



# Converge

AT YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY



## Prospectus

Academic Year 2026 to 2027

For further information  
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1841

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**Converge**  
AT YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

## Welcome to Converge

Converge is a creative learning community and an integral part of York St John University, which was named University of the Year for Social Inclusion in 2025 by The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide.

We're committed to supporting the recovery of local people with experience of mental ill-health through engagement in our educational opportunities, and we work closely with local mental health services to make sure everyone has access to what we offer.

It's now 18 years since Professor Nick Rowe founded Converge, starting with short courses in Theatre. We're still rooted in the arts, but we also offer a wide range of courses across many other subject areas. We hope that there will be something here for anyone who wants to engage in education as a core part of their mental health recovery journey.

In this prospectus you'll find information about our course subject areas for the academic year 2026/27, with QR codes directing you to more detail about individual courses on our website. Our courses are open to adults (18+) who live in York and the surrounding areas and have experience of mental ill-health. You don't need any previous educational experience to be part of our community.

Our courses are free of charge and take place at York St John University's main campus on Lord Mayors Walk. Alongside this, we offer Converge Connected: online and postal courses in partnership with Converge at Northumbria University. This makes Converge easier to access for people who live remotely or find it hard to leave the house. Courses run across the academic year from September to June, with additional events in the summer.

We welcome over 250 Converge students each term. Courses are taught by university students, graduates and staff, as well as by people who have themselves been Converge students following their own experience of mental ill-health and have progressed to become tutors.

Converge isn't just about the courses: Converge students are part of the wider York St John community. We want you to feel at home on our campus and, with our support, explore the wide range of possibilities that a university environment can offer.



### The principles of Converge

**We work together as artists and students.**

**We build a community where we learn from each other.**

**We engage and enhance the university and wider community.**

**We provide a supportive and inclusive environment.**

**We respect others and value ourselves.**

## About York St John University

Founded in 1841, York St John University has been teaching people from across the world for 180 years and is passionate about giving students a teaching and learning environment that is safe, exciting, inclusive and inspirational.

With official 'sanctuary' status, York St John's role in the city of York is bigger than being an education provider. Many students and staff are activists, engaging directly with the wider community. Social justice underpins all actions and decision making, and we take an active stand against climate change, prejudice and all forms of inequality. Converge proudly works in association with the Institute for Social Justice.



## Our Campus

In recent years, York St John University has spent £100 million making transformations to facilities, ensuring that students and staff have the best environment to work in. When you become a Converge student, you will have full access to specialist learning spaces, as well as the catering outlets and beautiful award-winning gardens.

### The Student Hub

The Student Hub is a calm environment featuring biophilic designs that incorporate plants and natural elements. There are clear wheelchair accessible routes, portable hearing loops and interactive help points. The Student Hub is the central meeting point for most Converge courses.

### Creative Centre

The Creative Centre is a purpose built three storey creative space for Music, Theatre and Computer Science. The 157-seat theatre has a large stage and state-of-the-art lighting and sound systems, and regularly hosts live student performances, community events and high-profile conferences. The building is also home to rehearsal spaces, recital rooms, editing suites and specialist music and media studios. The Creative Centre is 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. 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.

### 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.

“ I love York St John's campus. It's so pretty and everyone is so welcoming. Using the food and other facilities before going to the course made me feel part of the community and I started to think about how nice it would be to attend there as a full-time student.

Ellie, Converge Student

”

## Latest news

Academic year 2025/26 has been an exciting year at Converge. Here are some of the things we've been up to:

- We've run new courses, and we're proud to have had the largest intake of Converge students to date.
- We've enjoyed a year-long partnership with Orb Arts in Knaresborough, including our first 'travelling course' which made its way week by week from Knaresborough to York, visiting numerous villages on the way.
- In July, we hosted Occupational Therapy students from Western Oregon University (USA). As part of their visit, we ran a 2-week summer festival of one-off workshops and events.
- For the second year in a row, we've held an exhibition of our art students' work in the main university art building alongside our Summer Sharing event in the university's Creative Centre, which showcases the work done by students on our performance and creative writing courses.
- We received funding from the Guildhall Ward of City of York Council to run our first integrated course for Converge students and Guildhall ward residents. 'A Story in your Pocket' focused on the history and nature of the area immediately around the university.
- We've held Converge open mic nights in the YSJ Students' Union and acoustic gigs in the University Chapel, showcasing our students' musical, creative writing and standup comedy achievements.
- We've continued to provide creative input to patients at Foss Park Hospital in York and Cross Lane Hospital in Scarborough to enable patients to experience some of the activities that Converge provides. At Foss Park we have also provided regular music sessions, funded by the 'Connecting our City' initiative.



## Teaching and learning

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 (level 4) and focus on the practical and fun aspects of learning. We don't ask for any previous qualifications to access Converge, but we 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. Courses are between 5 and 10 weeks in length, and sessions are usually no longer than two hours at a time. Converge students can apply for up to 4 courses each term. Converge courses are taught by university students, graduates and people who have previously been Converge students and have progressed to become tutors with us. Our courses are supported by Converge student and university student volunteers.

More information about volunteering opportunities can be found on page 22.

### Converge Connected

Converge Connected is our online and postal course provision. Online courses can take place either over Zoom, or through independent learning modules via our online classroom.

Our postal courses involve course content being posted or emailed to a Converge student's home address along with any materials needed to complete the course (where appropriate). All students on our postal courses are followed up by an individual tutor who will check in on your progress and give feedback via email or post.



## Meet the team



Simon Procter

**Director of Converge**

As Director, Simon looks after the work of Converge as a whole and links it to the wider work of the University. He's a musician and improviser by background and is always eager to chat with Converge students. Simon also provides piano tuition and leads some of our music courses.



Emma McKenzie

**Converge and Discovery Hub Team Leader**

Emma supports the leadership of Converge and manages The Discovery Hub which is the individual support team within Converge. The Discovery Hub supports 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 Osborne

**Converge Office Coordinator**

Holly is responsible for overseeing the operations of Converge, which includes enrolment, course coordination, projects, finance and events. She joined the team in 2018 after finishing a BA in Drama: Education and Community. In 2025, she completed an MSc in Project Management at York St John University.



Helen Kenwright

**Converge Creative Writing and Tutor Support Lead**

Helen joined Converge as a volunteer in 2016 and now leads Creative Writing and Tutor Support. She's also the lead for our publications team, which produces our student anthology, Creative Writing Heals, every year.



Elaine Kelly

**Project Coordinator and Creative Writing Tutor**

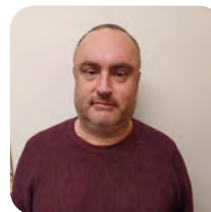
Elaine began working with Converge while studying at York St John and has been a creative writing tutor since 2017. She also coordinates our off-campus projects, including the development of Converge learning opportunities in collaboration with other organisations.



Kate Walker

**Converge Administrator and Volunteers Coordinator**

Kate provides administrative support for Converge and the Discovery Hub as well as coordinating the Volunteers programme. She has worked for Converge since 2022.



Paul Wort

**Converge Admin Assistant**

Paul has been a Converge student since 2015, participating in a wide range of different Converge courses. He worked as a Converge Administrator between 2018 and 2020. In 2024 he re-joined the staff team on a casual basis, providing weekly admin support to the Converge office.



Amy Skinner

**Associate Professor in Co-production in Mental Health Research**

Amy is an associate professor and arts-based researcher in the Institute for Social Justice at York St John University. Her research explores co-production in mental health contexts, particularly working with community organisations and young people.



Ruth Lambley

**CERT Coordinator**

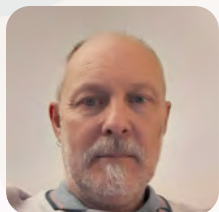
Ruth is the Coordinator for the Converge Evaluation and Research Team (CERT), a group of researchers and evaluators with lived experience of mental health difficulties. Ruth has been involved with Converge since 2017. She is also a PhD researcher at York St John, exploring coproduction in mental health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



Hazel Rowe

**Student Support Practitioner**

Hazel joined Converge in 2019 and works in the Discovery Hub, supporting Converge students to 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 45 years and is currently working out of Poppleton Community Railway Nursery, providing supportive volunteering experiences in all sorts of media, including craft, writing, woodwork 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 ever since. Karen takes a keen interest in connecting people to training, education and employment. She also works closely with the Creative Writing Team.



Ellie King

**Learning and Access Worker and Origami Tutor**

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.



Lee King

**Learning and Access Worker and Leaded Glass Tutor**

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. Lee is also the Converge Leaded Glass tutor, teaching students how to create a stained-glass art piece.



Aaron Soon

**Learning and Access Worker and Music Tutor**

Aaron joined Converge in 2017 as a student volunteer while studying BA (Hons) Music: Education and Community at York St John. He progressed to become a Music Facilitator and Events Organizer for both Converge and Emerging Voices Music Charity and completed an MA in Music Education at the University of York. Aaron also part of the Discovery Hub as a Learning and Access Worker.

# Our courses

Art and Design

Creative Writing

Music

Social Science and Study Skills

Theatre and Performance



## Art and Design

We offer a variety of entry level, skills development and progression art courses.

Entry classes include learning skills such as technical drawing in our Art: Drawing on Life course and surface pattern design via our Art: Mixed Media course. This year we are excited to offer skills development courses such as Print Making and Expansive Drawing Skills for Converge students wishing to progress their skills. Our art tutors also offer design-based courses including Origami and Leaded Glass as well as a Digital Art and Design course. Students completing these courses can progress to join our Arts Collective, which helps Converge students to build an individual portfolio of work.

Converge art courses are held in dedicated university classroom spaces and we have strong ties with university art programmes, whose staff support us to host a Converge Art Exhibition within the Phoenix Art Block at the end of the summer term.

Scan the QR code to see the most up to date list of our Art and Design courses, or go to

[yorks.ac.uk/converge/art-courses](https://yorks.ac.uk/converge/art-courses)



## 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 focused primarily on the pleasure of writing and developing skills through practice. You aren't expected to share your work (though you may be invited to if you wish). Our classes are about developing your creativity with words rather than spelling and grammar. Every Converge Creative Writing student will get an opportunity to prepare a piece of work for publication in our annual anthology; Creative Writing Heals at the end of the year.

Scan the QR code to see the most up to date list of our Creative Writing courses, or go to

[yorks.ac.uk/converge/creative-writing-courses](https://yorks.ac.uk/converge/creative-writing-courses)



## Music

Our music courses offer a range of learning and skills development, from drumming to improvisation, singing to applied music theory, and songwriting to ukelele groups.

Most music courses take place in either the beautiful Chapel or the state-of-the-art Creative Centre. You may also be invited to take part in our Christmas and Summer Sharing events. In addition to online and on-campus courses, 1 to 1 music tuition is offered. This is the only form of tuition that we have to charge for, and Converge students are asked to pay £14 per 30-minute session. This is a significantly subsidised rate. However, there is some funding available through the Emerging Voices Music Charity to pay for lessons for Converge students who may not otherwise be able to afford 1-2-1 tuition. Please contact the Converge office or Emerging Voices for more information. Open mic

nights, acoustic gigs and showcase opportunities are offered throughout the year in partnership with Emerging Voices. Further information about Emerging Voices can be found on page 28.

We also offer courses which use music as a way of thinking about some important social issues in the world around us.

Scan the QR code to see the most up to date list of our Music courses, or go to

[yorks.ac.uk/converge/music-courses](https://yorks.ac.uk/converge/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 will encourage you to express your response to what you 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 if you are hoping 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 most up to date list of our Social Science and Study Skills courses, or go to:

[yorks.ac.uk/converge/social-science-and-study-skills-courses](https://yorks.ac.uk/converge/social-science-and-study-skills-courses)

## Theatre and Performance

We offer practical courses which will introduce you to different styles of theatre. This includes staging, devising, improvisation, monologues, voice work, comedy, character development and script writing.

No previous experience in theatre or performance is necessary to take part. The courses mostly take place on-campus in York St John University's professional theatre studios, but we do offer some courses online through our Converge Connected programme. All theatre and performance courses are taught by highly skilled tutors with a wealth of industry experience.

Converge students will have the opportunity to take part in our Christmas and Summer Sharing, where they will perform in the Creative Centre auditorium. Converge students on our Converge Connected courses will also be invited to create a short film or online performance to be shown at the end of term events.

Converge students can progress to join Out of Character, a professional theatre company, after completing our theatre and performance courses. Further details about Out of Character Theatre Company can be found on page 26



Scan the QR code to see the most up to date list of our Theatre courses, or go to:

[yorks.ac.uk/converge/theatre-and-performance-courses](https://yorks.ac.uk/converge/theatre-and-performance-courses)



# Applying for courses

It is essential that Converge students complete an application form to enrol on our courses. You can complete an application form independently, or with support from our team. You must complete a new application form every term, even if you have been a Converge student before.

### How to apply:

1. Contact the Converge office to be added to our mailing list by emailing [converge@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:converge@yorks.ac.uk) or by calling either 07764 337 116 or 07779 544 874.
2. Each term, a publicity pack containing a confirmed list of courses and an application form is sent out by post and email to our mailing list. When you receive this, choose the courses that interest you and complete the application form.
3. List your chosen courses in order of preference. We will aim to give you your first or second choice, but please note that this is not guaranteed. There is no limit on how many times you can reapply for a course. However, if you have already completed a course once, we will prioritise new applicants to give everyone a fair chance to try different subjects.
4. Once you have completed your application form, return it to Converge either by post, email or by bringing it to one of our Open Days.
5. You can also download the form from our website and email or post it back to us.

### What happens next?

- We will process all returned forms and count how many people want to do each course. We receive around 250 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 by email, text, or post to let you know which courses you have been given 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 one week prior to the course starting.
- Places on Converge courses are limited, so you are expected to make a real commitment to attend the courses you have been offered a place on. If you would no longer like a place on one of your courses, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can offer the opportunity to someone on the waiting list.
- Please do not apply for courses if you already know you will be missing more than three sessions (for example, if you are going on holiday during the term).
- Where students join after the start of the course, one-to-one enrolment appointments can be arranged by contacting us.

## Support at Converge

### The Discovery Hub

Do you struggle with anxiety? Is it difficult going into a room of new people and making new friends? Do you feel underconfident stepping onto campus for the first time? The Discovery Hub is a team of 6 staff based on campus within Converge who are employed by Tees, Esk and Wear Valley's NHS Foundation Trust, and offer support to new and existing Converge students to access courses and engage with the programme. The Discovery Hub also work with volunteers at Converge, and can help to arrange volunteer support within the classroom to help ease initial nerves and to settle in.

Our support involves:

- Individual mentoring and progression support
- Assistance to access the right help at the right time if support is needed around a mental health issue that may be affecting attendance at Converge
- Help to connect with wider community activities, including training, education and employment

If you think you might benefit from some support, please email [discoveryhub@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:discoveryhub@yorks.ac.uk) to arrange for an initial chat regarding your support needs.



### Support to Progress

Are you interested in training, education or employment opportunities? The Discovery Hub also offer bespoke coaching to assist with development of your goals. We are keen to help people progress from our courses into independent activities in the local community. You might be interested to find out about other higher educational courses you can access, or how to use Converge to make the next steps into volunteering or employment. Please speak to your course tutor or any of the Converge team if you are interested in finding out more about progression opportunities from Converge or email [discoveryhub@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:discoveryhub@yorks.ac.uk) to book an appointment.



### The Discovery Hub and Poppleton Railway Nursery Partnership

Converge are proud to support the Discovery Hub in partnership work with Poppleton Community Railway Nursery. Poppleton Railway Nursery is Britain's last surviving railway nursery. It is operated by a charitable group as a non-profit organisation. Poppleton Railway Nursery work in partnership with us three days a week to help provide horticultural volunteering opportunities as well as creative workshops.

These sessions support the benefits of green spaces for mental health and wellbeing and offer a varied and ongoing programme of wider community activity. No previous experience is required to join these programmes, just enthusiasm to get involved. Poppleton Railway can be a great place to build confidence before coming to Converge, or for those looking for longer term community volunteering opportunities.

Please email the [discoveryhub@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:discoveryhub@yorks.ac.uk) for more information.

## Volunteering opportunities

### University students

University students are integral to the delivery of Converge courses. Converge provides practical experience to university students which can enhance their studies as well as future employment opportunities. Volunteering opportunities are open to students from York St John University and Northumbria University.

### 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 3 key roles for volunteers:

#### Student Participant

Model ideal student behaviour by taking part in courses alongside Converge students. Volunteers actively contribute to the Converge community of learners by helping to bring new ideas and energy to sessions. Volunteer participants also support Converge students to engage with course material and to access learning opportunities.

#### Shared Leadership Role

Under the guidance of the tutor, student volunteers are empowered to plan and lead parts of a session. This is a great way to develop practical skills in workshop facilitation and leadership.

#### Course Facilitator

Experienced volunteers are welcome to submit course proposals to Converge. If accepted, you would have the opportunity to lead a course on a voluntary basis and to be considered for paid tutoring roles. If you would like to find out more about volunteering with Converge, contact us at [convergevolunteering@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:convergevolunteering@yorks.ac.uk) or 07779 544 874.



When I joined Converge in 2022, I remember wondering what course to do, thinking that it would be great to have a comedy course and the next thing I knew there was an email saying that a new Improv Comedy course was starting! Some of the people I met on that course became friends, and they're still good friends to this day. Attending Improv Comedy for a while built up my confidence for performing and I felt able to apply for the theatre courses. I was then invited to join Out of Character theatre company and was performing at the Theatre Royal within a year!



Jane was my theatre tutor, and she encouraged me to become a volunteer and support new theatre students the following year. Before you become a volunteer, you don't realise how much you help just by being yourself, being present and a familiar face. Volunteering on a course you've already done is a whole new experience of it. You get a new group every year, so the course is different. It's great to be able to pass my experience on. You really see people grow in confidence and become better performers and I have encouraged people to come back the next year to grow further.

Being a volunteer gets you involved in more Converge events, like the American students' visit and Open Days, and that makes you feel a big part of it. There are also volunteer meetings, so you get to know the other volunteers from different subjects.

### Chris Hanson: Converge Student Volunteer



I was a volunteer on three Converge courses as a part of my placement doing Community Music at York St John University. After being with Converge for two terms, I now feel more confident, relaxed and capable when running sessions. I supported Communitas Choir both terms as well as Ukulele for Beginners and Music in Everyday Life in the Spring and Summer. My experience was really enjoyable and solidified my understanding and passion for community music projects. I hope to continue with Converge next year and develop my skills further.



### Kat Wells: York St John University Student Volunteer

## Converge Evaluation and Research Team (CERT)

We are a friendly Converge community who carry out:

- Evaluations of mental health related projects
- Consultancy work
- Academic research
- Collaborative writing projects
- Research methods training

### Who we are:

CERT Researchers have diverse lives and bring a wide range of lived experience and research skills. Some are completely new to research when they join, others have university degrees, and some are career researchers. What unites us as a team is our lived experience of mental health challenges and our quest for social justice. Most importantly, we use coproduction and participatory research methods. These approaches mean that we use and develop our own creative and inventive approaches such as artwork, photography and creative writing in our research and evaluation.

### How we work:

We meet every Tuesday between 11am and 12:30pm (approximately). These meetings are hybrid – CERT Researchers can meet on campus in a classroom or online via Zoom. Once a month we have a shared lunch following the meeting. In our meetings, we give updates about the projects we are currently working on and discuss new research tools and ideas we can use in our work.



### Our ethos:

We strive to both be trauma informed and to carry out our deeply ethical work with kindness, compassion, gentleness, neurodiversity affirmation and care. In this way, we specialise in finding ways to support people who find it hard to express themselves or whose voices are often not heard within traditional mainstream approaches, to meaningfully take part in evaluations, research, consultancy and training.

### Who can join us?

We welcome new Converge students who are curious about what we do to come and meet us. No previous experience of research is required: for Converge students who want it, we offer a research methods training course in the autumn term. However, you are welcome to join CERT without completing this course.

To find out more, email Ruth Lambley, CERT Co-ordinator: [r.lambley@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:r.lambley@yorks.ac.uk)

## 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 on hand to offer advice about volunteering 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.

### Open Mic Nights

Open Mic Nights are a social occasion where all members of the Converge community can showcase their talents in a relaxed, supportive and informal environment. Performances range from live music, spoken word, and comedy to storytelling, poetry, and other creative expressions.

### Christmas Sharing and Summer Sharing

Our Christmas Sharing and Summer Sharing are afternoons of performances and presentations by Converge students, staff, and university volunteers, which showcase the amazing work and projects our community have been part of during the year. We also host an exhibition put together by those involved in our Art and Design 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.

### Acoustic Gigs

Twice a year, we host Acoustic Gigs in partnership with Emerging Voices Music Charity. Converge students have the opportunity to practice instrumental and vocal performances as part of these events, and all members of the Converge community are invited to be audience members. Acoustic Gigs are usually held in the Chapel, or in the Creative Centre Recital Room.

### Taster Courses

In June, we offer a series of taster courses based around our core subject areas. These are only open to individuals who are brand new to Converge. Taster courses can help prospective Converge students decide which courses are right for them, before applying for our autumn term programme. It is also an opportunity for prospective students to explore the YSJ campus and get a feel for what to expect when they do enrol.

### Summer Festival

In July, we host visiting students from the USA and together put on a Summer Festival fortnight of one-off activities such as art, creative writing, sport, theatre, 'play in a day' and much more. The Summer Festival is open to all enrolled Converge students. Contact the Converge office for further details about our next Summer Festival.

## Our partners

### 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 University, and our company includes students who get involved as actors, technicians and facilitation volunteers. We also deliver sessions as an acting company to York St John Theatre students, most recently running a session for the second year Performance in Social Context module.

Our company is made up of a diverse range of ages, backgrounds and interests. Our interest in creating theatre and respecting each person's 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 Ripon Theatre Festival, York Theatre Royal, Arts and 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 and more recently in 2023 was awarded a Special Prize by The Eleanor Worthington Prize for our film Disability and Autonomy. We have a strong ongoing collaboration with University of York and create simulated patient work for their Nursing students each year. In 2024 the actor Mark Addy agreed to become our patron and support our work.

The company is led by Artistic Director Kate Veysey and Creative Producer Hannah Munro and supported by an Assistant Director. Sessions are split into 2 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, in which we work towards a production or project.



#### Recent productions include:

- A site-specific modern-day production of *A Christmas Carol* (December 2022)
- A commissioned play by Paul Birch, *Shattered*, which was performed as part of Takeover at York Theatre Royal Studio (May 2023)
- Jack Thorne's play *After Life*, which the company performed at York St John Creative Centre (December 2023) and then took to the main house at York Theatre Royal (May 2024)
- *Out of the Box*, a devised play about teenage mental health working in collaboration with York Theatre Royal Youth Theatre (December 2024)
- Laura Lomas' play *Chaos* at Friargate Theatre, York (July 2025)
- *Pure Bingo*, a devised production where characters are invited to share their true stories to win a game (February 2026)
- Jim Cartwright's play *Two*, set in a pub and performed at The Crescent community music venue, working in collaboration with The Brave project in Scarborough (July 2026).

Some of the company members and creative team have also represented the company in external commissions, the most recent including performing *Outcast* by Paul Mills and Andy Croft at Ripon Theatre Festival in July 2026.

For more information about Out of Character, please email [k.veysey@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:k.veysey@yorks.ac.uk)

[www.outofcharactertheatre.com](http://www.outofcharactertheatre.com)

 Out of Character Theatre Company  
 outofcharacteryork

## Emerging Voices Music Charity

Emerging Voices is a registered charity that provides music opportunities to adults with lived-experience of mental ill-health. They partner with Converge to support students to realise their musical aspirations, offering 1 to 1 vocal & instrumental tuition and performance opportunities such as open mic nights. Through our record label, Emerging Voices Records, there are opportunities for students to record, produce and release their own original work.

Off-campus, Emerging Voices currently runs the Selby Wellbeing Choir and Harrogate Wellbeing Choir, whose members participate in group songwriting and recording projects and informal performances. These singing groups are open to all adults with experience of mental ill-health, including Converge students. Recent projects in the community also include a series of percussion workshops in Gamelan and various types of drumming, in association with York Community Wellbeing Hubs.

To find out more please contact:  
**admin@emergingvoices.org.uk**  
**07984 535629**

**emergingvoices.org.uk**

**f** EmergeVoiceYork  
**@**emergingvoicesyork

“ The individual tuition and music events help me with building my skills, confidence and self-esteem. They also help me to get out of the house, and give me a goal to work towards, as well as something to look forward to ”  
**Converge student**

“ I look forward to the singing each week and would change nothing at all. The group is like a huge safety net. ”  
**Selby Wellbeing Choir Member**



## Converge at Northumbria

Converge Northumbria offer free educational campus-based opportunities to adults in the community who have experienced challenges associated with their mental health. Participants are enrolled as a Converge student and become part of the wider community working alongside university students and academics. Based in the heart of Newcastle City Centre at Northumbria University, our bespoke courses and opportunities give you the freedom to learn, create, challenge, and inspire yourself.

Alongside academic staff, university students and industry professionals, we deliver a rich and diverse range of courses across subjects such as:

- Theatre and Performance
- Movement and Dance
- Fashion
- Fine Art
- Creative Writing
- Music
- Sports and Fitness

We work in partnership with local mental health organisations and cultural venues to offer bespoke and collaborative creative learning opportunities. The majority of our courses are designed and delivered by Northumbria University students, and we work alongside them closely to create courses that they are passionate about and want to teach, meaning that no two courses are the same. When enrolling onto a Converge Northumbria course, you become a student at the University.

“ So grateful that I managed to get into Converge. It brought stuff from the surface that we don't really get to connect with. And you don't get to sit and think about it. It's creativity and a therapy thing and we're missing it in normal life. ”

“ I felt pretty relaxed and I feel grateful to be here and I love the creativity and the challenge behind it. I'm going to go home and feel recharged. ”

“ It's been lush seeing all my friends and it energises me and gives me purpose. It makes not just the week better but the month better. ”

For more information on how you can get involved, get in touch with us at:

E: **converge@northumbria.ac.uk**

T: 07468700881 | +44 (0)191 243 7393

**f** /convergeNU

**@** @convergenu



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE

## International connections



### Western Oregon University Oregon, USA

Each summer occupational therapy students from Western Oregon University in the USA visit us in York to learn more about the Converge model of supporting mental health recovery via engagement in an on-campus creative learning community. They also contribute significantly to our Converge Summer Festival. Students from Oregon and Converge students work alongside each other to provide collaborative workshops and other events. This is a real highlight of each year at Converge.

### Future connections

As an integral part of York St John University, we are committed to sharing our experience with colleagues around the world via our evaluations, publications and research reports. In this way we hope to offer 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 in the UK. We accept students from a variety of degree subjects, including the arts as well as health-related courses.
- Establish a Converge project with ongoing consultancy and support from us
- Provide visiting internships
- Contribute to ground-breaking work, innovating in mental health recovery

We believe that people everywhere should have access to high quality learning opportunities as an integral part of their mental health recovery journey. Just as we aim to build a community in York for people who want this for themselves, so we are part of an international community which tries to provide similar opportunities and advocates for people's access to them.

## Converge Student Stories



I was really nervous about going to my first Converge class but thank goodness I did! After years of mental illness, I felt that I had lost the creativity that once was such an important part of me. With the help and kindness of the wonderful Converge tutors and other students, it didn't take me long to find it again! By the end of the class the group had all relaxed and we were chatting and laughing with each other. We didn't speak about it, but we all knew that each of us had been through our own battles with mental illness and the camaraderie between us was so uplifting. Converge had given us the safe space and gentle guidance needed to begin to enjoy our lives again and, over the weeks, it was amazing to see such a positive change in others whilst also feeling my own confidence growing. The courses that I have taken this term have enriched my life in so many ways and I know that I would not have recovered so quickly, or so well, without them. Converge has given me my creativity and my love of learning back and, for that, I will be forever grateful!

Emily, Converge Student



I've been at Converge now for approaching two years, and I've thoroughly enjoyed myself. I have done various different courses that Converge has offered and has really benefited my mental health. I also have met so many new friends.

Peter, Converge Student



I was looking for something to push away my mental fog. Along with an understanding or help with my mental health issues. Hey, I found a lot of people in the groups with various problems, some people like minded. There is no pressure to share but I found it a help sometimes. Great for finding other things of interest within the curriculum or maybe things when you need further stimulation. Converge is a help on many levels.

Martin, Converge Student





## Mosaic at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia

Spring 2025 was a landmark moment for our colleagues at Griffith University, with the launch of Mosaic, their own version of Converge which draws upon their experiences of working with us.

Like Converge, Mosaic is a social justice service, opening university-level education to those who often do not have that opportunity. Mosaic is underpinned by two key principles. First, the program provides education, not therapy. Second, Mosaic participants are students, not patients or service users.

Mosaic students enrol in one or more courses, that are designed and delivered specifically for them, at Griffith University's South Bank campus. The courses are open to adults (18 years of age and older) currently receiving support for their mental health, or who have experienced mental health issues. These are introductory courses that do not require any prior experience. Mosaic courses are free, run for about 8 weeks in length, for

2 hours each week. Courses are taught by university tutors in state-of-the-art facilities at the Queensland Conservatorium and the Queensland College of Art and Design.

There is an expectation that Mosaic students will have a genuine willingness to engage and learn. Participants engage socially and educationally, increasing their self-agency, confidence, independence, and well-being.

A key component of Mosaic is the 'social hour' that follows each class, where students and staff mingle. Mosaic commenced in Trimester 1 2025 and is about to enter its fourth trimester with four courses: Drawing and Mystery, Thinking Jewellery, Songwriting and Storytelling II, and Thinking and Making through Print.



Here are some of the wonderful outcomes Mosaic students have shared:

*Getting out of the house is really hard for me, and this has provided the opportunity to get out, meet people, and socialise with them, the confidence it has given me is remarkable, every week learning and discovering something new, and the mindfulness of being in a safe place, exploding your thoughts and feelings onto a piece of paper and being able to walk away and feel the sense of relief, it's just incredible.*

### **Mosaic Drawing Student**

*I have complex PTSD and it's wonderful to come somewhere where you feel so safe, and you belong, and people treat you so nicely. The other students at the Conservatorium are so supportive, really supportive, and I've just had the most amazing conversations with all sorts of people. It's wonderful to get out of the house and do something that uses your mind and your creativity.*

### **Mosaic Acting Student**

Trimester 2 will commence in August with four courses: Creative Writing 1, Mosaic Singers, Painting in Practice, and Studio Drawing. Mosaic supports a whole-person approach to wellbeing, recognising the benefits of collaborative education and healthcare, where all stakeholders share a genuine commitment to improving the lives of people living in the region and beyond

For more information, please visit Mosaic's website:

**[www.griffith.edu.au/griffith-health/school-allied-health-sport-social-work/mosaic](http://www.griffith.edu.au/griffith-health/school-allied-health-sport-social-work/mosaic)**



## Converge Student Stories

“ In spring 2025, I took my first Converge courses in creative writing and origami. Back then, I was still recovering from being very ill and Converge really helped me re-structure my life with meaningful activities. During 2025, I went on to run workshops in the Summer School and at the Creative Writing conference. I also wrote a piece for the Converge anthology: Creative Writing Heals 9.

This year I have acted as a volunteer and mentor to other students which I have thoroughly enjoyed. I entered a creative writing competition, and my poem was shortlisted and posted on the University's creative writing blog. I am involved in the Converge Evaluation and Research Team, or CERT, where I am making use of research skills from my earlier academic career. I have also taken a masterclass course in The Art of Poetry which I loved and have a great mentor who helps me hugely.

I will continue to volunteer and take more courses next year plus I hope to deliver a new course for Converge if my course proposal is accepted. Finally, I am applying to study for a master's qualification in creative writing – something I could not have imagined doing three years ago!

The opportunities at Converge are extensive, the community is a really important part of my life, and the people involved never cease to amaze me. It remains a total privilege to be part of such an inspiring organisation.

**Jane, Converge Student & Volunteer**

## What our students say

This has been the highlight of my week...I loved the atmosphere, the challenges, the gentleness of the sessions. People were all so supportive and Laurie is so inspiring and genuine.

A fantastic experience, where I got to draw in a few different ways, aided by helpful tutors and surrounded by a brilliant group of people.

Excellent teaching that has really helped me move forward with my art practice.

It opened me up to a new way of thinking about my voice and how to make music.

It was an amazing experience, gently taking us out of comfort zones and offering new types of learning.

The tutor created a really lovely atmosphere in the room. We were encouraged to be bold and explore our capabilities and given good feedback.

I always left feeling better than when I started the session.

I felt in safe and knowledgeable hands.

I felt part of the campus community. I was pleased I could use the facilities.

Experienced tutors with a zest for teaching.

Converge really helped me with my mood. It's rare for me to look forward to doing something but this course was something I looked forward to.

This was fun and enjoyable. It has helped enrich my life. Thank you.

Very convenient to reach by bus. A very attractive and modern campus.

## What our students say

The tutors were very helpful and friendly and willing to accept people at all levels of knowledge and ability.

The tutor was very friendly and welcoming. He helped us all feel comfortable and also confident in our abilities and provided regular positive feedback to us individually after each activity. The sessions were always fun and relaxing, and we really came together as a group, which made it even more enjoyable.



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 and learning new skills. Converge has the power to unleash the potential in its students that last a lifetime.

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

The progression of sessions enabled us to build our techniques and challenge ourselves.



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

The course helped me tap into my creativity in a physical way, connecting emotions and memories.

This is the first Converge course I've done, so I wasn't sure what to expect. It was a brilliant experience, and I can't wait to do more courses!

There is a real kindness and thought into how things are organised, how things are run, how things are communicated.





# Converge

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