

## Episode 031: Learning and Teaching Conference 2023

Hello and welcome to episode three of the learning and teaching at Newcastle University podcast.

My name is Holly Wheeler and I'll be your guest host this week.

For this month's episode, we will be focussing on the 2023 Learning and Teaching Conference each year learning and teaching conference as a theme.

And 2023 this is student centred education.

Students are key partners in the co-creation of their education,

and their voice plays a vital role in developing and shaping the future of learning and student experience at Newcastle University.

Over the next 30 minutes or so, we'll let you know what the learning and teaching conference is explore student centred

education means and let you know how you can get involved with the conference.

In this first part of the podcast, we hear from Professor Tom Ward.

Tom Ward is Pro Vice Chancellor for Education at Newcastle University.

Tom will be taking us through what the learning and teaching conference is and this year's theme.

So firstly, we asked Tom, What is the Learning and Teaching Conference?

Hi Holly. It's our annual event where we exchange ideas and innovations in education.

We'll be talking about some of the excellent things going on in education at Newcastle and there'll be opportunities for discussions,

panel events and so on. So what can attendees expect from the conference this year?

The chance to meet colleagues from outside their own unit who share an interest in education, as well as hearing things?

I hope some of the people listening to this will contribute things.

Do have a look at the conference website and see if you might want to offer something.

What does student centred education mean to you, and how would you like to see the future of it develop?

I think it's about how do we best fulfil the obligation to the students who put their trust in us for their chance at higher education.

It's multifaceted. It might be about how we use the student voice via mid module feedback to address things as

simple as the acoustics in a given room or a problem as complex as a given assessment.

Items purpose not being well understood. It might be about how we adapt year one of a programme to reflect the difficult experiences incoming students had due to COVID.

At its heart, it's about engaging students in their own educational journey while maintaining our role as subject experts in shaping the curriculum.

Why is the conference so important for learning and teaching at Newcastle University?

For many reasons. For one thing, I think the last few years have been pretty tough for our dedicated colleagues,

and this is an opportunity to showcase some of the fantastic work being done.

Another important reason is that we always benefit from sharing best practise.

When and where is the conference taking place? It's going to take place on the 30th of March in the Frederick Douglass Centre at Newcastle University.

There'll be a link for registering in the notes to this podcast. Thank you, Tom,

for providing us with a great overview of the learning and teaching conference and its

impact upon the future of all students and their education at Newcastle University.

Now we are going to catch up with Mack Marshall, education officer in the NUSU

Matt provides us with an idea of why the conference is so important students, how they can get involved and tips for how to present to a conference.

So Mack, why is it so important that students attend this year's conference?

Well, this year's conference is all centred around student centred education, and there's going to be the best conference for students to attend.

It's a really fantastic opportunity to engage in and look all the developments in

learning and teaching that are happening across university and most importantly,

kind of have your say on what contribute to the discussions talk to people.

Share your experiences of what you know is really great student centred education and what maybe you'd like to see improvements on.

And it's also a great opportunity this year to present to actually have the opportunity to stand at the front of

a big lecture theatre and speak to colleagues about learning and teaching and being there and asking questions.

You're not only shaping your academic experience,

but you're also shaping it for your peers and the people that are going to be here four years after you.

So it can't be a better time to attend. Can you talk a bit more about the subthemes and how you might like to see colleagues

and students respond to? There are to some really interesting subthemes themes this year,

and things like embedding the student voice into education be really interesting to see

discussions about the ways we can capture student voice more informally through students,

and then how we actually feed the student voice continually into redeveloping and improving our programmes and tailoring

student voice to specific cohorts would be really interesting to discuss in terms of both themes like students,

as partners and cocreators

in education, I think, could be really interesting to see how colleagues respond to examples of good practise regarding co-creation,

whether this is in curricula or assessment,

design and weighting of assessment design, and also how we start to create this culture of treating students as colleagues,

as key stakeholders in the developing development of their learning and teaching as well.

In terms of all other subthemes we've got supporting students in the digital world.

I think with so much of students learning online in previous years and going forward, students know best what their digital journey looks like.

And I think there'll be some fantastic discussions about how staff can support and new ideas that students have.

And another really interesting sort of thing that I'll finish on is putting students at the centre of this research intensive university.

And it's great to see examples of research led teaching,

but also research led assessment and really treating students as researchers across the university and

the ways in which we can develop our practise to really give our students autonomy as researchers.

I think those will be really interesting subthemes and really interesting ways. We'll see colleagues and students engage in those discussions.

Why should students submit a proposal for presentation? I think those students that are interested in student voice,

which have been engaged in academic representation structures, those interested in pedagogy, in higher education.

I think this is a fantastic opportunity to present to really key stakeholders at the university.

This isn't just a small, small fish.

These are really big fish that are going to be there, and it's a real opportunity to influence those that shape your education.

I also think it's a great experience for you personally to prepare a proposal to work on a submission,

to prepare a presentation and to present a well respected conference.

And it's also a really great opportunity for just those that maybe not interested specifically in student voice or pedagogy or higher education,

but ask for those that are just interested in their experience in their time in Newcastle and to reflect on what we've really enjoyed.

And it's the most opportunity to reflect and give that back and share that good

practise and really improve that experience for others going forward further.

What key tips do you have for students who want to submit a proposal but don't know what to stop?

I'd say if you thought about it, then you should get involved.

And the first probably step is to speak to us or speak to some of the people behind the learning and teaching conference.

This isn't something that you have to do all alone and isolated in the dark. We're very much here to support you in preparing your proposal.

This might be the first time you've done it. It might be a bit different to something that you've done before.

So it's nothing that you're going to be massively assessed on or to be stressed about what very topics that might help you through that.

No idea is silly. No question is selling proposal would be silly.

And we're really here to support you and help you create a really productive proposal.

And what's also a good idea is to maybe if you want to collaborate with staff or fellow students,

if you reach out to some academics or even some people that might be involved in the conference, this isn't something that you have to do alone.

This is something you could kind of work collaboratively and co-create with fellow members of staff and students.

Thank you, Mack, for digging deeper into the subthemes of the conference and providing students with insight into the conference itself.

In this final section, we talked to Dr. Amina Razak from Inclusive Newcastle Knowledge Centre and Claire Rodgerson

from Citizens UK about their experience of presenting at last year's conference,

what their proposal was and advice for those presenting. Firstly, I mean, you and Claire talk about their proposal for last year's conference.

So last year, yeah, we submitted a proposal to to kind of talk about and discuss a pilot project that we've been doing in the School of Engineering,

the pilot project aims to reduce the degree awarding gap for black homestudents at Newcastle University.

So there is a persistent and unexplained gap between the proportion of black and

white home undergrad students who are awarded the first or upper second class degree.

So what we did at the conference is we discussed the methodology we had used in co-creating the research with students.

We also talked about practical considerations of undertaking this kind of work, as it's so it's really complex.

It requires a lot of forethought planning, and you need ample time to be able to build the trust and the relationships with the students.

It's talking about those practicalities to ensure that that we create a space that students engaged with,

and they fact that their voice was being enabled and that the work partners in the process.

So that's what we talked about. We also talked about the design of the projects as being a participate active research approach,

working with students and and what we did as part of that is we recruited and

advertised and invited engineering students to come on board a student advisory

group to work with us as researchers to guide and co-create and oversee the

research and help us identify actions we can take to narrow the degree awarding up.

The advisory board,

very much worked with us having so much weight with us to kind of enable the voices and experiences of black home students in engineering.

And we also talked about how we inducted the students into their roles and part of the induction included in training community organising methods.

We decided to incorporate community organising principles and methods as a very much complements participatory action research.

But Claire is the expert in that, so I'm going to hand over to Claire to tell you about that.

Well, expert is a subjective term, but my role is a bit odd.

So Amina described us as researcher is just there. I'm not a researcher.

Amina, and I and a team of the researchers and I'm a supporter, I guess, in this work as the universe is embedded community organiser.

So I work for Charity Citizens UK, as you mentioned,

and the local chapter of that is Tyne and Wear citizens that the university is a strategic partner in doing social justice work around the region,

but that the partnership also involves may be an embedded here at the end of the week,

supporting the university to use community, organising support the life in the work and the culture of the institution.

So Amina and I knew each other at a minimum recently been on our community organising training,

which proposes that in order to be more effective, a change for social justice, we need to support and develop leaders from within civil society.

Institutions may have just been on that train and thought that the principles and the methods that

we adopt within organising will be useful for the project to support the Student Advisory Group.

So have taught some of the principals in their induction, and we've come back at a later date after the conference to do it.

A bit more work with them on that as well. Yeah, lovely.

Thank you. One of the subthemes they share is students as partners and co-creators in their education.

How would you like to see proposals respond to this thing?

I am quite excited to see that subtheme because given the way that we would be doing away with students,

so we think of submitting a proposal ourselves.

So I think it'd be really useful for the university to hear about the work that we've been doing at the student

and enabling opportunity for students to reflect on the process that's working with with us as researcher,

as Newcastle knowledge centre and the process of collaborating on that work.

And it's kind of building those relationships with students.



I undertake a regular one to ones with students individually and in those conversations that have

reflected on the work and the value of it and the benefit of it personally to themselves as well,

and recognising how we can enact change when we work together.

Something could be beneficial for colleagues to hear on students as well to hear about

how working together we can organise and try and think about how we can make a change.

Yeah, it's also really useful for the students, as well as an opportunity to kind of present as well,

and if they haven't presented before a conference to pick a kind of pick up those skills. Yeah.

For me, one of the big learnings I've taken away from this work with Amina and the team is really exploring what co-creation means.

So particularly through the lens of community organising, we we kind of assert in organising that in order to get change,

you have to have power and you need to understand power and order so that your

recommendations and all that go to the right place and you can effectively communicate them.

But that having to have power means having as a researcher who's interested in

co-create and means letting go of some of yours and developing that others.

So in this case, the Student Advisory Board. And so I'm interested in and that really.

How is that experience by both parties? And I think you've always drawn that out of the the work that we've done together and letting that go and

seeing how amazing it is when the students become more comfortable through all that great work that managers

spend time in want ones as well as the group session and seeing the students through that process become more

confident to challenge what is said and be open to receive that challenge in order that the piece is really,

truly co-created. So you know what is co-creation really mean to people and how is experienced by both parties, both in power and trust and process?

Really interesting to see what happens there. Yeah, I think that's really important, and I agree.

I think students. I think it's good to look at how we can empower students more to feel like

they they have a voice and they can be assertive and say that you know what,

how they think and feel is important. So their education. Can you share with us your experiences presenting at last year's conference?

Yeah. For me, present at last year's conference, I was relatively, relatively new to the university at the time,

and join in the pandemic didn't really know anyone kind of beyond our kind of academic team and a few other colleagues.

So thought I found it really useful as a place can network with with other colleagues as

well and learn about other activities in research that's going on in the university.

But it was also a really useful opportunity to kind of test the format of what of our kind of proposal and what we were

presented at the conference because we went on to present to other conferences as well after the Learning and Teaching Conference.

So went on to present our work at Beyrer and the Rupee and also a conference at Warwick as well.

So it was really useful sites, kind of a first time to kind of test our methodology.

See what the reaction is to that. And then again, so I find that useful.

Yeah. And for me, as a non academic, being able to dip my toe

in the area of academic conferences was really useful,

particularly because we then went on that journey and then it can be really intimidating

just here that we're going to present in front of a group of our professors.

And you know that their various hierarchies more than the university, if you're not from the university,

but on all of your student, maybe or, you know, early career research or whoever, they can just be intimidating, right?

And so having that space in Newcastle, where I was working with someone who they know like and respect and would be prepared well together,

and we'll do it in the space where I could kind of see some friendly faces in the room as well

was really useful and made the rest of the stuff that we did last year less intimidating,

perhaps. Yeah. What guidance would you give to those who may not have presented at a conference before, but would like to the year?

And yeah, kind of practical advice I'd give is if you're thinking of submitting,

look at the themes and see how your work fits within those themes and being really concise about what you want to present,

make sure you, you get the word count. It's like really rocky advice.

But yes, be aware of the word counts resubmitting and think of a catchy title as well,

and something that is going to really engage the audience and engage people who would review abstracts as well.

And also, when you think about presenting the conference, especially especially if you haven't done it before.

Obviously, that's going to be anxiety's and you get me and I get stressed about kind of presenting.

So perhaps the advice kind of practise. Make sure you do it to time, perhaps a few times.

Have you noticed hand? And yeah, no, it's time to kind of be.

Can we quite comfort in knowing that the there just in case you need them? But yeah,

I would say practise as well just to help alleviate any anxieties you may have and

also kind of think about any potential questions that people might ask about.

Your research kind of pre-empt a couple of questions. But if you ask me this, I would respond like this sometimes useful, I think as well.

And I, you know, I hadn't prepared for when you might not know the answer.

You know, it's OK to not know the answer. And actually, I've seen a lot of professional people,

academics throw the question back to the audience when you know, people in the audience have thoughts as well.

If you don't know the answer, maybe someone else has thoughts that I want to share that isn't a cop out, I don't think.

But you know, it's a discussion, isn't it the end bit? And I think going into it without attitude of, you know, we understand what we're doing.

We've prepared well as Amina and we're just going to share what we know rather than are going

to go in there and be caught out is probably a better headspace to try and get yourself into.

And yet it was useful being able to look out at some of Amina's colleagues from the from the Inc team just to a sense check,

like I was still got the audience's attention. Crystal, for example, was sitting right in front of us.

That was really useful, so maybe plant a friendly face just to catch their eye every now and then.

I know you're doing all right. Lots of good advice, actually. I think I might use that myself.

Lovely. Well, thank you to

Amina and Claire for sharing their experiences of last year's conference and the value of co-creation for the student education.

Thank you. Thanks for having us. Thank you.

Thank you to Amina and Claire for sharing their experiences of last year's Conference on the Value of the Co-Creation of Student Education.

Thank you to Tom, Mack, Amina, and Claire for your time and input into this episode.

Thank you for listening, and we hope you enjoyed this episode.

The 2020 three Learning and Teaching Conference will take place on the 30th of March and the Frederick Douglass Centre at Newcastle University.

If you'd like to learn more about the conference, submit a proposal or attend.

Please check out the show notes for further details. Remember to download all past episodes, tell your friends about the podcast like and subscribe.

Thank you and goodbye.