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YORK
ST JOHN
UNIVERSITY

Alumni Magazine

2025/2026



1841



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Vice Chancellor's introduction

A very warm welcome to the fourth edition of our Alumni magazine at York St John University. As Vice Chancellor, I am always delighted to share the many achievements of our university community over the past year, and to recognise the important role our alumni play in that community.

Inside these pages, we have lots to celebrate. From exciting developments across our academic schools, and alumni stories to be proud of, to recent events marking the 50th anniversary of the College of Ripon and York St John.

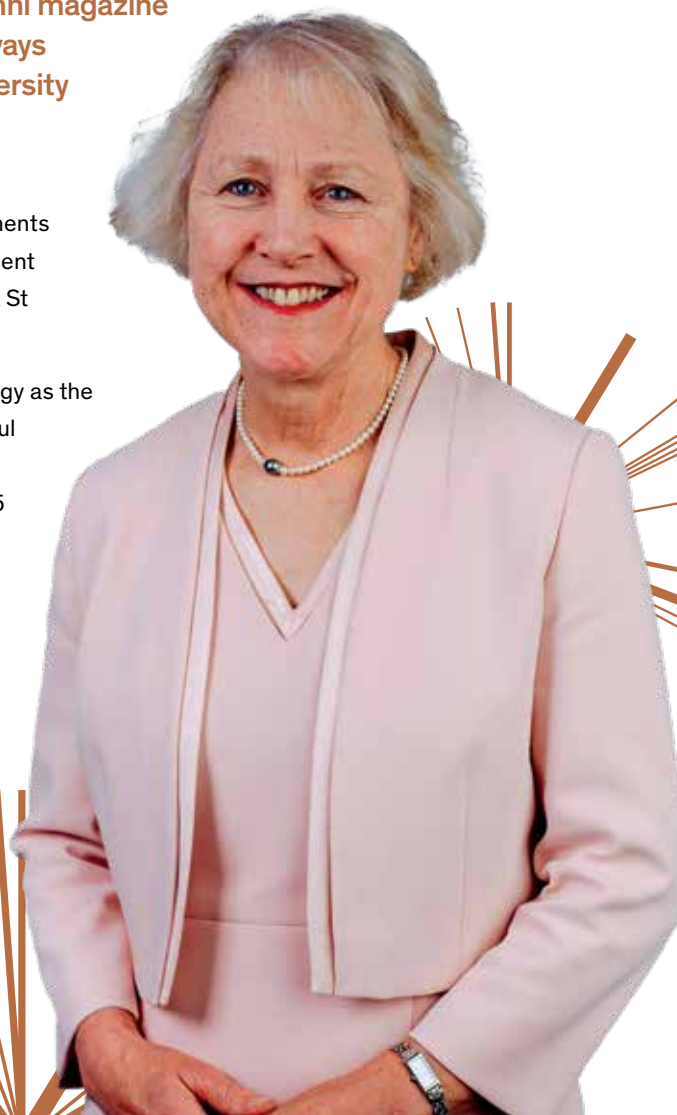
It has been just over a year since York St John launched its new Strategy as the University for Social Impact, setting out our vision to create meaningful change locally, regionally and beyond. In the same month, we were honoured to be named University of the Year for Social Inclusion 2025 by The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide. This recognition reflects the commitment we all feel at York St John to making university education more inclusive, and ensuring students from all backgrounds are afforded equal opportunities to thrive and to succeed.

I hope the stories in this magazine bring you closer to all the things that make York St John a university to be proud of.

Kind regards

Professor Karen Bryan

Vice Chancellor



Welcome from the alumni team



Welcome to this year's edition of 1841, your annual Alumni Magazine. We hope you enjoy reading about some of the events, research and student projects happening across our Schools and campuses.

In the last year, we've enjoyed celebrating the creation of the College of Ripon and York St John, sharing your stories on Aluminations, and meeting alumni at events and during your visits to campus. This year, we're excited to continue supporting students to thrive during their time with us. Through your generosity, grants from organisations, and scholarships created by our generous community, students are able to continue their studies instead of leaving them due to financial worries.

Looking ahead, we can't wait to share more webinars with you, connect with you in person at our network events and continue celebrating our alumni community.

Best wishes,
The Alumni Team

Upcoming alumni activity

As our alumni community continues to grow, we're always looking at new ways to enhance your alumni experience. In the last year, we've welcomed alumni to events in Darlington, Ripon and London, and welcomed groups back to York for campus tours. Next year, we're excited to ask your opinions on our events in an alumni-wide survey, so please keep an eye out for your invite in early 2026! Since the last magazine, we've also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the College of Ripon and York St John with a one-off yearbook and badge. You can find out more about our CRYSJ celebration on page 22.

Celebrating alumni stories

For the past two years, we've been asking alumni to complete alumni snapshots to share your stories and advice. From recent graduates to alumni reflecting on their careers after retiring, you can submit your alumni snapshot on Aluminations.

Since 2021, we've been sharing webinars from across our alumni community. Including alumni from every campus, and working in a range of fields, we now have over 25 webinars available to watch for free on YouTube. This year, we're excited to share seven more webinars highlighting the wonderful careers and experiences of our alumni community.



Discover your alumni benefits

Did you know that as an alum of York St John University or one of our founder colleges, you can access a range of alumni benefits? Your benefits include discounted room hire at our York campus, discounted access to The Dock at our London campus, and free in person library access.

You are also entitled to 10% off eligible postgraduate course fees, including PGCE courses and Research Degrees.

Lifelong career support

Did you know that as an alum of York St John, you can access lifelong career support? This includes free career appointments where you can plan your next steps, and access to 1 on 1 careers advice. For more recent graduates, our Careers team might also contact you with information about how to access graduate support, including careers events you might find helpful.

Plus, you can also use our Ask Our Alum service to ask for career advice from alumni who have completed alumni snapshots. All you need to do is browse Aluminator to find alumni who are happy to be contacted and complete our short form with your questions. You can find out more about how to use Ask Our Alum on our website.



You can learn more about your alumni benefits, upcoming events and discover our blog on our website. You can also submit a snapshot, connect to Aluminator and watch our webinars from our website too. www.yorks.ac.uk/alumni

You can stay in touch with us by following us on Facebook and Instagram, just search 'ysjualumni'.



Quarterly campus newsletters

We produce two quarterly newsletters, one for alumni who studied in Ripon, and another for alumni who studied in London.

Ripon newsletters are sent in March, June, September and December. London newsletters are sent in January, April, July and October.

If you studied at our Ripon or London campuses and haven't been receiving quarterly newsletters alongside your monthly newsletter, please update your details by completing the form on our website, or emailing alumni@yorks.ac.uk.

Alumni networks and events

As an alum of York St John, you can attend a range of events including alumni networks, our annual Christmas Carol Service and wider University events. We can't wait to meet you at one of our upcoming events! You can discover more about our upcoming events on page 6.

Celebrating our fundraising

In the past year, we've connected with donors, applied for funding from a range of organisations and supported students to thrive during their time with us.



The Cordukes Circle

Named for our first student, Edward Cordukes, the Cordukes Circle is a special community composed of our most committed and generous donors. This includes donors who have supported us for over five years, donated more than £1000, or have pledged to leave a gift in their will to the University. Our Cordukes Circle represents its members commitment to strengthening and supporting York St John now, and in the future.

In 2025, we have been delighted to welcome new members to the Cordukes Circle to thank them for their continued support.

If you would like to learn more about joining our Cordukes Circle, please email alumni@yorks.ac.uk.

Donor Christmas Event 2024

Ahead of the Christmas Carol Service in 2024, we hosted a festive gathering with drinks and nibbles to thank all those who had recently supported our students. It was wonderful to speak to donors and tell them more about our work to support students.

After enjoying time on campus, we joined the rest of our University community in York Minster for our annual Christmas Carol Service.

If you have donated to our alumni-funded scholarships, or to the CRYSJ Graduation Prize this year, please keep an eye out for your invitation in November.

Fundraising highlights

This year, we have successfully applied for funding to continue supporting our alumni-funded scholarships. By applying to external trusts and funds, we can continue safeguarding the future of our scholarship fund and support students who need our help.

We are incredibly grateful to all of our current and past funders, including the Sylvia and Colin Shepherd Charitable Trust for their continued support.

We are incredibly humbled by the support of our community.

York 10k 2025

On Sunday 3 August, a fantastic team of staff and alumni ran the York 10k to raise money for our scholarship fund. Now in our third year, our team battled the rain to support our students. Despite the weather, our team had a great time enjoying some of York's beautiful scenery.

In the last three years, our York 10k teams have raised over £3000. That's enough to support a three year scholarship, helping a student access all the opportunities that make studying at York St John University so special.



Upcoming alumni events



There's always something happening at York St John University! From one-off events like book launches or performances, to our annual Chancellor's lecture, Ebor lectures or our Inaugural Lecture series, alumni can return to campus for a range of exciting events all year round. We always try to share upcoming events in your monthly newsletters, but you can also connect with our Events team directly to see what's happening next on campus.

Find out about upcoming events and connect with our Events team: <https://linktr.ee/ysjevents>

November 2025



Aesthetica Short Film Festival: From 5 to 9 November join us on campus for an exciting range of events during this annual Film Festival. A full programme of events will be released in autumn, and we'll signpost how to book tickets in your monthly newsletters too.

North East Network: Join us on Wednesday 12 November for our second North East Network event. Reconnect with friends, hear from the Alumni Office and learn more about your alumni community. Keep an eye out for more information by email.

Graduation in York Minster: We're excited to celebrate the Class of 2025 from our York campus as they mark their achievements. We can't wait to cheer you across the stage during your big day!

York Business Festival: Now in its second year, join us on campus from 25 to 27 November for York Business Festival! Including workshops, key notes and more, please check your newsletters for more information on how to get involved.

A Very Ripon Christmas: Join us this November for our third festive event in Ripon. If you studied in Ripon, please keep an eye out for more information in late autumn.

December 2025

Christmas Carol Service: Join us on Tuesday 9 December for our University's annual Christmas Carol Service at York Minster. Including traditional carols and a student performance, free tickets will be available in November.



February 2026

LGBTQ+ History month: February is LGBTQ+ History month. To mark this, the University will be hosting a range of events. We'll let you know when tickets are available in your monthly newsletters.

March 2026

International Women's Day: Celebrated on 8 March every year, York St John will be holding events throughout March. We will also share alumnae webinars, snapshots and blogs too.

York Literature Festival: From bestselling authors to debut writers, York Literature Festival will be taking over York in March. We'll include information on events and how to book in your monthly newsletter.

Graduation in London: We can't wait to celebrate the achievements of our Class of 2025 in London! Make sure you've updated your details to receive information about graduation closer to the time.

YSJ London Network: Join us for our third network event in London. We'll be releasing more details closer to the time, so keep an eye on your newsletters for more information.

April 2026



York International Shakespeare Festival: When shall we three meet again? We're proud to once again be sponsoring and hosting York International Shakespeare Festival. Including performances, exhibits and more, a full programme will be released in March.

York Open Studios: This year York Open Studios will be marking its 25th anniversary! On 18 and 19 April, and 25 and 26 April, experience York's talent and creativity at a range of venues across the city. Keep an eye on our newsletters to find out more.

June 2026

School of the Arts Festival: Every year our fantastic School of the Arts holds a series of events showcasing the work of their students. Including concerts, screenings, and the annual art degree show, keep an eye out for tickets in May.

Festival of Ideas: In June, York is home to the annual Festival of Ideas. From walking tours to lectures, there's something for everyone to enjoy! Including hybrid events, a full event programme will be released in May.

York Pride: Join us for York Pride as we celebrate and support our LGBTQ+ community. York St John will be taking part in the march, so please feel free to join us if you see our banners!



August 2026

York 10k: Join us on Sunday 2 August to help raise money for our alumni-funded scholarships. Now in its fourth year, we can't wait to support alumni, staff and students as they join our York 10k team.

Quiet Pride: Keep an eye out for information about attending Quiet Pride, a calm, inclusive and welcoming Pride event for everyone to enjoy. Quiet Pride usually includes bookable scheduled activities too.



October 2026

Black History Month: Join us for a range of events to mark Black History Month. Full event details and tickets will be available in September.

Chancellor's Lecture: Join us for our annual Chancellor's lecture. Full details of the event and who will be speaking will be released closer to the time.

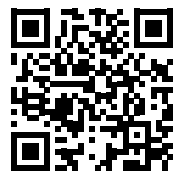


With you, we can do more

At York St John University, we're dedicated to levelling the playing field for students from less advantaged backgrounds.

Since our first students completed their two year teacher training course in 1843, our alumni community have been part of our drive to help current students thrive. Over 180 years later, we're proud to have an alumni community just as invested in helping our students.

Every year, we support students to continue their studies and reach their potential with an alumni-funded scholarship. For many scholarship recipients, an alumni-funded scholarship is the helping hand they need to continue their studies and pursue their dreams. Your support helps students buy key resources, afford to commute to class and support them with unexpected expenses.



You can find out more about how to donate, and learn more about our alumni-funded scholarships on our website:

www.yorks.ac.uk/support-us

If you donate £5 every month, your donations alone could pay for a one year railcard to make commuting to campus cheaper for a scholarship recipient, with £25 left over to buy academic supplies.

If you donate £10 every month, your donations alone could pay for the first three volumes of The Norton Anthology of English Literature, a set of core texts for first year English Literature students, with money left over for stationary to annotate their copies.

If 40 alumni who receive this magazine donate £25 this year, those 40 donations alone will be enough to fund a one year scholarship.



Isabella's story

York St John University was always my first choice. When I attended an Open Day back in 2017, I felt accepted and as if I belonged from the get-go. At the time, I was experiencing an issue that is unique to those in foster care – I was coming straight from a respite placement to meet my carers at the event. When I presented myself to the people at reception after entering the Open Day, they were extremely receptive and didn't question why I had a large suitcase with me.

When I returned several years later, I had become a care leaver and found myself aging out of the additional funding my home council had provided me with. I ended up applying for a scholarship in the second year of my degree and was successful. With it, I have been able to purchase a bus pass and ensure that travel to campus has been covered, year-round. I do not live in York as I cannot access accommodation there. In addition to this, I have been able to purchase more resources to help with my learning and continuous personal development, which has enabled me to look further into the future at my career prospects. I am looking to become a social worker and am currently undertaking work experience to achieve that.

Without that scholarship, I don't think I can truthfully say that I would still be in education.

It has been a lifeline for my university experience and has enabled me to achieve far more than I would have expected. I feel that I would have been in a position where I was choosing between living and studying, and no student deserves to be in that position.

With the support of the scholarship, I have been able to access York St John in all ways possible, and I cannot thank the donors enough.

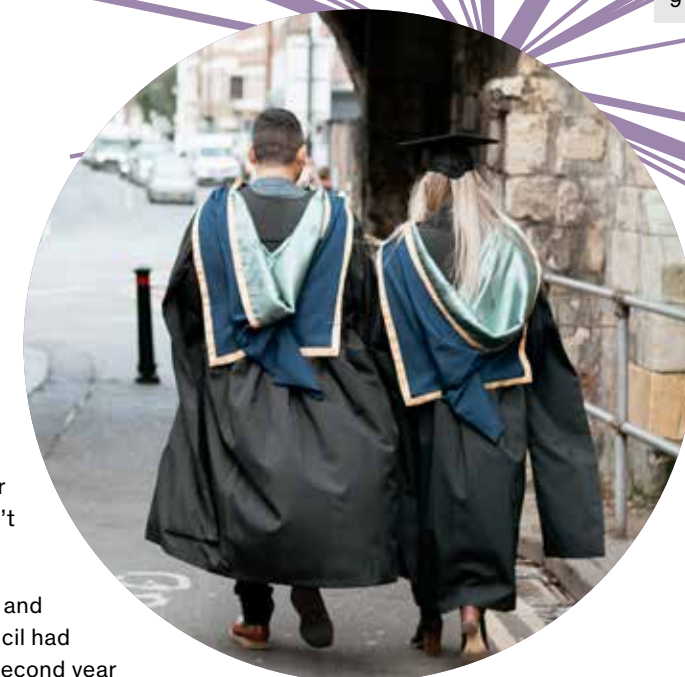


Since completing their degree, Isabella has started working as a SEN Teaching Assistant, specialising in autism. Over the next year, they are planning to continue diversifying their work experience before applying for a Masters Apprenticeship in Social Work.

You can help students like Isabella by donating to our alumni-funded scholarships.

You can donate by completing your magazine insert and sending it back to us with your pre-paid envelope. You can also donate online, or set up a regular donation on JustGiving:

www.justgiving.com/charity/yorks



The School of the Arts

This year, staff and students from the School of the Arts have been very busy alongside their usual work. Staff and students have won awards, produced albums, staged iconic productions and even met the King!

A Royal welcome

In April 2025, the International Centre for Community Music (ICCM) was invited to Windsor Castle by His Majesty, King Charles III, for a community music event. Based at York St John University, the ICCM is a global forum for research and scholarship in community music. Alongside a range of international partnerships, the ICCM works on a variety of related projects, including the Singing for Health Research Network.

The community music event was held to recognise supporters of community music from across the United Kingdom. Alongside Professor Helen Julia Minors, the reception was also attended by other ICCM researchers, community musicians and other supporters of community music.



A Fine art triumph

Earlier this year, four Fine Art students secured the top awards in the Eleanor Worthington International Art Prize. The Prize is open to students in higher education studying Art and Media in the UK, Ireland and Italy. Matthew Hammond, Nyimbwa Clyde, Ami Taylor and Charles Swan-Woods were awarded for their work on the 2024 theme 'Disability and Self-Fulfilment'.



You can find out more about their work on our website: www.yorks.ac.uk/news/2025/eleanor-worthington

Exciting changes ahead

This autumn, we're excited to launch our new Animation MA in our redeveloped Design Centre. Alongside a wide range of other courses, we can't wait for our students to learn in new specialist spaces.

You can find out more about the new Design Centre on page 16.

Performing in our community

Meanwhile in Performance, students have been busy staging a range of productions and activities. Musical Theatre students chose to stage The Rocky Horror Show and truly made it their own. In Music, students created innovative productions for their collaborative project modules, including a Musical Murder Mystery that engaged almost all Music students in a single activity.

With thanks to Professor Helen Julia Minors, Dr Sarah-Jane Gibson and the School of the Arts team for their contributions to this article.



An Abbey Road album

Once used by The Beatles, every year our final year Music Production students have the opportunity to produce music at one of the world's most famous studios, Abbey Road Studios.

This year marked a special partnership with the BBC. Students recorded 'Live at Abbey Road' in Studio 2, a vinyl featuring five BBC Introducing acts. Released on Record Store Day 2025, this was our first collaborative album with BBC Introducing, and all proceeds were donated to BBC Children in Need. Looking ahead, the Music Production team have secured a future agreement with the BBC to support further student placements.

In May 2025, our Music Production team's dedication was recognised with a Students' Union Employability Award. Nominated by students, this was a wonderful end to the academic year.



You can learn more about the album on our website: www.yorks.ac.uk/news/2025/introducing-vinyl

The School of Education, Language and Psychology

This year, the School of Education, Language and Psychology has run partnership events, reflected on a major course milestone and supported students as they embarked on a year abroad.

Sharing the joy of maths

To celebrate World Mathematics Day, our student teachers facilitated a fun day of maths-based, problem-solving activities for Year 5 pupils from Tockwith Church of England Primary Academy. Fuelled by pupil curiosity, activities included a dominoes challenge, a team deductive reasoning task, and a campus tour to learn more about university life.

"I loved my time at York St John University of fun mathematics games and brain wiring problems that really made me think ... I am sure the entire class would love to come back again."
- Amy, year 5 pupil

At York St John, we inspire student and early career teachers to champion maths, and teach it confidently. Everyone involved on the day, from teachers to the pupils, left inspired. Student teachers also left the day feeling more confident, with a belief in a positive and dynamic mathematics education. As student teachers, this partnership experience will shape their own teaching philosophy as they continue their journey to Qualified Teacher Status.

Reflecting on four years of British Sign Language, Deaf Studies and Linguistics

Did you know York St John has the UK's only equally weighted British Sign Language (BSL), Deaf Studies and Linguistics degree? Launched in 2019, this year we will celebrate our fourth graduating cohort!

When we designed the degree, we collaborated across our School to create an engaging and coherent curriculum aligned with career outcomes. However, Covid-19 soon had an unprecedented impact on student learning. How could we teach BSL modules online when BSL is a 3D spatial language?

Despite the pandemic's challenges, teaching our students has only brought joy and intellectual discovery. We have been consistently humbled by the enthusiasm, joy and resilience of our students. Already, our graduates have gone on to do wonderful things, including working with the deaf community in charity, education and public facing roles.

Our modest aim when designing this degree was to create something which would help our graduates change the world for the better. We're proud to say that each and every one of them, in innumerable ways, are doing just that.

Testing student resilience

In their third year of study, our Japanese and Korean BA students spend a year studying abroad. For many, this is the culmination of years of interest in Japanese or South Korean culture, and their first chance to fully immerse themselves in it. However, nothing prepares students for waking up on their first day wondering: 'What have I done?'

Despite two years of successful language study, student resilience is often tested as they navigate local etiquette, transport and culture. For example, experiencing student accommodation curfews for the first time! During their time away, students must also complete a work placement. Many use their Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) skills developed during their degree, highlighting the value of their transferable skillset.

"Students return to York St John as very different people. The study abroad year helps our students to develop many key life skills and tests their adaptability and resilience like never before."
- Leesa Clarke, Associate Head of Language and Linguistics



Discover our TESOL MA on our website: www.yorks.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/english-language-and-linguistics/tesol-ma



Discover the full story behind these School of Education, Language and Psychology headlines on our blog: <https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/alumni/alumni-magazine-2025-2026-bonus-content>

With thanks to Dr Leesa Clarke, Dr Keith Parker, Dr Dai O'Brien and the School of Education, Language and Psychology team for their contributions to this article.

Alumni spotlight: David Crawley

Earlier this year, we caught up with Class of 1987 graduate, David Crawley, to chat all things College of Ripon and York St John (CRYSJ), his early career, starting a business and his plans for the future.

College life

David's journey to the CRYSJ started with recommendations from former students. With both his Head of PE at school, and his goalkeeping coach speaking highly about their experiences of studying with us, David applied for a Recreation Management and Psychology degree. After attending an interview and seeing our happy campus atmosphere for himself, David was convinced our College was the right place for him.

David's course was very varied, with a combination of practical and study-based work. During his studies, David discovered a career path very different to the teaching trajectory he'd originally planned! This was in part due to a three month placement shared between Leeds Leisure Centre and HMP Armley Prison!

"In the mid 80's the campus was much smaller and most 1st and 4th years lived in Halls of Residence at Lord Mayor's Walk. This resulted in a real community feel about the college, so you knew everyone on your course. We also had inspirational lecturers who, if you were prepared to put the effort in, would go the extra mile to help you. It would be remiss of me not to mention Romano Zavaroni, whom many students were the recipients of his visionary business intellect, lecturing style and drive."

From York to London

After graduating, David secured a Graduate Trainee position with the media department at Dorland Advertising in London. Building on the marketing knowledge David had gained at College, the role included planning and buying media space on behalf of advertisers. In his first year, David worked with household names like Duracell and Heinz Food Group!

"College made you independent and resilient which was important, but also the presentation skills we learnt, and the ability to work as part of a team were important attributes that made the move into working life easier."

As David's career developed, he soon became interested in the decisions made by his clients, and the marketing theory behind them. After speaking to a client who had recently completed their CIM Diploma, David became a student again to do the same. Over the course of two years, David balanced working full time and attending his course on an evening. Like his time at College, David soon discovered inspirational lecturers who supported him throughout his studies.

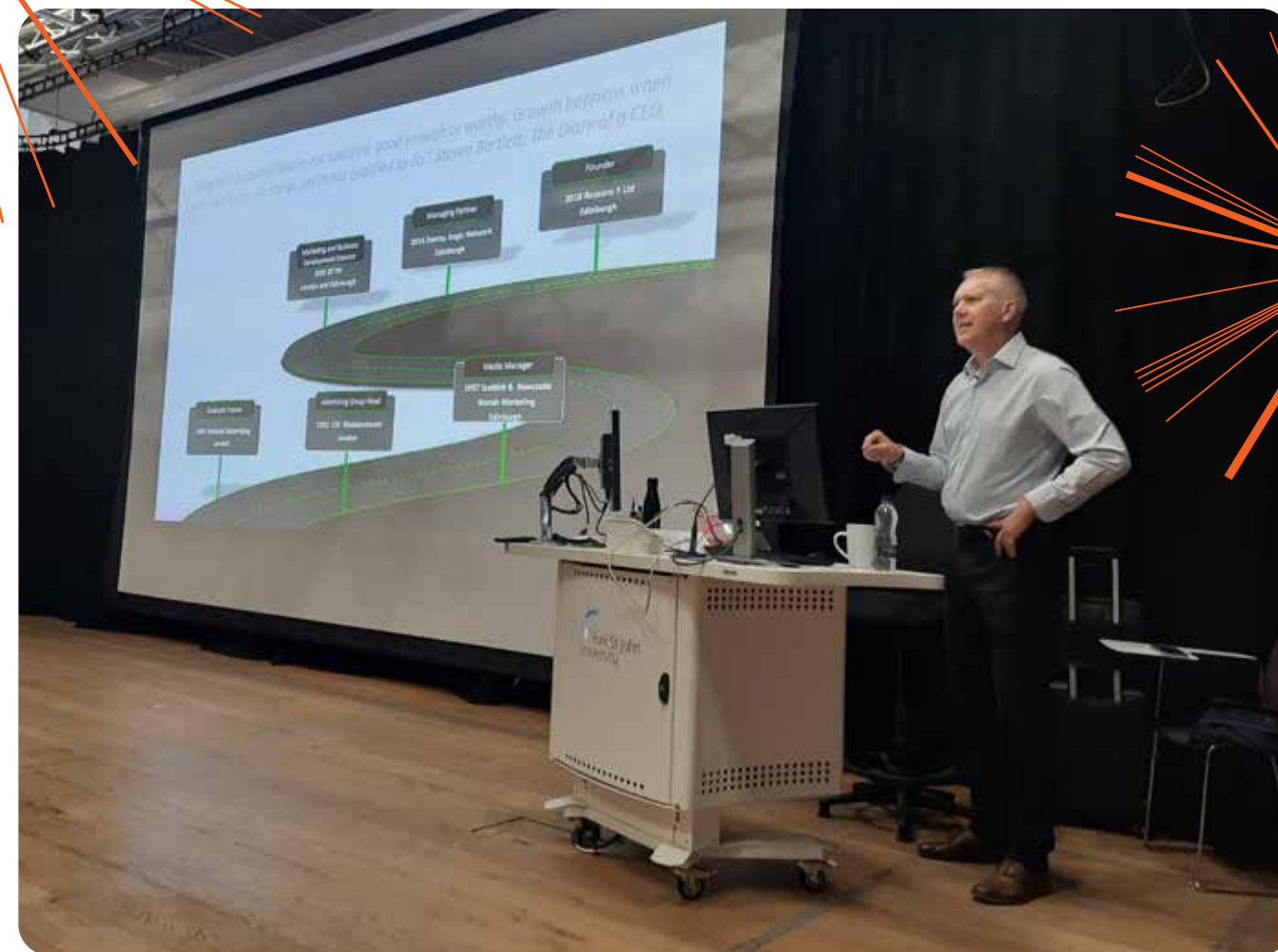
Working with household names

As the 2000's progressed, David moved from one household company name to another. For four years, David worked as Media Director for Scottish & Newcastle, now Heineken, to ensure their £70 million media budget was used effectively. From there, David moved to Coca-Cola and led their strategic media partnership planning. This involved identifying consumer trends that Coca-Cola wanted to align themselves with including the sponsorship of grassroots football, enhancing the consumers cinema experience and the emergence of the ability to download music.

When David left Coca-Cola, it was to join BT as Marketing and Creative Development Director. At BT, he worked with TV programmes like The X Factor, Britain's Got Talent, I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here, and Strictly Come Dancing. David might not have been on any judge's panels, but his work on developing and monetizing participation media helped all of us vote for our favourite acts!

After BT, David returned to his Edinburgh roots to begin work as Managing Partner at Dentsu Aegis in Scotland.

"It was simply an offer I couldn't refuse. Having started my career in an agency, the chance to run an agency in my home city of Edinburgh was very compelling."



Reasons Y Ltd

In 2018, David spent three months considering his next steps after taking voluntary redundancy. After reflecting on his own experiences and transferable skills, David founded a new consultancy business, Reasons Y Ltd. Now in its seventh year, Reasons Y has gone from strength to strength, and specialises in helping clients identify their barriers to growth and providing specialist presentation training.

"If you feel confident to start your own business, if you have a clear proposition in terms of what your business offers that clients will pay for and you are prepared to work really hard, go for it! It's both liberating and scary in equal measures but every pound you earn, you have earned it and you alone are responsible for making decisions about your future."

Return to York St John

In Spring 2025, David joined us on campus to host a workshop for Business students. During the workshop, David spoke about his own career and shared helpful advice, including tips for job applications and building a business.

"After a really interesting and enjoyable career, it was a real pleasure to come back to the college and share my journey since graduating, and also what I hope were some useful pointers as the students embark on their future careers."

Our students left the workshop feeling inspired, just as David did during his own time as a student. Looking ahead, David hopes to continue inspiring and supporting others through sitting on company boards to offer advice, and volunteering as a Charity Trustee. Alongside volunteering his time, David is excited to continue developing his business, travelling and playing more golf.



With thanks to David Crawley for joining us on campus and talking about his experiences with us. If you would like to find out more about David's career, please visit Aluminations.

<https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/aluminations/2024/10/21/david-crawley-reasons-y-ltd-founder>

The School of Humanities

This year the School of Humanities has worked in our local community to bring hidden history to light, share the power of Shakespeare and bridge a growing skill gap.

Women of York

For International Women's Day, Professor Anne-Marie Evans, Dr Elodie Duché, and Dr Brendan Paddison launched a new film in collaboration with the Yorkshire Film Archive. Drawing on over a century of archival footage, Women of York commemorates and celebrates how women's everyday lives and contributions have impacted our city.

During the film, key landmarks are shown in a different light. Women ice-skate on the River Ouse, work in Rowntree chocolate factory and play on our city's football pitches. The film also includes moments of activism, including protests outside York Minster and debates over a woman playing God in York Mystery Plays.

Dr Elodie Duché, Senior Lecturer in History said: "Among residents and tourists, York is known for its chocolate history, its Roman past, the influence of the Vikings and that of the Railways on the city. But what about the women who made it? Thinking about women's stories and lived experience is integral to thinking about how we can move forward in positive and inclusive ways. Marking women's history and women's achievements is hugely important to increase the visibility of women's history and to foster a sense of belonging in the city."



You can watch the short film for free on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZunmZi196U>

York International Shakespeare Festival

This year, York International Shakespeare Festival celebrated its tenth birthday with performances, talks and an Elizabethan dance party! Sponsored by York St John University, the Festival was one to remember, with a range of performances, activities, and thrilling Shakespearean re-imaginings including:

- A one-man Richard III
- A feminist retelling of King Lear
- European play readings
- A Hamlet Day
- Pop-up performances of Much Ado About Nothing by our Shakespeare Society

The international symposium also featured Darren Freebury-Jones and other local and global contributors. Also central to the Festival was engaging with Ukrainian creatives, refugees and asylum seekers to create a boundary crossing programme of events.

It was fantastic to see so many students and alumni supporting the Festival by attending and contributing to events with York Shakespeare Project, Theatre@41 and York Explore Library.



A green skills crisis

Our future will be shaped by our relationship to nature, and in turn, the demand for people with green skills is growing. Green skills encompass the knowledge, capacities and values needed for more sustainable societies.

"To say that green skills are in short supply is an understatement; what we are experiencing would be more aptly described as a green skills crisis." - World Economic Forum, 2024.

At York St John, our environmental postgraduate courses help students develop green skills to meet growing global needs. Our Environment and Social Justice MA is taught by researchers from a range of humanities and social science disciplines, including Geography, Literature and Religion. Alongside this, our Environmental Management and Sustainability MSc is grounded in the natural sciences. Together, these courses create a community who share a common interest in addressing environmental concerns, mirroring York St John's wider sense of community and commitment to sustainability and social impact.

Learn more about these courses on our website:



www.yorks.j.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/environment

With thanks to Dr Elodie Duché, Professor Anne-Marie Evans, Professor Brendan Paddison, Mie Claridge, Dr Saffron Vickers-Walking and Dr Pauline Couper and the School of the Humanities team for their contributions to this article.

The School of Science, Technology and Health

The School of Science, Technology and Health has had a busy year creating facilities and digital assets to support our local community.

Say hello to new facilities

The School of Science, Technology and Health have recently installed a state-of-the-art MAGNETOM Sola, 1.5T MRI Siemens scanner. Unlike conventional imaging equipment, this scanner is equipped with AI-powered Deep Resolve, a revolutionary technology that produces unparalleled image clarity to improve diagnostic accuracy and improve clinical efficiency. It also ensures a better patient experience through faster, more comfortable scans.

Looking ahead, our advanced MRI scanner will be used for real-world clinical work through our partnership with York Hospital. For students, this means more hands-on experience with state-of-the-art technology to prepare them to meet the evolving challenges of patient-centred modern healthcare.

The MRI scanner also creates further opportunities for research so we can support projects that push the boundaries of MRI technology. Designed to be energy efficient, the MAGNETOM Sola aligns with our sustainability commitments and is a long-standing investment in both our healthcare courses and local community.



Creating cybercrime awareness

Students from our Game Development course recently created games for an unlikely client: the Yorkshire and Humber Police Regional Organised Crime Unit. Students were tasked with creating a polished game experience that was educational, engaging and flexed the power of the Unity game engine. The Unity game engine is a specialist games development programme used to create 2D and 3D games. In recent years, Unity has also been used in non-gaming industries, including filmmaking and car design.

The games will be used to support Protect and Prevent, a programme engaging with young people at risk of falling into cybercrime. The games will be deployed in a community engagement vehicle called the Cyber Blue Line van. The van is equipped with gaming PCs and is already used to engage with local schools, colleges, and during community events.

This exciting opportunity challenged students to find an innovative solution for a real-world client. Alongside building their game development portfolio, this project highlighted to students how their work has the potential for social impact in their local communities.



With thanks to Toni Bailey, Dr Albert Piersson, Dr David Gundry, and the School of Science, Technology and Health team for their contributions to this article.

Our changing campus

Since 1841, we've developed and changed our campuses to support our students and reinvent our spaces for the next generation. This year, our campus has been busy with three projects to modernise spaces, support students and create exciting new learning opportunities.



Redesigning our Design Centre

Our Design Centre has been a recognisable part of campus for generations of students. Composed of an original Grade II listed Victorian building with a more modern extension, the Design Centre has helped students complete projects and begin their careers. But in recent years, the Design Centre has become outdated with several spaces only accessible by winding staircases. Our computer science programmes have also outgrown our current facilities due to increased interest in this area. The opportunity to redevelop the Design Centre to create more flexible, accessible and specialist teaching space was a way to futureproof our campus for the next generation of students.

The first phase of the project was completed for the start of the 2024/2025 academic year. Outbuilding space, which had previously been used as storage, was converted into new Makers Spaces. Used for both teaching and student workshops, students now have easy access to 3D printers, specialist workshop benches and hand tools.

The second phase of the redevelopment began in late 2024, with the demolition of the original extension and the creation of the new extension. The new Design Centre will include:

- Expanded, flexible teaching space
- A new lift to enhance building accessibility
- New studio spaces and computer science labs
- Installation of a Hearing Loop system
- A new atrium space for socialising and break out space
- New windows in the original building to improve thermal efficiency

Our latest building on campus will mirror the nearby Creative Centre's design, with wood cladding and extended landscaping. What was once car parking in front of the Centre will also be incorporated into landscaping to further our aim to semi-pedestrianize our campus.

Introducing the Student Hub

Originally opened in 1846 as a Yeoman School, our Holgate building finally joined St John's College in 1966. Since then, our Holgate building has had a lot of different uses, including being home to an infirmary and housing our College library. Holgate has also housed student favourites like Crush bar, Neo Pizza and our canteen. In recent years, Holgate has been home to various student support teams and our main reception.

This summer, the main atrium of Holgate has been transformed into our new Student Hub space. The Student Hub has been created to give students a single point of contact to access support. Students will be able to access the Student Hub online through a new portal or speak to frontline staff in Holgate. Self-help resources, such as how to reset their password, will also be available in person, with specialist team members available to help students with more complex queries.

Our new Student Hub space has been designed to be as welcoming as possible, with a focus on creating a peaceful area at the heart of campus. The new space includes comfortable seating areas for students to enjoy, structured planting and a small water feature to create a calming environment. Alongside open access areas, the space will also include waiting areas to streamline how students experience waiting for appointments with specialist staff.

New medical areas

In the past few years, our Foss building has undergone some major changes! Foss is already home to impressive mock hospital wards, with state of the art equipment and life-size, breathing mannequins to support our range of Allied Health courses, including Nursing, Physiotherapy and Paramedic Science.

Looking ahead, we plan to enhance our Allied Health course offering. To support this, Foss has undergone a final transformation to support new courses like our new Operating Department Practice MSc. Our latest facilities now include:

- State of the art Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanner
- Digital X-ray and ultrasound machines
- Functional near infrared spectroscopy machine
- Eye tracking device

We have also invested in creating an operating theatre suite built to the same specification as hospital facilities. This will allow students to practice skills and techniques in a safe learning space, simulating every stage of perioperative care, from pre-assessment, anaesthesia and surgery to recovery and critical care. The space will also ensure students are trained in current techniques with capacity to simulate emergency, pandemic, and multi-profession scenarios.

Creating Change: York St John Communities Centre

At York St John Communities Centre, we believe everyone deserves access to high-quality, inclusive mental health, educational and wellbeing support. Since opening our doors in 2016, we've worked to meet the evolving needs of individuals, families, and communities across York and North Yorkshire.

York St John Communities Centre in Action

Based in York, at York St John University, we're proud to operate as a not-for profit, values-led organisation. We're driven by our mission to make support more accessible, provide training courses, and create a range of opportunities for staff, students and members of the public.

Our Communities Centre is continuously growing and evolving to meet the needs of our community. We currently offer a range of free and low-cost initiatives, which include:

- Counselling
- Coaching
- Support groups
- Training opportunities
- Events

We're also involved in community projects and various research projects that aim to evaluate the effectiveness of different types of therapeutic support and educational interventions.

Supporting our community

All of our services are underpinned by a strong social justice model. Our work aims to reduce barriers to people accessing services, and to create equal opportunities. Most of our services have an adjoining research project attached to them, meaning we can evaluate our work and ensure we are serving the needs of our communities.

One integral service we offer is a community facing counselling service for adults. Counselling is priced on a sliding scale to make it accessible to everyone, and is delivered in person, online or by telephone, depending on the needs of the client. Alongside our trainee counsellors, we have a range of qualified counsellors and counselling psychologists, who support in the delivery of our services. We also offer a community coaching for wellbeing service which provides space for reflection, personal growth and development.

Additionally, we offer a growing number of group-based and family services. Our Creative Literacies Hub empowers parents and children to bond over reading and writing, while the Community Language School supports children from multilingual families to embrace their heritage languages. In Spring 2025, we successfully launched Lauren's Ladies, a free support group for students affected by suicide. We also have a range of Bereavement Services offering a supportive space for those experiencing grief.

Opportunities for Students, Staff and Alumni

The Centre offers a vast range of placement and volunteering opportunities which can help people develop their skills and experience, supporting them into employment. We strive to share our knowledge through the delivery of CPD training, events and conferences on topics including neurodiversity, trauma and bereavement.

We also partner with external charities and organisations to conduct research on current societal issues. Our work has been supported by and contributed to projects with Cruse Bereavement Support, IDAS (Independent Domestic Abuse Services), and the National Bereavement Organisation.

Looking ahead, we are recruiting volunteers to support and enhance our work. From Volunteer Marketing Officers to Volunteer Fundraisers, you can find out how to get involved on our website:



www.yorksj.ac.uk/working-with-the-community/communities-centre/opportunities-at-the-centre

Together, we can continue creating change in our communities

You can learn more about the Communities Centre on our website, or email ysjcc@yorksj.ac.uk



www.yorksj.ac.uk/working-with-the-community/communities-centre

With thanks to The Communities Centre team for this article.

York Business School

This year, students and staff from York Business School have presented their work to politicians, celebrated their employability and brought the night sky closer to campus.



Could York become the first UK Dark Sky City?

Researchers at York Business School have been exploring how York could become more dark sky friendly, and combat the growing crisis of light pollution. York St John University is leading the charge and has begun work to make the main campus on Lord Mayor's Walk dark skies friendly.

In March, Professor Brendan Paddison and Dr Jenny Hall hosted a panel of leading dark sky experts, academics and artists for an illuminating discussion. The panellists highlighted the urgent need for action against excessive artificial light and challenged attendees to rethink the way we use light. Research shows that high levels of artificial light negatively impact wildlife, human health and our wider environment.

During the event, a new short film was premiered called The Dark Matters. The film captures research into people's experiences of dark sky activities during the North York Moors National Park Day Sky Festival.

You can learn more about this project and watch The Dark Matters on our website:



www.yorksj.ac.uk/research/visitor-economy-and-experience/the-dark-matters

Posters in Parliament

In March, two York Business School student researchers presented their work to MPs and policymakers during an event at Westminster. During Posters in Parliament, our students presented their work alongside academic staff, highlighting the fantastic research currently taking place at York St John University.

Grace Weston, a second year Business Management student, presented her research, 'Black Rainbow: LGBTQ+ and BAME [Black, Asian and minority ethnic] Student Experiences at York St John University'. Presented alongside Dr Sanjeewa Winojith, the paper investigates the experiences of LGBTQ+ and BAME students, with a focus on their wellbeing, sense of belonging, and academic success.

Darcy Neilson, currently completing her PhD in Developmental Psychology, presented a poster summarising key findings from a project led by Dr Ernestine Gheyoh Ndzi. The project examined 'The Impact of Legal Policies and Workplace Culture on Breastfeeding in the UK Health Sector' and involved questioning over 900 health employees. The project also explored mothers' experiences of breastfeeding practices and policies, shared parental leave and workplace support upon returning to work.

This work has recently been published in the International Journal of Law and Society.



<https://www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/article/10.11648/j.ijls.20250801.14>

'Better Me' Employability Week

In November 2024, York Business School held a week of events to support students develop their career and employability skills. As part of the 'Better Me' programme, students attended an alumni panel to listen to advice from alumni and learn more about life post-graduation.

The alumni panel included alumni who studied Business Management BA(Hons) and Healthcare Management MBA. Now working for the likes of Nestle, Universal Pictures and The Electoral Commission, the panel was an invaluable opportunity for students to gain valuable insights into what careers they might pursue after graduation.

With thanks to Professor Brendan Paddison, Dr Sarah Cooper, and the York Business School team for their contributions to this article.

Postgraduate Research School

Since launching the new Postgraduate Research School in October 2024, the Postgraduate Research (PGR) Community has continued to grow, diversifying the range of research taking place at York St John University.



PGR School Launch Event

On 9 October 2024, the Postgraduate Research School was officially launched with a celebratory event. Attended by current PGRs, academics and externals, the launch included speeches from key voices from our PGR community:

- Professor Karen Bryan OBE, our Vice Chancellor
- Professor Andrew Hill, the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research
- Caitlin Veal, PGR Representative, Academic Associate and Doctoral student

The launch of our new PGR School also marked the end of our long-standing relationship with the University of Leeds. Before becoming a University in 2006, the majority of our courses were validated by the University of Leeds, with this relationship continuing for our research degrees until 2015. When we awarded our first Masters by Research and PhD degrees in 2017, we began a journey that led to the creation of our PGR School. We were very lucky to have a representative from the University of Leeds join our celebration, Professor Luke Windsor, Head of the Doctoral College.

The launch event was a huge success and was a fantastic way to mark our new School.

Since launching the PGR School, we have welcomed over 50 PGRs and two new staff members to our growing community. Looking ahead, we have big plans to ensure our PGR community continues to thrive and is supported to continue its world-leading, transformative research.

The Annual Postgraduate Research School Conference

The same day as our launch event, we also held our annual conference. Now in its sixth year, we welcomed PGRs and colleagues from across the University and country to share their research in a supportive and welcoming environment.

In 2024 we hosted the conference at the Citadel on Gillygate, a short distance from our York campus. PGR participants enjoyed sharing their research in 10-minute talks. Research topics ranged from Natalie Hynes' contemporary retellings of Medusa, to examinations of the psychosocial determinants influencing asylum-seeking parents in the UK, and socialisation and meaning-making practices in online video games.

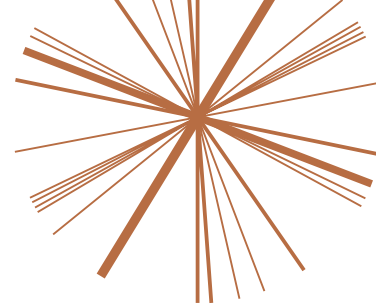
During the conference, we were also joined by three alumni speakers: Dr Charlotte Haines Lyon, Dr Helgi Clayton McClure and Dr George Wardell. Our three alumni all completed their PhDs at York St John and inspired the conference attendees by sharing their YSJ doctoral research journeys.

After a long but successful day, our PGRs left confident in their place in our passionate research community, and newly inspired to continue their work.



With thanks to Amy Langton and Emily Smith and the wider Postgraduate Research School for their contributions to this article.

Our first female principal



This year, as we mark the 50th anniversary of the College of Ripon and York St John, we thought we'd share the story of another monumental change: the story of our first female Principal.



Born in 1887, Eva Lett's career began as a lecturer at St Hild's College in Durham, before becoming the Principal at Osterberg Physical Training College in Dartford. In 1930, she became Ripon College's first female principal.

A Christmas to remember

In her first letter to the alumni magazine, Principal Lett wrote of 'her privilege [at] joining a college with such a long and unbroken tradition.' One of these traditions was the College Christmas Party. A later summary from A.M Wilkinson's 'Ripon College: The First Hundred Years' highlights the underlying tension of Principal Lett's early years:

"...as Miss Lett sat down to supper between Canon Garrod and Canon Smith, she cannot have felt that it was an evening of pure pleasure. The old gentlemen would be quite at their ease, though Canon Smith, who had spent twenty-two years with his predecessor on the doorstep, may have felt a flicker of sympathy for the new Principal."

Principal Lett's two predecessors, Canon Garrod and Canon Smith, retained a very active involvement in the College after their retirements. As well as being frequent visitors, they also sat on the College Committee, which had oversight over the College and her work.

No gloomy places

By Summer 1931, Principal Lett had transformed Ripon College. East Wing's condemned accommodation, classrooms and hall had been replaced with New Wing's modern replacements. At the same time, Principal Lett also created:

- New tennis courts
- New staff sitting rooms and accommodation for non-teaching staff
- A housekeeper's office and household mending room

Student areas were also redecorated with more homely touches and electric lighting was finally installed, something which had been put off by her predecessor.

"The whole of the main building was given up to electricians, plumbers, joiners, plasterers and decorators... [there are] no gloomy places in the College, the corridors and common rooms are brightly lit and the students can study along in their own cubicles..."

– Principal Lett, October 1931 annual report

For the remaining 14 years of her principalship, Principal Lett continued developing the College. Over the years, she improved the standard of student food, hired a trained nurse and encouraged students to enjoy more activities than ever before.

Future plans

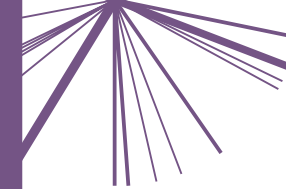
Throughout World War Two, Principal Lett ensured that Ripon College played its part. After the 1941 Blitz, Ripon College welcomed 30 students from Hull Training College, and housed 25 evacuated babies and nurses. Students also supported local schools as they grappled with larger classes due to an influx of evacuees.

In late 1944, Principal Lett began looking to a post-war future. She opened talks with St John's College in York, proposing new, joint opportunities. Unfortunately, she didn't live to see the bright future she had laid the foundations for. In August 1945, Principal Lett resigned due to health; she died three months later, on 30 November 1945.

"[She introduced the] beauty of flowers, the fragrance of which, just at the right moment and in odd corners, filled the heart with sudden joy, or came as "balm of hurt minds", or lay on the coffin of an old student living in the City, placed there by her own hand a day or so before her final collapse."

– Extract from Principal Lett's obituary in the Alumni Magazine.

London campus



This year staff and students from our York St John University London campus have had their work recognised at award ceremonies and conferences. Students have also learnt more about research opportunities and seen how employability is at the heart of our London campus culture.

Introducing Enactus

In March 2025, our students presented their work at the Enactus UK regional qualifying event. Enactus is a global organisation who promote social action and environmentally responsible enterprise. The chance to present was a fantastic achievement and highlighted how our Enactus group has developed since its foundation in 2023.

Alongside their presentation success, students also secured second place in the Sodexo: Stop Hunger Action4Impact Project Incubator challenge, securing £1000 in seed funding. Later, at the Enactus UK & Ireland 2025 Expo, Julius Ibrahim, our Enterprise and Innovation Manager, and Nelum Haththella, our Employability Engagement Manager, were jointly awarded University Advisor of the Year in recognition of their support.

Promoting our research culture

In February 2025, we hosted Research Week. Alongside an inspiring guest lecture from Professor Anne-Marie Evans, Head of the School of Humanities, students also attended masterclasses and seminars hosted by our School Research & Knowledge Transfer Co-leads, Dr Obasanjo Bolarinwa and Dr Muhammad Salman Shabbir.

A few months later, the strength of our growing research culture was demonstrated at the Midlands African Studies Hub Conference. Students from our International Project Management MSc presented their research to a room full of PhD candidates and industry professionals, earning them positive feedback and well-deserved applause. As the only taught postgraduate students presenting, the conference highlighted the strength of our research culture and our ability for sector changing research.

Putting employability at the heart of campus

We offer enterprise support for students throughout the year. In early 2025, our Enterprise and Innovations team partnered with Start-Up London for a six week accelerator programme. Collaborating with London Southbank University, the programme provided valuable support, structure, and networking opportunities for our students.

In Spring 2025, our dedication to embedding employability into our curriculum was recognised at the AGCAS Academic Employability Awards. It was wonderful to be shortlisted in four categories:

- Nelum Haththella, for the Employability Professional of the Year
- Our Applied Research Project module, for the International Employability and Global Skills award
- Our Computer Science and Data Science Department, for the Authentic Assessment for Employability Award
- Our wider London campus, for the Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Employability Award

As an alum, you can still access career support at our London campus. Alongside attending our Career Fairs in October 2025 and in February, March and May 2026, you can also attend drop in Career Clinics. Please email our London Careers Service team for more information on how to access career support in London: london.careers@yorks.ac.uk.

Celebrating our success

This year, we've had a lot to celebrate! In March 2025, our Class of 2024 graduates enjoyed our first ever London graduation ceremonies at London Guildhall.

Our London campus staff have also had their work celebrated. In Spring 2025, three London campus staff received awards in recognition of their work:

- Lola Owolabi, an Enterprise Academy Mentor, won the prestigious 'Social Entrepreneur of the Year' award at the Influencer Magazine UK Awards 2025
- Dr Obasanjo Bolarinwa's global research was endorsed by The Royal Society as he was named a Global Talent Exceptional leader
- Dr Ejindu Morah won the 'Outstanding Feedback Award' at YSJ Awards 2025

With thanks to Funbi Bakare, David Maguire, the Student Opportunities team and the wider London campus team for their contributions to this article.



Celebrating 50 years



This September marked 50 years since the College of Ripon and York St John (CRYSJ) was formed after the amalgamation of Ripon College and St John's College. Over the past 12 months, we've been asking alumni to celebrate with us, and share their memories of their time studying at the College.

Celebrating your stories

This summer, over 350 yearbook entries were published in our one-off CRYSJ alumni yearbook. It was wonderful to see so many alumni get involved and share their memories of their College days, their student achievements, and their greatest achievements since completing their studies. We really enjoyed reading through every entry and seeing some of the photos alumni shared too.

In December 2025, a copy of the CRYSJ yearbook will be added to our University Archive as a permanent reminder of the fantastic legacy of the College of Ripon and York St John. Our University Archive is home to thousands of objects which chart our history from 1841 onwards, including class photos, letters, original workbooks and historical uniform items.

A College reminder

Since 2018, we've created an annual graduation badge for each graduating cohort. So, it only made sense to create a CRYSJ badge to celebrate our CRYSJ alumni as well!

After an initial design process with our in-house team, we selected the final design from a range of options. The final design incorporates the original College logo, fondly remembered as 'the tapeworm' by some alumni, in a modern, silver coloured badge.

We hope everyone who bought a badge enjoys wearing it for many years to come.



Celebrating your College legacy

To celebrate the legacy of CRYSJ, we created the CRYSJ Graduation Prize. The Prize was created to honour the legacy of the College and celebrate Class of 2025 students who continue to embody our values.

Thanks to your support, we raised £2500 for the CRYSJ Graduation Prize. In November 2025, 50 graduates will receive a CRYSJ Graduation Prize in recognition of their community drive, resilience and their support of others during their York St John journey.

Prize winners were nominated by their tutors so that each Academic School could be represented at Graduation. During the shortlisting process, tutors shared stories of personal resilience, students working to better their community and the many ways students continue to support each other.

"Loved my time at CRYSJ in the 80's - happy to support others at the start of their career."
– CRYSJ Prize Donor

As a thank you to everyone who donated to our CRYSJ Graduation Prize, we're inviting all donors to a festive get together before our annual Christmas Carol Service on Tuesday 9 December. During the event, we'll share stories from some of the Prize recipients and have the CRYSJ yearbook on display for alumni to look through and sign.

If you donated to the CRYSJ Prize fund, including by buying a badge, please expect your invite in November.



With your legacy, we can do more

Since our foundation in 1841, our legacy has been the positive change created by our alumni, students, staff and partner organisations. From our basis in teacher training, to our latest courses supporting our NHS, York St John University continues to uphold the legacy of our earliest foundation: education for everyone.

By leaving a gift in your will, you can continue this legacy and support our future students.

Anyone can make a will and leave a gift to support our students. We advise that you consult a solicitor before drafting a new will or changing an existing one. Alternatively, if you are local to York, our free York St John Law Clinic is on hand to help with any queries you may have.

Leaving a gift in your will to York St John University is simple. All you need is our address, charity number, and your intention for the gift.

Address:

York St John University
Lord Mayors Walk
York
YO31 7EX

Exempt Charity Status Number:

GB 4498 683

The details included in your will are personal and unique to you. However, we would love to thank you for your support and work with you in making sure your gift has the biggest impact. Please consider contacting us at alumni@yorksja.ac.uk to organise a confidential chat and to receive our legacy pledge form.

With you, we can do more.

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