the second set as they already answered the questions before. The reason we chose this amount and type of questions was to get feedback on this new lecture format. In future events that take on the same format, it might be more beneficial with fewer questions, and to have different questions at the beginning and end.

As not everyone who attended the event answered the survey, the poll result might not accurately reflect the opinions of all participants. For example, the people who are inclined to answer the survey might be the same group of people who generally benefited from a more interactive format. This should be taken into consideration when reading the poll results.

THE SESSION FORMAT

Based on the poll results, the format was effective in achieving the project's aim. However, there was a significantly larger number of attendees at the beginning than the end, suggesting that the format was too long for people to attend the whole event. Students and tutors who attended the second half of the event, where two speakers gave back to back lectures, thought that format was more engaging since it generated discussions between the speakers themselves (as well as the audience). In the future, the sessions could be 1.5 hours long, allowing more time for discussion but only two guest speakers.

The breakout rooms were successful overall. These small discussion groups were planned so that tutors and students could discuss the contents of the lecture and formulate a question for the speaker, with the help of a facilitator. Each group had one facilitator whose role was to guide the conversation in case it didn't start naturally, which has become very common in online learning. Facilitators also shared access to the Miro Board, a tool where each group had their own workspace where people could write notes, questions or

interesting thoughts on the lecture; workspaces were clearly labelled with suggestions in case the group struggled to come up with any questions.

However, there were some breakout rooms with little-to-no participation, despite there being a facilitator in each room. Perhaps a solution to this could be to prepare participants on the fact that there will be breakout rooms where everyone is encouraged to participate while introducing the event. This could give people who feel scared of participating some time to prepare. For these groups the miro-board was beneficial, as it allowed anyone who wanted to take notes and write reflections without needing to discuss.

The study found that engagement with the Miro Board wasn't consistent throughout the groups; while some used it to write down every point in their discussion, others didn't use it at all. Although Miro is a platform used by some design studios during online learning to simulate the format of in-studio pinups, the majority of attendees weren't familiar with the interface, which could have affected their interest in using the tool. Despite this, a common platform for note taking was thought to be effective in creating a record of the sessions and an archive of resources students and tutors can use when designing and teaching; which could be built upon if the sessions are continued.

The event confirmed that discussions surrounding a topic, in this case design and the climate emergency, increases more engagement and understanding for both tutors and students.

The Miro Board

Brainstorm + Discuss

Please go to the column that corresponds to your breakout room number



Zoomed in miro pages

Room 12

Scott's talk:

Main task: Come up with one question for the speaker

If you are stuck, use these points as a guide to start the conversation:

- Discuss one thing you learned during the talk
- Is there something that you would like to know more about?
- How could you apply some of the things learned in studio or other relevant fields?



Room 13

Scott's talk:

Main task: Come up with one question for the speaker

If you are stuck, use these points as a guide to start the conversation:

- Discuss one thing you learned during the talk
- Is there something that you would like to know more about?
- How could you apply some of the things learned in studio or other relevant fields?



Nana and Ross' talk:

Main task: Come up with one question for the speakers

If you are stuck, use these points as a guide to start the conversation:

- Discuss one thing you learned during the talk
- Is there something that you would like to know more about?
- How could you apply some of the things learned in studio or other relevant fields?



Nana and Ross' talk:

Main task: Come up with one question for the speakers

If you are stuck, use these points as a guide to start the conversation:

- Discuss one thing you learned during the talk
- Is there something that you would like to know more about?
- How could you apply some of the things learned in studio or other relevant fields?



IMPACT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Through the study, we found that this format is effective for both students and tutors to generate discussions and engage in their learning. The sessions are simple to organise and practical to include as part of the design module. The layout is also easily transferable to other modules, which would help generate a more cohesive link between the work produced in the studio, sustainable practices and the current climate emergency. The majority of attendees said they felt more confident to implement what they learnt in their design work after attending the event. Therefore continuing the Climate Studio Sessions could be the initial action for universities to implement that would encourage students to engage in climate affairs. It is a step towards the architectural curriculum ensuring students have an adequate understanding of the climate emergency, and the ability to design with regenerative principles as the minimum standard.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ENGAGEMENT

Interdisciplinary discussions in the Climate Studio Sessions were effective in offering different perspectives and encouraging active engagement. Hearing from various disciplines within architecture generated interesting overlaps in discussion topics and approaches. Including a wider array of courses within the School of Architecture and Cities to future events could therefore enable students to expand on their knowledge, both through engagement with other courses and guest speakers.

The sessions could also expand outside the School of Architecture and Cities, including courses in engineering, construction management, etc. which would help all students engage with the wider scope of the discipline and the different professionals they will be collaborating with once they start working in the industry. Sessions with other universities that also include professional practices (architecture, landscape, urban planning), could also be beneficial for creating a stronger link between education and professional practice under the same overarching principle; creating an open setting for discussions about the climate emergency and the application of sustainable design principles.

ONLINE VS IN PERSON

As the event was planned and carried out online, there are aspects of this format that could be useful as teaching goes back to in-person. During the breakout room section of the event, participants were encouraged to come up with questions and use a Miro board to write them down before deciding on which one to put forward for the speakers to answer. A similar format could be set up for in-person sessions, where a board is available for (voluntary) use and can serve as an archive for references, discussion points and interesting questions students and tutors have put forward.

The online format, however, allowed flexibility in the planning of the event as it is not dependent on a location. Therefore, the sessions could also continue to be organised online, specially if they are expanded to a wider audience.

APPENDIX

1. POLL QUESTIONS

These survey questions were asked at the beginning (round 1) and the end (round 2) of the session. We also asked for participants consent to use their answers anonymously for our research,

ROUND 1 (START)

Q1 - How well equipped do you feel following a lecture to implement what you have learned into your design work?

Very unequipped - Unequipped - Neutral - Equipped - Very equipped

Q2 - How likely are you to ask a question in a lecture?

Never - Unlikely - Neutral - Likely - Very likely

Q3 - Do you think discussing a lecture in an informal setting enhances your understanding of the material/topic presented?

No - Neutral - Yes

Q4 - Do you feel you learn better through visual or interactive learning?

Visual - Interactive

Q5 - Do you feel current lectures leave enough time for peer discussion, to understand the topic and how it is implemented into design studio projects?

No - Neutral - Yes

ROUND 2 (END)

Q1 - How well equipped do you feel after a lecture to implement what you have learned into your design work?

Very unequipped - Unequipped - Neutral - Equipped - Very equipped

Q2 - How likely are you to ask a question in a lecture using this format?

Never - Unlikely - Neutral - Likely - Very likely

Q3 - Do you think discussing a lecture in an informal setting enhances your understanding of the material/topic presented?

No - Neutral - Yes

Q4 - Do you feel you learn better through visual or interactive learning?

Visual - Interactive

Q5 - Do you think this event structuring and methodology (interactive breakout rooms) was successful and something you would like to see more of in your modules and typical lectures?

No - Neutral - Yes

2. BUDGET APPLICATION



STUDENTS AS CO-CREATORS PROJECT BUDGET PLAN

Project Title: The **WestCAN Collaborative Curriculum Initiative**
Budget Prepared by: Fin Johnson

Promotional Materials (please list items and costs)

Survey Prize Money **£50**

Project Events (please list items and costs)

Proposed Speaker 1: Scott McAuley **£125**

Proposed Speaker 2: Nana Biamah-Ofosu **£125**

Proposed Speaker 3: Ross O'Ceallaigh **£125**

Other (please list items and costs)

Zoom Account: £150 - Microsoft Teams does not have the breakout room function which means smaller group discussions cannot happen. Research presented by [ACAN](#) shows that smaller group discussions are more productive and inclusive.

Total project costs: **£575**

*Please note that co-creators have awarded us the maximum amount of money towards the project - £300. Thus we are asking for an extra **£275** to make up the total project cost.*

Please outline what the incentive or prizes are, who will receive them and how will they be awarded:

There will be one prize which is a subscription to 'it's freezing in LA' which is an independent climate change magazine - <https://www.itsfreezinginla.co.uk/subscribe>

Please describe how any proposed incentives will benefit the project:

In order for us to understand whether the project has worked or not it will be essential to gain qualitative information regarding how well our proposed curriculum initiative performs against how lectures are usually given. Therefore if we incentivise students and tutors we will have a broader set of feedback to use to help formulate our summary report.

Signed (academic partner from project team): Paolo Zadio

Date submitted: 09/03/21

Approved by: Paolo Zadio

All budget plans must be submitted and approved by the Director of Student Partnership (or their designate) before expenditure is incurred. Please wait for an email confirmation from the Student Partnership Projects Co-ordinator regarding your funds.

Expenses claims will not be paid without this approval. Changes to the plan should be agreed with the Student Partnership Projects Co-ordinator in advance of expenditure.

3. EVENT PRESENTATION

1



2

RUNNING ORDER

Questionnaire

WestCAN Introduction

1. Scott McAulay

Breakout room discussion
Q&A

2. Nana Biamah-Oforu & Ross O'Ceallaigh

Breakout room discussion
Q&A

Questionnaire

3



QUESTIONNAIRE

All answers are anonymous.

Please confirm your consent which allows us to use your response in our study

4

WestCAN

Non-hierarchical

Everyone is welcome

Everyone's opinion is valued equally



STUDENTS AS CO-CREATORS

Encourage collaboration between students and tutors

Increasing participation

Lectures can become more valuable



STUDENTS AS
CO-CREATORS

A Curriculum Design Collaboration