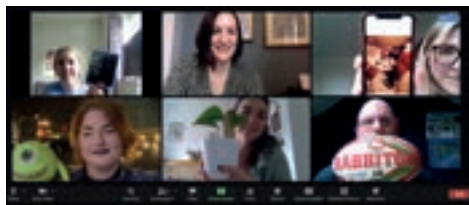
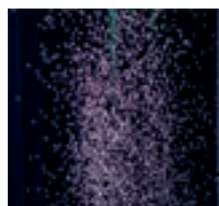


CONVERGE

www.yorksj.ac.uk/converge



Prospectus: Academic Year 2023/2024



Est.
1841

YORK
ST JOHN
UNIVERSITY



Northumbria
University
NEWCASTLE



CONVERGE
CONNECTED
INNOVATION
IN MENTAL HEALTH



Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys
NHS Foundation Trust



Contents

Welcome to Converge	3
History of Converge	4
Meet the Team	5
Our Teaching Methods	10
York St John University Campus	13
Support at Converge	14
Converge Events	16
Applying for Courses	18
Creative Writing	19
Music	21
Social Science and Study Skills	22
Theatre and Performance	23
Visual Arts	24
Converge at Northumbria	26
Volunteering Opportunities	28
International Connections	29
Out of Character Theatre Company	30
Converge Evaluation and Research Team	32
Emerging Voices Music Charity	33
New Applicant Information and Support	34
What the students say...	35

Welcome to Converge

We can't believe how quickly academic year 22/23 has gone, and we're very excited to show you our 23/24 Converge prospectus!

This year's prospectus aims to be an overview of the whole of the Converge project, introducing our courses, teams and sister projects, including exciting new developments in our international work.

In the following sections you will find a history of Converge, and an overview of the different subject areas that we currently offer. If you are interested in finding out the specific programme for this academic year, please email converge@yorks.ac.uk to be added to our mailing list. You can also see an overview of current Converge York courses at www.yorks.ac.uk/converge

Converge has been growing rapidly over the last year. We enrolled a record number of Converge students to our York based courses: 265 in total. We have continued to develop our postal and online programme and are spending time focusing on how we can link with the local hospitals and mental health care teams to provide taster sessions for Converge, and to help people make those first steps onto our courses.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

With best wishes,
Nick and Emma

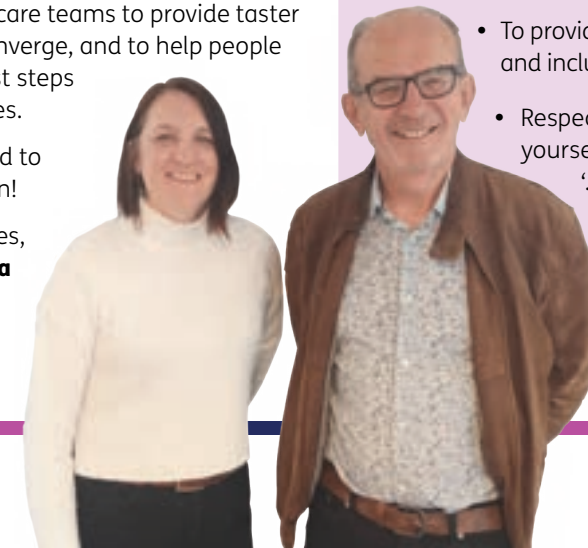
About Converge

Courses are provided free of charge and are open to adults (18 years of age and older) currently receiving support for their mental health, or who have experienced mental health issues.

Our courses are supported by university students as part of their degree programme, and we run across the academic term from September through to June. Courses are taught by university students and graduates, as well as people who have come through Converge following an experience of mental ill health and progressed to become tutors on our programme.

The principles of Converge

- To work together as artists and students
- To build a community where we learn from each other
- To engage and enhance the university and wider community
- To provide a supportive and inclusive environment
- Respect others, value yourself. and above all '... be ordinary, be extraordinary, be yourself.'



History of Converge

Converge began with a simple idea: to offer a course in theatre to local people who experienced mental ill health, and to involve university students in the delivery of the course.

In the autumn of 2007, Nick Rowe discussed the idea with Emma McKenzie. Emma, who now leads Converge's Discovery Hub, thought it was a good idea. Nick started the course with two York St John theatre students in January 2008.

One of those students, Gemma Alldred, was committed to the course, started Out of Character Theatre Company and played a crucial role in Converge for the next five years. When Gemma left Hilary Bailey took over and enabled us to grow and offer courses safely and effectively.

*Students not service users,
Education not therapy.*

Converge student

The idea began to take shape. We would offer courses in the university to adults who experience mental health challenges and involve university students in the delivery of the courses and the support of people who take part. We continued to offer theatre, then we began to add courses such as dance, song writing, creative writing and, with the help of a psychology lecturer, Understanding Happiness. A music lecturer, Chris Bartram set up the Converge choir (Communitas) in 2009.

As these courses developed, the principles of Converge emerged and were clearly expressed by a Converge student in this way: Students not service users, Education not therapy. These ideas were crucial;

people would be regarded as students, and we would offer education in a university environment.

We were looking for a name for what we were doing that would express the coming together of the interests of a university (to educate and give real world experience to its students) and people with mental health problems looking for non-stigmatising opportunities for education and development. This convergence of interests suggested the name Converge to Hazel Rowe, so we called it that.

Emma McKenzie joined us in 2015 and set up the Discovery Hub, which became the support service for Converge students. This was a crucial step forward: we were now working closely with the NHS, and we

could offer professional support to enable people to make the most of the education we could offer.

In 2016, Northumbria University in Newcastle began to offer Converge courses in theatre and fashion design. We now work together to deliver online courses through Converge Connected. More information about Converge Northumbria is on page 26.

Also in 2016, we set up a Research Methods course, which developed through the determination and ability of Ruth Lambley, into the Converge Evaluation and Research Team (CERT). CERT now carry out commissioned internal and external research and evaluation.

Meet the Team



Professor Nick Rowe MBE

Director of Converge

Nick is the Director and founder of Converge and responsible for the overall development of the project. He has worked at York St John for over 30 years as a lecturer in health and latterly in theatre.



Emma McKenzie

Converge & Discovery Hub Team Lead

Emma supports the leadership of Converge and manages The Discovery Hub. The Discovery Hub is the individual support team within Converge. We support people to make steps into the university as part of a recovery journey, as well as assisting with opportunities for future progression. Emma is also completing a PhD in Humanities.



Holly Sloan

Converge Office Coordinator

Holly is responsible for overseeing the administration of Converge. She joined the team in 2018 after completing a BA in Drama: Education and Community, where the focus of her work was on theatre and mental health. Holly is currently studying an MSc in Project Management at York St John University.



Helen Kenwright

Converge Creative Writing & Tutor Lead

Helen has been with Converge since 2016 and currently leads the Creative Writing team. She also leads our Converge Connected project and facilitates tutor training and support. She co-ordinates Converge's publications programme, including our annual Creative Writing Heals collection.

Meet the Team



Lucy Coleman

Study Development Coordinator & Music Lead

Lucy coordinates the music courses at Converge. She also works with individual students to progress their music or performance skills through the Emerging Voices Music Charity. Additionally, Lucy coordinates workshops and exhibitions at Foss Park Mental Health Hospital as part of Foss Park Arts. Lucy came to Converge as an occupational therapy student in 2011. Previously, she was a music teacher and toured the UK and Ireland as a classical singer.



Elaine Kelly

Project Coordinator and Creative Writing Tutor

Elaine began working with Converge while studying at York St John and has been a creative writing tutor since 2017. She also coordinates our off-campus projects, including the development of Converge learning opportunities in collaboration with other organisations.



Kate Walker

Converge Admin & Volunteers Coordinator

Kate joined the Converge Administration team in 2022. She provides administrative support in the Converge and Discovery Hub offices as well as coordinating the Volunteers.



Janine Yardley

Converge Admin Assistant

Janine formed part of the Converge Evaluation and Research Team and Playback Theatre group as a Converge student in 2019, before joining the team as a staff member in September 2021. Janine works alongside Elaine and provides administrative support to the wider Converge team.



Louise Raw

Converge Admin Assistant

Louise has been a Converge student since 2016, participating in our Creative Writing courses. In 2021 she joined the staff team on a casual basis, providing weekly admin support to the Converge office.

Meet the Team



Hazel Rowe

Student Support Practitioner

Hazel joined Converge in 2019 and works in the Discovery Hub, supporting Converge students to help them access courses. Hazel is a qualified Occupational Therapist who also offers Coaching to Converge students to assist with widening opportunities and future progression.



Paul Botting

Associate Practitioner

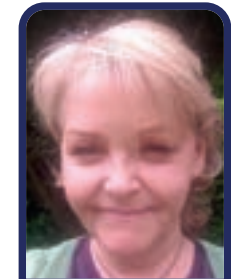
Paul joined Converge as part of the TEWV partnership in 2017. He has run horticultural therapy in many different locations over the last 40 years and is currently working out of both Poppleton Community Railway Nursery and St Nicks, providing supportive volunteering experiences in all sorts of media, including craft, woodworking and gardening.



Karen Wilson

Learning and Access Worker

Karen joined the team in 2015 and has been actively involved as a Learning and Access Worker for the Discovery Hub since. Karen also supports the Converge Student Volunteer Programme and takes a keen interest in connecting people to training, education and employment.



Ellie King

Learning and Access Worker

Ellie joined the Discovery Hub team as a Learning and Access worker in 2022. She also teaches our Origami course and supports the Leaded Glass course.

Meet the Team



Lee King

Learning and Access Worker

Lee joined The Discovery Hub as a Learning and Access Worker in 2018. Lee supports people to access Converge courses as well as undertaking outreach work, helping people to get involved at Poppleton Railway Nursery. Lee has also taught Ledged Glass Making for Converge in the past.



Aaron Soon

Learning and Access Worker

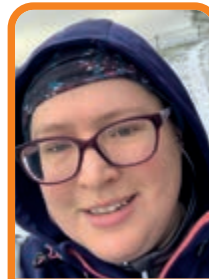
Aaron joined Converge in 2017 as a YSJ Student Volunteer, while studying BA Music: Education and Community. He progressed to becoming a music tutor for both Converge and Emerging Voices Music Charity, while also completing an MA in Music Education at the University of York. In 2023, Aaron joined the Discovery Hub as a Learning and Access Worker.



Robert Bennett

Learning and Access Worker

Robert joined Converge in 2019 and helps individuals to access Converge courses as well as further opportunities within the broader community. He is also a member of the Converge Evaluation and Research Team and is passionate about answering some of the big questions about mental health and wellbeing. Independent of Converge, he also runs Brighter Futures, a Selby based group supporting people with mental health issues.



Ruth Lambley

CERT Co-ordinator

Ruth is the co-ordinator for the Converge Evaluation and Research Team (CERT), a group of researchers/ evaluators with lived experience of mental health difficulties. Ruth has been involved with Converge since 2017. She is also a PhD researcher at York St John exploring co-production in mental health research.

Meet the Team



Ally Hunter-Byron

Converge Director at Northumbria University

Ally is responsible for the development of Converge in Newcastle and has worked in the Northeast as an Arts Development worker, Performer, and Youth and Community worker for the last 20+ years. She is a graduate from Northumbria University, and an Associate Lecturer in Theatre and Performance.



Heather Robson

University Lead, Converge at Northumbria

Heather is the Head of the School of Design at Northumbria University, as well as the University Lead for Converge at Northumbria. Heather has been involved with Converge since its beginnings in the North East. Creative practice is her passion and she believes that everyone should have the opportunity to engage and explore the arts and creativity as part of their everyday lives.



Toby Brandon

Research Lead

Toby is an academic at Northumbria University and his lack of any natural creative ability has not stopped him being a long-standing fan of Converge. He supports all aspects of Converge in terms of developing research and conducting ongoing evaluation and he is committed to its long-term development.



Cat Catizone

Engagement Coordinator, Converge at Northumbria

Cat first volunteered for Converge at Northumbria's pilot in 2017, during her BA in Performance at Northumbria University. She has since gone on to get her MA in Theatre and Performance and is Converge at Northumbria's Engagement Coordinator, as well as a Converge Connected Tutor. Her work focuses on creating performances and community-based theatre.

Our Teaching Methods

We currently offer courses in person, online and by post.

Our aim is to deliver courses that reach the standard of first year degree studies, and focus on the practical and fun aspects of learning. We don't ask for any previous qualifications to access Converge, but do expect Converge students to come with a willingness to learn and develop their skills. Our courses are non-accredited, so you will not be assessed or marked on any work that you do.

Converge courses are taught by university students, graduates and people who have previously been Converge students and have progressed to become tutors with us, where they have a previous career or skill to share. Our courses are supported by Converge student and university student volunteers. More information about volunteering opportunities can be found on page 28.

Courses are usually between 1 and 2 hours in length. Converge students are welcome to apply for up to four courses per term, which we will ask you to list in order of preference on your application form. Courses can be repeated where a student wishes to progress their learning. This is done on a case-by-case basis, depending on how many times the Converge student has already completed the course and considering any personal reasons for wishing to repeat a course. There is no pressure to complete any work outside of the classroom, but our tutors will give encouragement to continue learning and developing skills where any student wishes to do so.

Converge Connected is our online and postal provision of courses.

Online courses either happen over Zoom, or through independent learning modules via our online classroom.

Our postal courses involve course content being posted to a Converge student's home address along with any materials needed to complete the course (where appropriate).

All Converge Connected courses are followed up by an individual tutor who will check in on your progress and give feedback either during the Zoom session, via email or via post.

Converge York Taster Courses

During 2023, we have been working hard to improve pathways into Converge. We currently lead the arts strategy with Foss Park Hospital, and we have ongoing links with local mental health teams in York. We are working towards creating a series of postal and online bite-size taster courses, as well as furthering our work with The Hub, Social Prescribers and Local Area Coordinators. We have also established a programme of taster courses taking place at 30 Clarence Street, in collaboration with the Mental Health Recovery Service. This provides an opportunity to find out a bit more about Converge and our courses, before deciding to complete a full enrolment.

For information about the latest taster courses available, contact Elaine Kelly: e.kelly@yorks.ac.uk





York St John University Campus

York St John University is a campus where modern buildings meet Victorian architecture. When you become a Converge student in York, you will have full access to specialist learning spaces, as well as the catering outlets and our beautiful award-winning gardens.

Creative Centre

The York St John Creative Centre is a purpose built 3-storey creative space for Music, Theatre and Computer Science. The building is home to a professional theatre, a theatre rehearsal studio, recital rooms, editing suits and specialist music and media studios. The Creative Centre is also one of the most environmentally friendly buildings in York with its innovative design and sustainable construction.

Fountains Learning Centre

Fountains Learning Centre is home to over 220,000 books and more than 92,500 journals, as well as print resources and access to both Windows and Mac PC's. The library also provides both independent and group study spaces. Enrolled Converge students can contact the Converge office

to request a library card, which gives you borrowing rights in the library and 24-hour access to use the computers and the Wi-Fi.

The Quad

The Quad is the oldest building on campus, built in 1841. It is a peaceful and tranquil space, well looked after by our fantastic grounds team. The Quad is home to a dance studio, theatre studios and media production spaces.

Teaching Spaces

Ripon Wing: Spacious, airy classrooms used by the university primary education programme to practise teaching. Most of the Converge art courses are based in Ripon Wing 006 due to its large size and access to facilities such as sinks and drying racks.

Cordukes Building: Large, bright teaching spaces based near the Quad and next to Ripon Wing. Each classroom is equipped with a PC and projector screen. Converge Creative Writing courses are usually based here.



Fountains Learning Centre



Built in 1841 - The Quad

Support at Converge

We understand that it can be stressful to join a new course and meet new people. We can offer you in-class support from our dedicated team of Converge volunteers, who support people to engage in our classes.

Where appropriate, we are happy for students to attend courses with a mental health support worker or peer mentor, although this must be agreed in advance. Please note that any support person attending a course must be willing to take an active part in the sessions.

Support to Progress

Converge is a stepping stone to many opportunities. Since 2008, Converge York has helped their students to access further or higher education, find employment, and become performers and artists. We run an active Converge volunteers' scheme as well as offering individual support to help people achieve their

personal goals and aspirations as a result of attending courses. The Discovery Hub team at Converge York also offer individual coaching to Converge students who have a progression related goal.

The Discovery Hub: Converge York

Converge York also has its own in-house support team: The Discovery Hub. The Discovery Hub was established in 2014 and consists of health professionals and Learning and Access Workers employed by Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust. We offer a hop on-hop off service to help people make the first steps into Converge and to engage with our programme, especially when a Converge student is still struggling with recent mental health symptoms.

If you think you or someone else would benefit from the additional support of the Discovery Hub, email discoveryhub@yorks.ac.uk or contact Emma McKenzie on 07785 607 771.



Supported Volunteering in Horticulture

Converge York are proud to work in partnership with Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust to offer supported horticultural volunteering opportunities at Poppleton Community Railway Nursery (www.poppletonrailwaynursery.co.uk)

These sessions support the benefits of green spaces for mental health and wellbeing and offer a varied and ongoing programme of supported volunteering. No previous experience of horticulture is required to join these programmes, just enthusiasm to get involved. Poppleton Railway Nursery is Britain's last surviving railway nursery. It is operated by a charitable group as a non-profit organisation. Supported sessions at Poppleton Railway Nursery operate on Mondays all day, Tuesday afternoons (craft session) and Thursdays (horticulture, wood work training and a creative writing session).

Poppleton Railway Nursery is a useful venue for those wishing to build confidence before accessing Converge, or to complement a Converge journey with a regular volunteering activity.

Please email the discoveryhub@yorks.ac.uk for more information



Converge Events



Open Days

Open days are held twice a year, in September for the autumn term and January for the spring/summer term. They are an opportunity for new and potential Converge students to meet the tutors, speak to Converge staff, find out more about courses and complete an application form. Our team are also on hand to offer advice about our Converge Volunteers Scheme and student support. We can also help you to complete your application form. Please contact the Converge office to find out about the next available open day.

Christmas Sharing and Summer Festival

Twice a year, at the end of each term, we hold a special event to celebrate the wonderful achievements of our Converge students. Our Christmas Sharing

and Summer Festival are afternoons of performances and presentations by Converge students, staff, and university volunteers, showcasing the amazing work and projects our community has worked on during the year. We also host an exhibition put together by the tutors of our visual arts courses. Family and friends are invited to both events, as well as the wider community and people who are considering applying for our courses in the future.

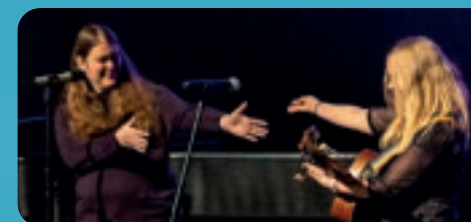
Dates for your diary...

Christmas Sharing: Tuesday 19th December 2023, Creative Centre at York St John University.

Summer Festival: Tuesday 18th June 2024, Creative Centre at York St John University.

Summer School

In June, we host a summer school week of one-off activities such as art, creative writing, sport, theatre, 'play in a day' and much more. We also run an Open Mic Night and offer the opportunity to watch a Playback Theatre performance. The Summer School is open to all enrolled Converge students, and prospective students who may want a taster of Converge before choosing to enrol for the autumn term. Contact the Converge office for further details about our next summer school.



Applying for courses

As with any course of study, it is essential that Converge students complete an application process to enrol on our courses, so that we have all relevant details prior to the start of the course. With support from our team, this process is easy and as stress free as possible.

Procedure

- Contact the Converge office to be added to our mailing list by emailing converge@yorks.ac.uk or calling 07764 337 116 (Holly) or 07779 544 874 (Kate).
- Each term, a publicity pack containing a confirmed list of courses taking place is sent out by post and email to our mailing list. When you receive this, choose the courses that interest you and complete an application form.
- List your chosen courses in order of preference, so that we can aim to give you your first choices. There is no limit on how many times you can apply for a course. However, if you have already completed a course once we may prioritise new applicants to give everyone a fair chance to get involved with different subjects.
- Once you have completed your application form, return it to Converge either by post, email or by bringing it with you to one of our Open Days.
- You can also download the form from our website and email or post this back to us.

What happens once I have completed an application?

- We will process all returned forms and count how many people want to do each course. We receive around 190 forms each term, so please don't worry if you don't hear from us straight away. It usually takes a few weeks to complete the course allocations process.
- Once we have finished allocating places on courses, we will get in touch with you via email, text, or post to let you know which courses you have been allocated a place on. This is done on a course-by-course basis, in order of course start dates. We will aim to let you know at least 1 week prior to the course starting.
- Please note that, due to limited places, you may not be offered your first choice of course but we will do our best to make sure you get a place on one of your first two choices. For this reason, you are expected to make a real commitment to attend your courses, and to let us know if there are any sessions you cannot attend.
- Where students join after the start of the course, one-to-one enrolment appointments can be arranged by contacting us.

Creative Writing

We offer a range of courses, online and on campus, for all writers, whether you're a beginner, a re-starter or an experienced wordsmith.

Our courses are low-pressure and focussed primarily on the pleasure of writing and developing skills through practise.

You aren't expected to share your work

(though you may be invited to if you wish) and our classes are about developing students' creativity with words rather than spelling and grammar.

Every Creative Writing student will get an opportunity to prepare a piece of work for publication in our annual anthology, 'Creative Writing Heals'.



Scan the QR code to see the up-to-date list of our Creative Writing courses:





Music

Our music courses offer a range of skills development from playing or singing in a group to songwriting, composition and music production.

Other courses may also include subject areas such as music theory and psychology. Courses on campus mostly take place in the Creative Centre which offers seminar, practice and performance spaces for music. You may also be invited to take part in our end of term sharing events.

In addition to group courses both on campus and online, individual instrumental and vocal tuition is also offered as well as mentoring in songwriting and composition. Converge students do need to pay for individual tuition at a rate of £12 per 30-minute session. However, for students who cannot afford to pay for tuition, there may be funding available through Emerging Voices Music Charity. Please contact the charity for more information.



Regular open mic nights, showcase concerts and recording opportunities are offered throughout the year in partnership with Emerging Voices music charity. Further information about Emerging Voices Music Charity can be found on page 33.

Scan the QR code to see the up-to-date list of our Music courses:



Social Science and Study Skills

Social Science

Our social science courses range across various disciplines, including philosophy, politics, sociology, social policy and spirituality. These courses encourage productive discussion and reflection, exploring a variety of perspectives.

We encourage our students to express their response to what they learn in creative as well as critical and academic ways.

Social science courses may be offered on campus or online.

Study Skills:

Our study skills courses are designed to support students who are new to university study, or would like a refresher. They can also be useful preparation for any students wishing to progress to a degree course. Primarily offered online, these courses include self-study modules as well as classes on Zoom.

Topics include critical thinking, research skills, organisational skills for study, reading and writing skills, how to prepare and deliver presentations and how to use references and citations.



Scan the QR code to see the up-to-date list of our Social Science and Study Skills courses:



Theatre and Performance

Practical courses which will introduce you to the different styles of theatre, staging, devising, improvisation, monologues, comedy, character development, and script work.

No previous experience in theatre or performance is necessary to take part.

Our theatre and performance courses are offered online as part of our Converge Connected programme, and on-campus at York St John University.

Our on-campus courses take place in professional theatre studios at York St John University, including in our new Creative Centre. Converge students will have the opportunity to take part in our end of term Christmas Sharing and Summer Festival, where you will get to perform in our professional auditorium. Converge students on our Converge Connected courses will also have the chance to create a short film or online performance to be shown at the end of term events.

Every theatre course is taught by experienced tutors with a breadth of industry experience. Following completion of the theatre courses, Converge students can progress to join Out of Character, a professional theatre company. Further details about Out of Character Theatre Company can be found on page 30.

Scan the QR code to see the up-to-date list of our Theatre and Performance courses:

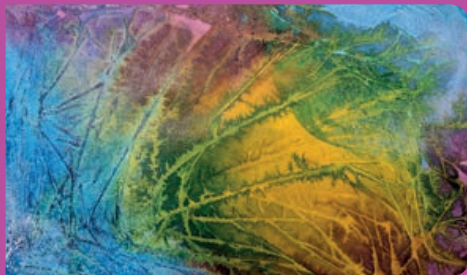


Visual Arts

Explore a diverse range of creative possibilities through our practical art courses. You can discover different art forms like mixed media, drawing on life and leaded glass.

Our on-campus art courses are held in dedicated classroom spaces at York St John University. We also offer art courses as part of our Converge Connected programme, where you will be sent a pack of art materials to enable you to participate in the course at home. As a Converge student, you will fully embrace the university's atmosphere and resources while pursuing your academic goals.

Enrich your artistic journey with our experienced tutors, who have extensive knowledge and experience in the arts. They are passionate about sharing their expertise and will provide guidance, support and inspiration throughout your creative exploration. You will also have the opportunity to exhibit some of your work at our end of term events.



Scan the QR code to see the up-to-date list of our Visual Arts courses:



Converge at Northumbria



Converge at Northumbria University sits in the heart of the bustling campus and Newcastle city centre, bursting with creativity.

Our courses are free and open to anyone aged 18 + in the local community who receives support for a mental health issue or have experienced mental health issues in the past. Alongside academics, university students and industry professionals we deliver a rich and diverse range of courses across Theatre and Performance, Movement and Dance, Fashion, Fine Art, Creative Writing, Music and other opportunities. We work in partnership with local mental health organisations and cultural venues to offer bespoke and collaborative creative learning opportunities. All our courses are Northumbria student led and we work alongside them to create courses that they are passionate about and want to teach, meaning that no two courses are the same and each is unique. When enrolling onto a Converge at Northumbria

course, you become a student of the university. This enables individual access to all the wonderful opportunities and support that we have here at Northumbria University.

Student Feedback:

- *“I learned more about myself. I haven't felt so much kindness in a long time, it feels free, and it's just so nice to be here.”*
- *“Joining Converge has helped me massively and has opened different avenues for future choices.”*
- *“It's so good to keep going and feeling like you're working towards something.”*
- *“It's been a good distraction from my worries.”*
- *“I lost my voice 2 years ago, so this is very out of my comfort zone and this has inspired me to write as well.”*



Our Campus: Northumbria University

Northumbria University is a modern university with a global reputation for academic excellence and was named UK University of the Year 2022 in the Times Higher Education Awards. When you enrol as a student of Converge at Northumbria, you also get access to our world class facilities and resources.



University Library

Our University Library, one of the best academic libraries in the UK, has around half a million print books, over 900,000 e-books and around 85,000 e-journals. This means you can even access these books at home!



Teaching Spaces

At Northumbria we make sure you have all the resources you need to realise your creative potential, whether that's



our tailor-made rehearsal studios, performance spaces with lighting rigs and tech support, or our wonderful art studio spaces. Your workshops will be in spaces designed for those activities, so that you get the best experience possible.

Food and Drink

Northumbria University offers a host of catering options across both City and Coach Lane campuses. For example, located inside our Student's Union, Habita is our stylish and relaxed bar café, with drinks, Starbucks coffee, table and takeaway service, and a delicious menu. It's also home to fab regular entertainment!

For more information, and to find out what courses we have running this academic year please get in touch with our director:

Ally Hunter-Byron

Ally2.hunter@northumbria.ac.uk

facebook.com/convergeNU

@convergenu

@convergeNU

Converge at Northumbria
convergenorthumbria.wixsite.com/convergenorthumbria

Volunteering Opportunities

University Students

Converge is centred on the opportunity for university students to get actively involved in the project and to be integral to the delivery and work of Converge. Converge provides vocational experience to university students that can enhance their studies as well as future employment opportunities. Volunteering opportunities are open to York St John University students and Northumbria University students.

Converge Students

Volunteering positions are available for Converge students who have accessed Converge for at least one academic year. Converge student volunteers follow the same pathway as university students and have access to all the same training and support from the Converge team.

Some of the benefits of volunteering for Converge are:

- Valuable work experience which can be included in a professional reference
- Personal and career development
- Access to training in mental health awareness and working with the public
- Opportunities to connect to a professional network relevant to your chosen subject field

There are three key roles for volunteers:

1) Student Participant: modelling ideal student behaviour by taking part in courses alongside Converge students as a community of learners. Volunteers become active participants by helping to bring new ideas and energy to Converge classes. Volunteer participants also support Converge Students to engage in course material and to access learning opportunities.

2) Shared Leadership Role: under the guidance of the tutor, student volunteers are empowered to run and lead parts of the session. This is a great way to develop practical skills in workshop facilitation and leadership.

3) Course Facilitator: experienced volunteers are welcome to submit course proposals to Converge. If accepted, this will give you the opportunity to volunteer to lead a course and be considered for paid tutoring roles.

If you would like to find out more about volunteering opportunities, email convergevolunteering@yorks.ac.uk or call 07779 544 874.

International Connections

Since 2016 Converge has been growing international connections with universities overseas who are interested in our work.

We currently have an ongoing partnership with Pacific University in Oregon, and are in discussions with Western Oregon University and Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia, to explore the prospect of developing wider international connections.

To date we have worked with the Pacific University Oregon Occupational Therapy doctoral course to offer a yearly exchange programme. Each summer we host a visit to the Converge programme at the York St John Campus for Pacific students travelling from America. During a period of two weeks students are given the opportunity to explore the work of Converge, to meet with our team and to design and deliver their own summer school programme for the Converge

students. Pacific University has also involved their students in delivering a smaller version of Converge at the Oregon campus.

In the future we hope to give more universities the opportunity to work in partnership with Converge to:

- Explore combined research projects
- Complete international placements to study abroad and learn from the unique and innovative approach at Converge UK. We accept students from a variety of degree programmes, including the arts as well as health related degree studies.
- Establish a Converge project with ongoing consultancy from Converge UK
- Provide visiting internships
- Contribute to ground-breaking work, innovating in mental health recovery



OUT OF CHARACTER

THEATRE COMPANY

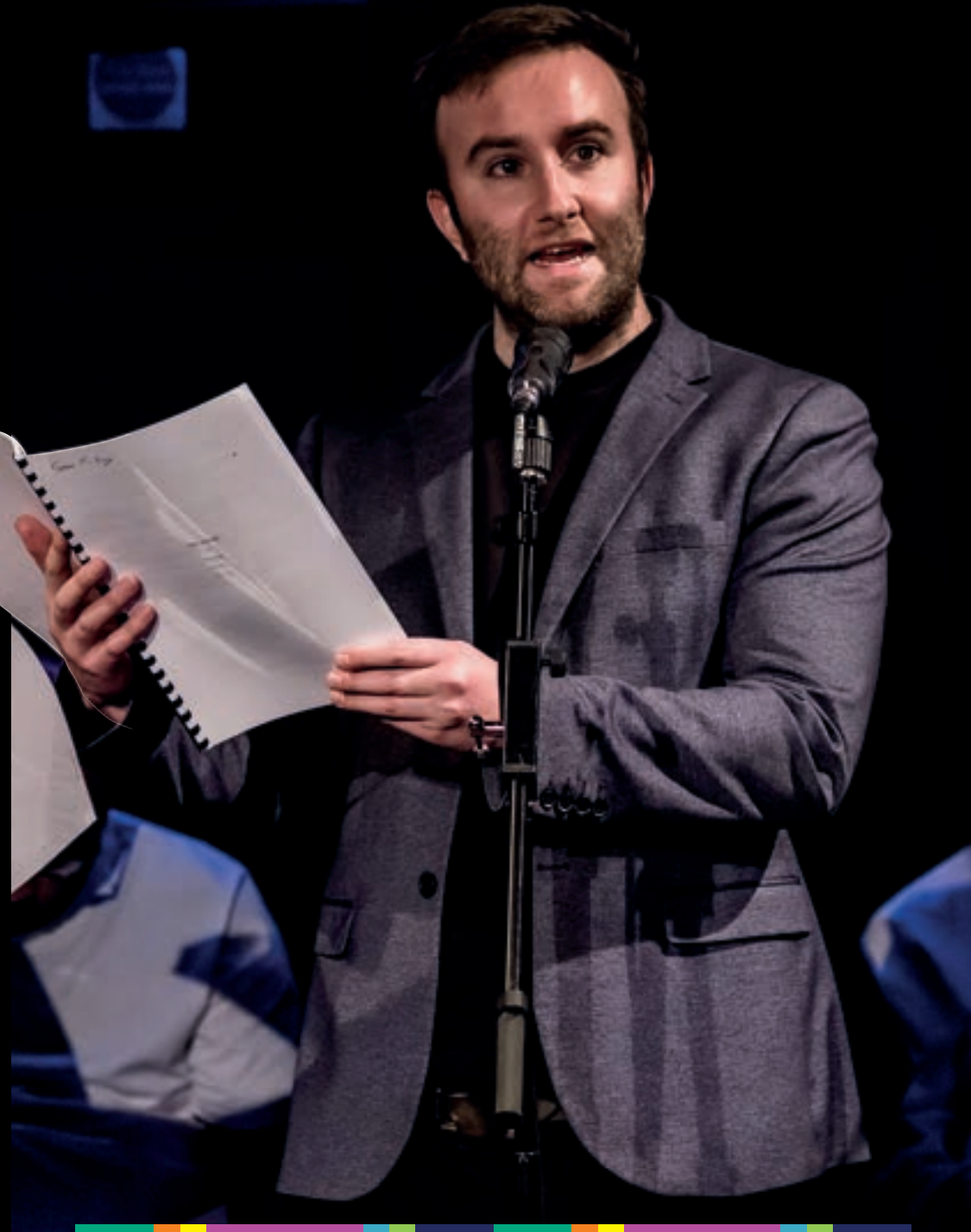
Out of Character was formed in 2009 as a theatre company of artists and performers comprising of people who access, or have accessed, mental health services. We are based at York St John and our company includes students who get involved as both actors and supporting volunteers. Our company is made up of a diverse range of ages, backgrounds and interests. Our interest in creating theatre and respecting each persons' skills is what binds us together. We always work collaboratively and with ambition.

We devise and write a range of projects both in York and nationally. Some of our work, but not all of it, is about mental health. Over time, we've created very personal pieces specifically for audiences interested in mental illness as well as devising site-specific durational performances and performing scripted works and audio stories. Collaboration is really important to us, and we have recently worked with York Theatre Royal, Love Arts, Arts & Minds, the Wy-Fi project, other universities, the NHS and many medical

schools. The company was the proud winner of the Excellence in Equality and Cultural Diversity in the York Culture Awards in 2018.

The company is led by Artistic Director Kate Veysey and Associate Director Jane Allanach and supported by Assistant Director Hannah Munro. Sessions are split into two sections on the same evening; Out of Character Prepares, a workshop style skills focused session, and then (after an all-important tea break) Out of Character Production where we work towards a production or project. Last year, we created a site-specific modern-day production of A Christmas Carol which was performed in various spaces in the Creative Centre at York St John University. This was supported by writers and composers from Converge courses.

For more information about Out of Character, please email k.veysey@yorks.ac.uk



Converge Evaluation and Research Team



The Converge Evaluation and Research Team (CERT) is a small and friendly group of Converge students who carry out research and evaluations of mental health related community projects.

We welcome new members who are interested in what we do, and no experience of research is needed to join. We run a course in research methods each autumn, offer on-going training, and look into areas of specific interest to members.

What we offer

We produce bespoke evaluations of your mental health service or community project. This can be a springboard for service improvement.

Evaluations are tailored to the outcomes most important to you. We conduct research through interviews, questionnaires and focus groups. We specialise in using inventive approaches to support people who find it hard to express themselves.



At the end of the evaluation, you will receive an evaluation report. We can use creative methods, such as theatre and art, to help share these findings at conferences and events.

What makes us different

CERT stand out from other research teams across the UK. Our own experience of lived mental ill health informs the work we produce.

This allows us to:

- Provide support to people who find it difficult to express themselves
- Involve service users in the research and evaluation process
- Produce meaningful and relevant recommendations for service improvement
- Create social change and empower marginalised groups

To find out more,
email: cert@yorks.ac.uk

Emerging Voices Music Charity

Emerging Voices is a music charity that supports Converge students to reach their musical aspirations in a collaborative and friendly environment.

We work with Converge to provide quality music-making opportunities, supporting students through 1 to 1 mentoring in performance, recording, song writing, composition and instrumental tuition.

Emerging Voices offers performance opportunities for Converge students through regular concerts and open mic nights. We also help to support Communitas choir and a choir in Harrogate.

Working with Converge Records, an inhouse record label, students can record, produce and release their work.

"The concert was a source of pride for my son as the audience were very appreciative and he and his family cannot thank Aaron (tutor) enough for the effort, empathy and compassion he put into the project and the lessons" Converge student.

"I love to sing, and the choir gives me a space to feel comfortable doing so without judgment. They're so fun and I look forward to them every week." Harrogate choir member.

To find out more please contact:

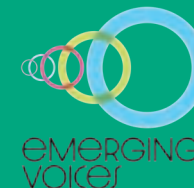
Email:

admin@emergingvoicescharity.co.uk

Tel: 07984 535629

Website: emergingvoicescharity.co.uk/

Registered Charity Number: 1183043



New Applicant Information and Support

As with any place of educational study, we ask you to make a real commitment to attend any course you have a place on.

If for any reason you cannot attend a session, please make sure you inform the Converge office at the earliest opportunity. This includes for any prior appointments or arrangements (for example, a hospital appointment or holiday), or if you are feeling unwell. This is to ensure that you, and any other Converge students in your class, get the most from the course.

We are aware that, sometimes, other things in life can affect how you feel and that this can make it hard for you to motivate yourself to attend the course. We do understand and are always happy to speak with you to see if we can help. If you feel overwhelmed or are finding it difficult to attend, please contact us so that we know that you are okay and can explore options for further support.

If you find that you are attending a course but are not enjoying it, please let us know that you don't want to continue so that we can offer your place to another student; we do recommend, however, that you attend for more than one session before you decide. You might want to consider a change to another course which you might enjoy more. This is usually possible for most Converge courses, but we do need to know as some courses have a limit on how many students they can take.

Please don't forget to keep us up to date if any of your contact details or support details change. This is so we can make sure information goes to the right place. It's also a good idea to save the Converge mobile numbers to your contacts so that you know it's us contacting you.

We hope you enjoy your time with Converge.



What the students say:

"There's real kindness and thought put into how things are organised, how things are run, how things are communicated."

"Success for one person might just be getting out of the house for a session or keeping regular attendance. For the next person it might be increasing confidence or learning new skills. Converge has the power to unleash the potential in its students that last a lifetime."

"It's about humanity, and it's about being connected. And it's about supporting one another and being in a community."

"University students gain a "real life" facilitation experience of working with real people in a real community. And you see them grow as people and facilitators."

"Converge helped me to put myself out there and do something slightly different, because we weren't writing this same thing all the time. It was nice to be able to take inspiration from others, but then also give myself a challenge."

"I have found Converge to be a tremendous help in my darkest hours."

"If your dream is to write, this is the place."

"I still struggle a lot. But I think I've definitely felt more confident in my ability to be more than a patient. I would now describe myself as a student and a member of a choir rather than a patient and a service user."

"It's a unique thing within a university facility, with university students and Converge students coming together. And it's like a symbiosis of two parties, which I think is better for both people."

"A pleasure to be around like-minded people, students and tutors."

"Converge gives me hope that there's a quality of life that I could have."

"I would wish to say how amazing the tutors are. How much time they give. How they make everyone welcome. It's a fantastic place full of great people."

"I have been with Converge for a few years. I can say without, they changed my view of my life."

"There are no obstacles as there's always a way around any challenges you may have."

Converge York

T: 07764 337 116 (Holly) or
T: 07779 544 874 (Kate)

E: converge@yorks.ac.uk

Postal Address:
Converge Office, HG219
York St John University
Lord Mayor's Walk
York YO31 7EX

Main Website: www.yorks.ac.uk/converge

Converge Connected Website:
<https://converge.yorks.ac.uk/home/>

 [/converge.york](https://www.facebook.com/converge.york)

 [@ConvergeYork](https://twitter.com/ConvergeYork)

 [@convergeyork](https://www.instagram.com/convergeyork)

Converge Northumbria

E: ally2.hunter@northumbria.ac.uk

W: convergenu.wordpress.com

 [/convergeNU](https://www.facebook.com/convergeNU)

 [@convergeNU](https://twitter.com/convergeNU)

 [@convergenu](https://www.instagram.com/convergenu)

With thanks to Mark Gowland
Photography, Nick Small Photography,
Sam Taylor Photography and
Michael Waterfall, HBA Graphic Design.

The tutors are approachable and encouraging. I have felt supported by all and it has been a pleasure to be part of such a creative group.

To anyone considering this I would say go for it. You don't have to be anything other than yourself and it's great fun!