



# Converge

AT YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

## Prospectus

Academic Year 2025 to 2026

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# Converge

AT YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

## Contents

Welcome to Converge .....	3
The principles of Converge .....	4
Latest news .....	5
Learning and teaching .....	6
Meet the team .....	7
<b>Our courses</b> .....	10
Art and Design .....	11
Creative Writing .....	12
Music .....	13
Social Science Study Skills .....	14
Theatre and Performance .....	15
Applying for courses .....	16
The Discovery Hub: support at Converge .....	17
York St John University Campus .....	18
Volunteering opportunities .....	20
Converge Evaluation and Research Team .....	22
Converge events .....	23
Our partners .....	24
Out of Character Theatre Company .....	25
Emerging Voices Music Charity .....	26
Orb Community Arts .....	27
Converge at Northumbria University .....	28
International connections .....	29
Mosaic at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia .....	30
Converge Student Stories .....	32
What the students say .....	34

## Welcome to Converge

In this prospectus you'll find information about our course subject areas for the academic year 2025 to 2026, 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.

It has been 17 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 part of their mental health recovery journey.

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 are committed to supporting people to access educational opportunities, and we work closely with local mental health services to make sure everyone has access to what we offer.

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 campus and, with our support, explore the possibilities that a university environment can provide.



## 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.**

## Latest news

2024 - 2025 has been an exciting year at Converge. Here are some 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 hosted a range of events which celebrated the varied work Converge students.
- We've been busy planning a partnership with Orb Arts (see page 27) which will enable Converge students to participate in activities with our friends from Knaresborough throughout the forthcoming year.
- Beyond York, we are excited that our Converge at Northumbria colleagues have secured funding to extend their educational opportunities.
- Griffith University in Australia have launched their own version of Converge, called Mosaic, with three courses already up and running.
- Over the summer, we hosted Occupational Therapy students from Western Oregon University in the USA as part of our summer school activities.
- We are very proud to have won an award for Community Engagement at the Educate North Awards 2025. This recognises the opportunities we offer York St John students to support the Converge community.





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 6 and 12 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 14.



### **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 to a Converge student's home address along with any materials needed to complete the course (where appropriate). All Converge Connected courses are followed up by an individual tutor who will check in on your progress and give feedback either during the Zoom session, via email or via post.



Simon Procter

### **Director of Converge**

Simon joined Converge last summer. As Director, he 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.



Emma McKenzie

### **Converge and Discovery Hub Team Leader**

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



Holly Osborne

### **Converge Office Coordinator**

Holly is responsible for running the office and overseeing the daily operations of Converge. She joined the team in 2018 after completing a BA in Drama: Education and Community, and has recently finished 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.



## Meet the team



Kate Walker

**Converge Administrator and Volunteers Coordinator**

Kate provides administrative support for Converge and the Discovery Hub as well as coordinating the Volunteers programme.



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/ evaluators with lived experience of mental health difficulties. Ruth has been involved with Converge since 2017. She is also a PhD researcher at York St John, exploring co-production in mental health research.



Hazel Rowe

**Student Support Practitioner**

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



Paul Botting

**Associate Practitioner**

Paul joined Converge as part of the TEWW 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.



Ellie King

**Learning and Access Worker and Origami Tutor**

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 York St John Student Volunteer while studying Music: Education and Community BA (Hons). 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. In 2023, Aaron also joined 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

Explore a diverse range of creative possibilities through our practical art courses.

You can discover different art forms like mixed media, drawing on life and leaded glass. We also run an Arts Collective for those students progressing from our introductory courses and wishing to develop an individual portfolio to use to apply for higher education or personal development of an arts-based skill. Our on-campus art courses are held in dedicated classroom spaces at York St John University. We also offer art courses as part of our Converge Connected programme, where you will be sent a pack of art materials in the post to enable you to participate in the course at home. As a Converge student, you will fully embrace the University's atmosphere and resources

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



Scan the QR code to see the 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) and our classes are about developing your creativity with words rather than spelling and grammar.

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



Scan the QR code to see the 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 skills development, from singing in a group to songwriting, playing instruments, composition and music production.

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, 1-2-1 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.

Regular open mic nights, showcase concerts and recording opportunities are offered throughout the year in partnership with Emerging Voices. Further information about Emerging Voices can be found on page 26.



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 the different styles of theatre, staging, devising, improvisation, monologues, comedy, character development, and script work.

No previous experience in theatre or performance is necessary to take part. Our theatre and performance courses are offered online as part of our Converge Connected programme, and on-campus at York St John University.

Our on-campus courses take place in professional theatre studios at York St John University. Converge students will have the opportunity to take part in our end of term Christmas Sharing and Summer Festival, where you will get the chance to perform in the Creative Centre auditorium.

Converge students on our Converge Connected courses will also have the chance to create a short film or online

performance to be shown at the end of term events. Every theatre course is taught by experienced tutors with a wealth of industry experience. Following completion of the theatre courses, Converge students can progress to join Out of Character, a professional theatre company. Further details about Out of Character Theatre Company can be found on page 22.



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



# Applying for courses

As with any course of study, 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.

## To apply:

1. Contact the Converge office to be added to our mailing list by emailing **converge@yorks.ac.uk** or calling **07764 337 116** (Holly) or **07779 544 874** (Kate).
2. Each term, a publicity pack containing a confirmed list of courses taking place is sent out by post and email to our mailing list. When you receive this, choose the courses that interest you and complete an application form.
3. List your chosen courses in order of preference, so that we can aim to give you your first choice. There is no limit on how many times you can apply for a course. However, if you have already completed a course once, we may prioritise new applicants to give everyone a fair chance to try different subjects.
4. Once you have completed your application form, return it to Converge either by post, by email or by bringing it to one of our Converge 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 via email, text, or post to let you know which courses you have been allocated a place on. This is done on a course-by-course basis, in order of course start dates. We will aim to let you know at least one week prior to the course starting.
- Please note that, due to limited places, you may not be offered your first choice of course, but we will do our best to make sure you get a place on one of your first 2 choices. For this reason, you are expected to make a real commitment to attend your courses, and to let us know if there are any sessions you cannot attend.
- Where students join after the start of the course, one-to-one enrolment appointments can be arranged by contacting us.

## The Discovery Hub

### Support at Converge

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 8 staff 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

If you think you might benefit from some support to attend, please email **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** 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. We provide supported horticultural volunteering, craft and creative writing workshops and individual woodwork tuition. 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** for more information.



## York St John University Campus

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

### The Student Hub

Ahead of the 2025 to 2026 academic year, Holgate Student Information Centre has been remodelled into The Student Hub. This 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 building is home to a professional theatre, rehearsal spaces, recital rooms, editing suites and specialist music and media studios. The Creative Centre is also one of the most environmentally friendly buildings in York with its innovative design and sustainable construction.

### Fountains Learning Centre

Fountains Learning Centre is home to over 220,000 books and more than 92,500 journals, as well as printing resources and access to Windows PCs. The library also provides both independent and group study spaces. Enrolled Converge students can contact the Converge office to request a library card, which gives you borrowing rights in the library and access to the computers.

### The Quad

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

### Teaching spaces

York St John University is home to many professional, accessible and specialised teaching spaces, which Converge students have access to as part of their courses. Each room is equipped with a PC and projector screen.





# Volunteering opportunities

## University students

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

## Converge students

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

## Some of the benefits of volunteering for Converge are:

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

## There are 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 run 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, this will give you the opportunity to volunteer to lead a course and be considered for paid tutoring roles.

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

“ I started volunteering with Converge in Spring 2024, supporting the Art: Drawing on Life course. The next term, I carried on with this as well as helping to develop an exciting new course – the Art Collective. Gradually, I built up my facilitation skills and am now a paid tutor with Converge. Working with Converge has allowed me to develop my teaching skills and has been an excellent stepping stone in my career trajectory. ”

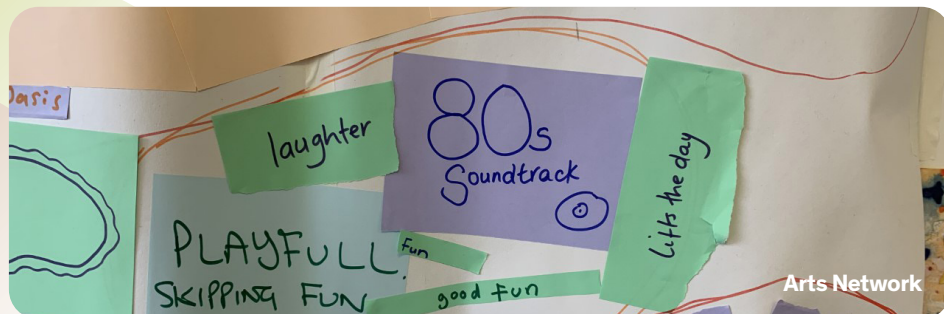
**Amelia | Fine Art MFA student at York St John University, and Converge volunteer**



“ I began Converge in 2017 with an acting course, Introduction to Theatre, and performed for the first time. I followed the different theatre courses each term until I reached Out of Character in 2019. We performed at York Theatre Royal and it was so exciting – I just love being on the stage. I had helped out on some theatre courses and became a volunteer in 2023. It's wonderful to be part of a journey, watching the new students come in, they mostly are nervous and I just want to give them a big squish and let them know they'll be okay. You can see the nerves go bit by bit, week by week, and once the group starts to bond with each other it gets really interesting. This is why I love Converge and being a part of the process myself – we have a safe environment where people understand each other most of the time. We're all different but none of this gets in the way of making friends and forming real bonds. ”

**Heather | Converge student and volunteer**





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

We welcome new members who are curious about what we do, and no previous experience of research is needed to join. We deliver an engaging university level 3 accredited course in Research Methods each autumn, which offers a comprehensive introduction to the subject. This means you will get credits towards a foundation degree. We also offer on-going training and explore areas of specific interest to members. You are welcome to join CERT without completing the Research Methods course.

### What we offer

CERT produces bespoke evaluations of mental health services or community projects. We specialise in using inventive and creative approaches to support people who find it hard to express themselves to participate. We

use a variety of research methods including interviews and questionnaires, but we prefer to use more creative approaches such as visual art, creative writing and poetry.

### What makes us different

CERT stands out from other research teams across the UK because the insight we have from our own experience of mental health challenges informs our work. This allows us to:

- Provide better support to people who find it difficult to express themselves
- Involve people with lived experience of mental health challenges in the research and evaluation process
- Produce meaningful and relevant recommendations for service improvement and future research activities
- Create social change and empower marginalised groups

To find out more, email: [cert@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:cert@yorks.ac.uk) or [r.lambley@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:r.lambley@yorks.ac.uk)

### 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.

### Summer School

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

### Christmas Sharing and Summer Festival

Twice a year, at the end of each term, we hold an event to celebrate the wonderful achievements of our Converge students. Our Christmas Sharing and Summer Festival are afternoons of performances and presentations by Converge students, staff, and university volunteers, showcasing the amazing work and projects our community has worked on during the year. We also host an exhibition put together by the tutors of our 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.



## 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 persons' skills is what binds us together. We always work collaboratively and with ambition.

We devise and write a range of projects both in York and nationally. Some of our work, but not all of it, is about mental health. Over time, we've created very personal pieces specifically for audiences interested in mental illness, as well as devising site-specific durational performances and performing scripted works and audio stories.

Collaboration is really important to us, and we have recently worked with York Theatre Royal, 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 Associate Director Jane Allanach and supported by Assistant Director Hannah Munro. 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)

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



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 and song-writing tuition and performance opportunities such as open-mic nights. Through our record label, Emerging Voices Records, students can 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.

To find out more please contact:

**E: [admin@emergingvoicescharity.co.uk](mailto:admin@emergingvoicescharity.co.uk)**

**co.uk T: 07984 535629**

**W: [emergingvoicescharity.co.uk](http://emergingvoicescharity.co.uk)**



“ 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 love the choir - it's the best thing I've ever done! ”

**Harrogate Wellbeing Choir member**



Orb Community Arts (Orb) is a creative mental health charity based in Knaresborough. It has been running for the last 20 years supporting people from across the Harrogate and Rural district of North Yorkshire to access a wide range of high quality creative and wellbeing activities.

This includes regular weekly sessions in art, textiles, music, singing, theatre, puppetry, gardening, cooking and creative writing, alongside 1 to 1 wellbeing support to help people to progress into volunteering, educational and employment opportunities.

Orb believe in the intrinsic and universal power of creativity to empower people and improve wellbeing, to build inclusive and resilient communities and to build bridges and share learning between communities.

They work in partnership with a wide variety of creative, health and community settings, both indoors and out, face to face and online. Over the last few years, they have developed a range of local and regional partnerships with creative and cultural organisations such as:

- Pioneer Projects
- Chapel FM Arts Centre
- Chrysalis Arts
- Rural Arts
- Ripon Museums Trust
- Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
- Knaresborough Forest Park
- RHS Harlow Carr
- The Woodland Trust
- The National Trust

Working with these organisations they have developed bespoke projects exploring themes such as the environment, green spaces, recovery, gifting, communities, travel, and the home.

During the 2025 to 2026 academic year they will be working with Converge York on a year-long creative collaboration bringing people from York and Knaresborough together to explore the physical and virtual corridors that connect both communities: ancient footpaths, rail, road and communication networks, and green corridors for wildlife.

If you live in North Yorkshire you can access Orb's activities by getting a referral through your GP, NHS Community Mental Health Teams or North Yorkshire Council's Health and Adult Services.

For more information about how to get involved please contact:

**E: [admin@orb-arts.org](mailto:admin@orb-arts.org) | T: 01423 202028**



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 of the University.

“ I learned more about myself. I haven't felt so much kindness in a long time, it feels free, and it's just so nice to be here. ”

Joining Converge has helped me massively and has opened different avenues for future choices.

It's so good to keep going and feeling like you're working towards something.

I lost my voice 2 years ago, so this is very out of my comfort zone, and has inspired me to write as well. ”

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

**E: [converge@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:converge@northumbria.ac.uk)**

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



/convergeNU



@convergenu



Converge at Northumbria



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE

Since 2016 Converge has been growing connections with universities in other countries who are interested in our work and might wish to start something similar for their own local communities.

### Pacific University, Oregon, USA

Our international work began with a partnership with the Pacific University in Oregon, when we partnered with their Occupational Therapy doctoral course to offer the opportunity for an exchange visit to take place every summer to support the running of the Converge summer school. Visiting students were given the opportunity to explore the work of Converge, to meet with our team and to design and deliver their own summer school programme for the Converge students. Pacific University also involved their students in delivering a smaller version of Converge at the Oregon campus. This work took place every summer between 2016 and 2023. Since 2024 this work has transferred to Western Oregon University: Converge students now enjoy working with students from Western Oregon each summer.

### 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.

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.

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 with three courses: Studio Drawing, Songwriting and Storytelling, and Creativity through Acting. While a formal evaluation is currently being undertaken, here are a couple of comments shared by participants during the trimester:



“ 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.





## Converge Student Stories

I saw some amazing transformations in 8 weeks, maybe I didn't have the insight to see it in myself, but I saw it clearly in others. Confidence restored, ambition reignited, inspiration gained and given. Support for the time you are willing to share with YSJ. I wish I made it to more of my classes because they are precious gifts.

Andrew



When I was first introduced to Converge courses, I really didn't know what to expect. Indeed, if I'm truly honest, I was probably a bit sceptical as to how Converge could help me. I had been very ill and was still in the early stages of recovering and looking for activities I could do with others. So, I decided to 'give Converge a go' as I had nothing to lose. I chose my courses for the spring/summer Term and got a place on two of them.

Jane



## What our students say

“The tutor worked well to include everyone and make us feel valued as participants. He was clearly passionate about the subject.”

“We were asked to do our own research which was a great way to add to our own learning and presenting skills. The tutor was careful to include and encourage everyone in the discussions.”

“It was certainly an eye opener and a great learning experience.”

“The experience has made possible what was previously impossible - to write to a publishable standard. That achievement and the feeling of connection I've got from being part of the course has boosted and brightened my life.”

“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.”

“I have achieved so much at Converge. The help and support have been amazing. I've actually started writing and doing monologue - me, who never wrote anything and even struggled holding pen and pencils!”

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

“The experience has made possible what was previously impossible - to write to a publishable standard. That achievement and the feeling of connection I've got from being part of the course has boosted and brightened my life.”

“I really enjoyed the courses and gained a great deal of personal satisfaction as well as learning new skills.”

“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.”



# Converge

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