

British Conference of Undergraduate Research 2026: a students' reflection

BCUR 2026: Growing Through Connection

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Wesley Chew

It is a great honour to have served on the BCUR 2026 Student Advisory Board, particularly as this was the first time it was hosted at the University of Glasgow. Through weeks of preparation with fellow board members and organising professors, every decision was shaped by one shared hope: that every student would leave with a stronger sense of academic belonging and confidence.

During the conference, seeing students eagerly and spontaneously using the passport I proposed and designed, approaching peers from different disciplines to exchange ideas and explore questions together, I realised that a creative and thoughtful design can encourage students to interact and bring people closer together.

When I stood at the closing ceremony to speak on behalf of the Board, looking out at the students, full of curiosity and passion, I felt certain: research is not merely what we produce. It is who we become in the process of thinking and exchanging ideas with others.

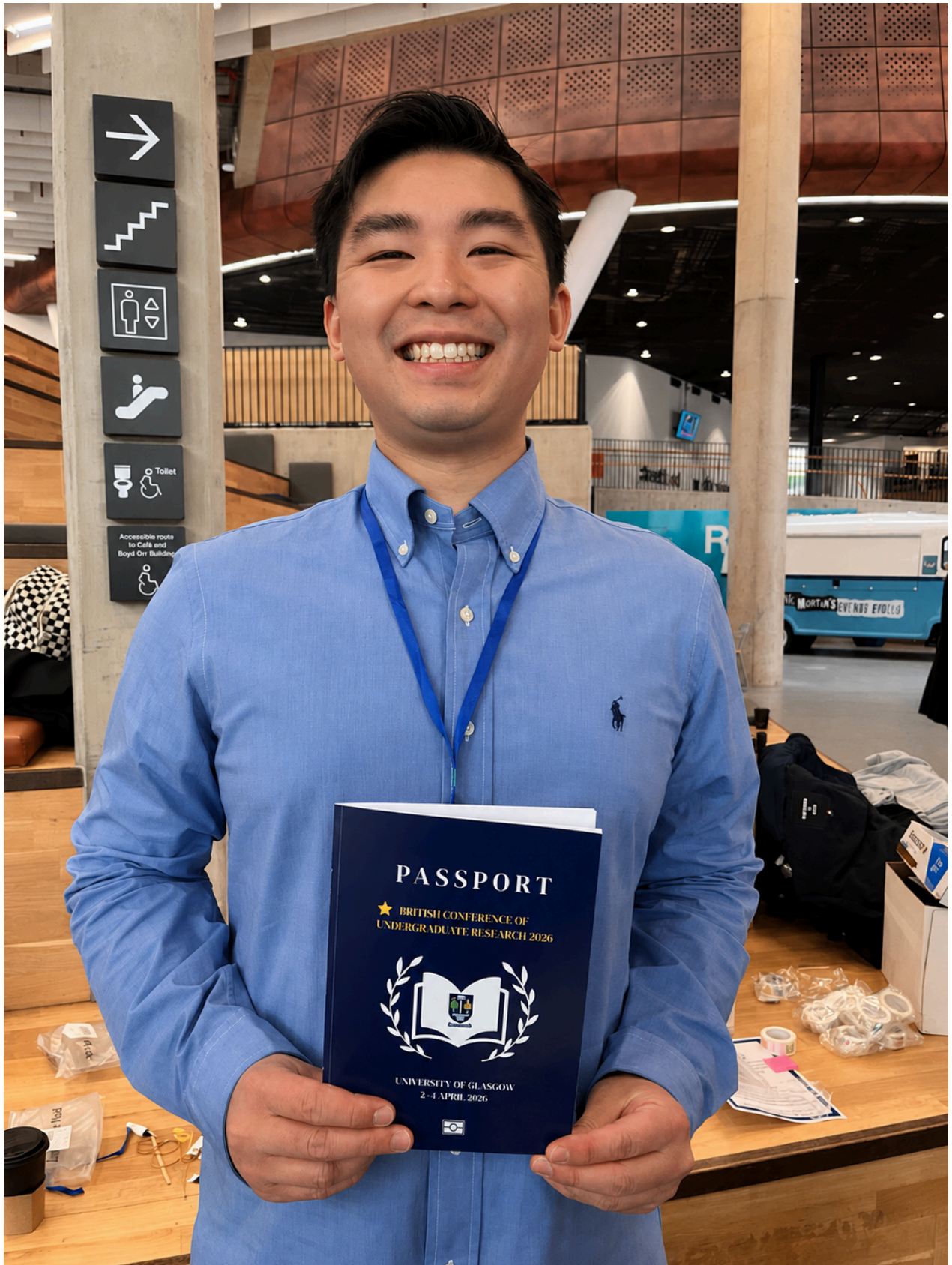


Image: Wesley Chow, BCUR 2026

Aya Aalhasan

Hello, I am Aya Aalhasan and this is my first time volunteering as a chair for an undergraduate conference. It was a pleasure to be a part of the staff that sat through many amazing and diverse undergraduate research. Seeing the students' confident and enthusiastic presentations was truly inspiring, making me eager to travel and present my research with similar passion. The students' work demonstrated that lively narratives and genuine enthusiasm are essential for effectively communicating scientific and academic material.

Seeing everyone ask questions and try to understand how each other's research could contribute to one another was so refreshing, and the presenters handled it with so much grace. It taught me that research can be presented in an enjoyable manner, increasing the audience's engagement and desire to learn more.

Without question, this experience has raised the bar for my professional aspirations in disseminating research. It is a privilege to witness the students' enthusiasm for learning and broadening their understanding beyond their individual research.



Image: Session at BCUR 2026

Angelina Kancheva

Hello, Angelina here, a final-year PhD student post-thesis submission and pre-viva! This was my first time chairing at a scientific conference and I thought the experience was lovely. First of all, I should point out that the conference was very well organised - this is something that many participants and presenters would say, and it made for an overall very positive experience of BCUR2026. I was able to chair several sessions and took turns either doing tech or most of the talking - I'd discuss beforehand with my chairing partner in each session, and that worked out pretty well.

I really enjoyed one of the sessions, which featured mixed topics spanning different disciplines, after which one of the presenters, myself and a few more attendees stayed in the session room and chatted about AI (one of the themes of the session), its impact on work, entrepreneurship, student learning, life. It was lovely to continue the discussion after the session was over, and just get carried away in a pleasant stimulating conversation. This is what conferences should be about: steering conversation, facilitating networking (or in plain human language, meeting other human beings), sharing professional and sometimes personal insights. It was also very lovely to catch myself getting very impressed by some of the presentations and students doing them: I had a brief exchange with one particular student and told them that they seemed like someone who'd love to do a PhD and might do very well. The student really appreciated that and said that it meant a lot. This made me think that we shouldn't shy away from giving praise when we feel praise is appropriate, it might as well make someone's day! Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my time as a chair and would love to do it again in the future!

Rob Sinnerton

Serving as a session chair at the British Conference for Undergraduate Research was a genuinely rewarding experience. It was a privilege to help create a space where undergraduate researchers could share work with clarity and confidence, and to play a small part in ensuring their presentations were heard and engaged with meaningfully. Each session brought a striking diversity of ideas, from the complexities of Shenzhen and Hong Kong real estate markets to UK hip hop and rap as a form of protest,

critiques of economic greenwashing, and reflections on the experiences of male speech and language therapists.

What stood out most was the energy and seriousness with which students approached their subjects, and the way discussion naturally expanded across disciplines. Being part of that environment, facilitating conversation and listening closely throughout, was deeply rewarding in its own right and highlighted the value of undergraduate research communities as a whole today.

Nida Naeem

Hi, I am Nida Naeem. I am a second-year PGR student and class rep for Politics and International Studies. Reflecting on BCUR 26, I was most struck by the remarkable confidence and immersion shown by the young researchers. As a mid-career researcher, chairing this session provided an unexpected moment of personal growth. Stepping into the role of facilitator, I realised my evolved capacity to hold space for others. Navigating the Q&A and ensuring the speakers felt supported and validated tested my ability to think on my feet and harmonise different perspectives. I found that my confidence in guiding a room has grown significantly, allowing me to focus on easing their nerves and drawing out their best insights.

My role as chair also afforded me a brilliant vantage point for my own learning. I was genuinely taken aback by the sheer diversity of topics presented from Economics and Medicine to Biochemistry and, to my surprise, Psychology, which proved to be quite a learning experience. The students displayed enormous confidence in representing their research internationally. The sharp, articulate way they handled the Q&A made it clear that they were not merely presenting surface-level findings; they were deeply immersed in their project work. Consequently, the room was buzzing, and the session was full of genuine excitement for each upcoming paper.

Beyond the papers themselves, I witnessed a generation developing qualities, problem-solving, resilience, and intellectual rigour that are deeply embedded at every stage. Seeing these graduates trusted and prepared at such a high level serves as a benchmark for their future careers. I witnessed that this wasn't just a presentation of work but a

bridge between generations - a reminder of the British Council's role as a torchbearer for global academia, and it reinforced my own commitment to academic mentorship.



Image: Session at BCUR 2026

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