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 FREDERICK DOUGLASS CENTRE,
NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

Celebrating Student Research at BCUR 2025: Reflections from the Host Institution, Newcastle University

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Introduction

In April 2025, Newcastle University hosted the British Conference of Undergraduate Research 2025 (BCUR). We thought ourselves very privileged to be hosting the largest conference in the UK, exclusively dedicated to showcasing undergraduate research. We have been committed to fostering undergraduate research for a long time - Newcastle has been sponsoring students to attend BCUR since 2014 - but this year it was finally our turn to host. We welcomed over 400 students and lecturers from all over the UK and beyond to celebrate undergraduate research. These are what we thought were the highlights of the event for the participants.

1. Sharing research

The chance to speak in front of a large crowd and share research ideas is a huge benefit for students. It gives them a taste of research presentation, should they wish to continue their journey in academia. However, presenting in front of an audience is something that most graduates will have to do as part of their careers, so it's an excellent transferable skill regardless. In some academic subjects, research is presented more often as posters than in oral talks, so the poster viewing section of the conference also allowed students to experience this format. Finally, the artistic

installations (we were thrilled to have them!) allowed participants to see that you don't have to write talks or poster summaries to share innovative research.



Figure 1: Penny Riley-Smith (U. Sunderland) shows her installation 'Techniques for using cast glass to represent aspects of water pollution' to BCUR 25 attendees.

2. Making connections

For many, networking is not a welcome activity. With that in mind, BCUR offered many ways to mingle and make connections in a relaxed way, from the refreshment breaks to the poster exhibition spaces, drinks receptions and conference dinners. We were delighted to be able to host our dinner at St James's Park, and even more pleased to be able to see the pitch, an opportunity that many conference delegates will not forget. Finally, we also built connections into the conference's workshop programme, with a dedicated session on 'Building Connections and networking in research and beyond' by Beth Lawry from NU's Faculty of Medical Sciences.



Figure 2: BCUR 25 poster exhibition, Urban Sciences Building

3. Making learning the ropes

An undergraduate research project may be the beginning of one's research career, so getting a taste of this environment is invaluable. Delegates had the opportunity to attend sessions on 'Writing for publication with *Reinvention: an International Journal of Undergraduate Research*' with Fiona O'Brien, Student Research Support Officer (Journals), from the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning at the University of Warwick, and 'Shaping your future after Graduation' with Jos Harrison, Careers Consultant from the Careers Service at Newcastle University.

4. Finding support

Finding a supportive community, as well as learning to support yourself, is vital for anyone's research journey. At BCUR, Newcastle University academics offered sessions on 'The struggles, surprises and successes of research' and 'Using Reflective Practice to Become an Effective Researcher'.

The BCUR organisers were very grateful for the support of Professor Ruth Valentine, Newcastle's Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education (basically the top person in the University dealing with how we educate students). Ruth also gave the opening keynote of the event. Afterwards, she commented: <https://doi.org/10.31273/reinvention.v18iS1.1972>, ISSN 1755-7429, c 2025, contact reinventionjournal@warwick.ac.uk. Published by the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning, University of Warwick. This is an open access article under the CC-BY licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

"It was my absolute pleasure to welcome so many UG students from diverse disciplines to Newcastle University BCUR 2025. This is a unique opportunity for UG students to take part in a multidisciplinary conference and to meet peers from across the world and to showcase their research. I was proud to be able to support such an event, welcoming attendees to our city and campus."

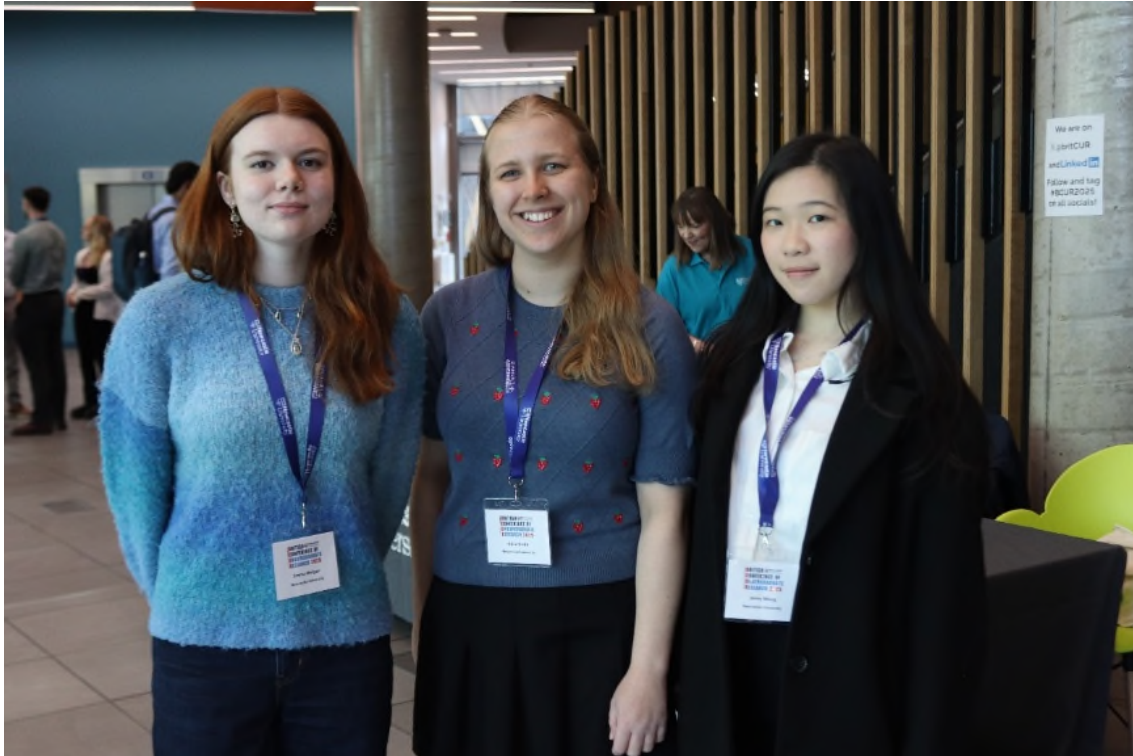


Figure 3: Newcastle students Emma Morgan, Alice Groth and Jenny Wong take a break at BCUR 25

Damien Hall was a lead member of the Newcastle University organising committee. He reflected:

"It was a pleasure to host the conference in Newcastle University this year. I really valued the opportunity to demonstrate to our undergraduate students what it means to be a research-intensive university. Research can so often be seen as something to do after your first degree, but BCUR demonstrates, year after year, that it isn't just that! Hosting BCUR at Newcastle University demonstrates our commitment to fostering a positive research culture throughout the whole student journey, not just for those who develop this interest at postgraduate level.

I also thoroughly enjoyed hearing about the hard work that our students, and all the participants have put into their research, it was fascinating to learn about their research journeys so far".

All in all, we're delighted to have hosted this fantastic conference, and we hope you find the abstracts interesting, and the breadth of subjects inspiring! Roll on BCUR 2026 at the University of Glasgow.

Dr Damien Hall, Helen Foley
Newcastle University



Figure 4: NU PVC-Education Ruth Valentine opens BCUR 25

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