



Conference Theme

Better Together: Rethinking Practice Through Partnership

Better Together invites educators, artists, practitioners, and researchers from across schools, higher education, and the performing arts to come together in a shared exploration of collaboration as a catalyst for change in teaching, learning, artistic practice and well-being.

This year's theme recognises that the most powerful learning environments and the most impactful artistic practices, emerge when we work in partnership. Whether between students and teachers, artists and participants, schools and communities, or across disciplines and sectors, collaboration offers us ways to rethink how we teach, assess, support and create. It also offers space to prioritise well-being, inclusion and innovation in increasingly complex educational, artistic and cultural landscapes.

This cross-sector conference will explore:

- Co-created approaches to teaching, learning and assessment that centre voice, equity and engagement
- How artistic and creative practices enable shared inquiry, critical reflection and transformation
- Structures of support and belonging that promote the well-being of learners and educators alike
- Case studies of partnership across schools, universities, arts organisations and communities
- The value of listening, shared authorship, and collective leadership in responding to sector challenges

Better Together is a call to celebrate the knowledge that emerges in relationship with each other, with our students, and with our wider communities. It is a space to imagine new futures where collaboration is not just a method, but a mindset.

7th January 2026 (onsite) (HE conference)

Venue: **Northern School of Contemporary Dance**

Deadline for submissions: **12 noon, Friday 14th November 2025.**

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Structure

The conference will run a full day with drinks, food and performance on the evening of Wednesday 7th January. This will be joined up with a separate event on Thursday 8th focusing on the Arts and Health. We will aim to create a schedule where delegates can attend the full conference or choose the one day that resonates with their work, practice or experiences the most.

Purpose of the conference

This conference seeks to explore the transformative power of collaboration within the arts and its profound impact on community engagement, cultural expression, and educational practices. At a time when social cohesion, cultural sustainability, and community regeneration are at the forefront of global discourse, the role of collaborative arts practices in nurturing these values has never been more critical. By examining how artistic and creative practices serve as vehicles for shared inquiry and collective agency, we aim to shed light on how they can function as key components in building resilient and inclusive societies.

Grounded in the work of prominent scholars such as Bourriaud (2002) on relational aesthetics and Hennessy (2019) on collaborative pedagogy, we propose a framework that sees collaboration not just as a method, but as a way of being. The growing recognition of "arts citizenship" (Rech, 2019; Schupp, 2019) emphasizes the responsibility of artists, educators, and citizens in co-creating spaces where culture, identity, and participation intersect. Through the lens of this perspective, the conference explores the evolving relationship between the arts, citizenship, and community-building, encouraging an inclusive approach to creativity and collective action.

We invite contributors to reflect on the role of the arts, whether through performance, visual arts, or participatory practices, as a tool for fostering connections across diverse groups and disciplines. By situating the arts as a central agent in shaping social and civic realities, we aim to consider how these practices can influence the development of citizenship in both personal and collective terms. Our goal is to unpack how collaboration across educational, artistic, and community spaces creates new pathways for artistic expression, civic engagement, and cultural understanding.

Throughout the conference, we seek to:

- Investigate the power of collaborative art-making practices in fostering social engagement, inclusivity, and cultural identity.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange between educators, artists, and researchers to stimulate interdisciplinary dialogue on best practices for arts-based collaboration.
- Examine case studies and shared experiences of collaboration across educational settings, arts organisations, and community groups, with a focus on outcomes for both the individual and society.
- Identify and explore the principles of shared authorship, collective leadership, and mutual respect as they relate to partnership models within arts and education.

This year's theme invites all participants to engage in a collective exploration of how partnerships between schools, universities, arts organisations, and local communities can lead to innovative solutions for education and the arts. We believe that collaboration is the catalyst for advancing new methodologies in teaching, learning, and artistic practice, ultimately enhancing well-being, inclusion, and sustainable cultural development.

We are inspired by recent studies that highlight the power of co-created learning environments to foster belonging and transformation (Rancière, 2009; Dewey, 1938). By prioritizing dialogue and shared expertise, this conference aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of the arts in nurturing a sense of belonging, responsibility, and agency in an increasingly interconnected

world.

In essence, *Better Together* is a call to action to envision new futures where collaboration is a fundamental mindset that shapes the way we create, teach, learn, and live together.

Call for contribution proposals

Proposals are sought against any of the conference themes, or through suggestion of your own theme, ignited from what is proposed.

We welcome proposals from individuals or teams from an institution or across multiple institutions as well as from students, student unions or other student bodies/groups. We particularly welcome submissions from practitioners working in and outside of Education. We also encourage policy makers, regulators, funding bodies and local authorities to submit.

Our aim is that proposals represent the breadth of our artistic and educational community.

Suggested themes for the conference

There are a number of themes that we would like to explore. This list is by no means exhaustive, and we hope that proposals will enable many more to present themselves. We hope that the questions inspire and motivate your own thoughts, responses and contributions.

1. Co-Creating Citizenship: The Role of the Arts in Social Change

- Exploring how arts-based practices can nurture a sense of collective responsibility and active citizenship.
- Investigating the potential of art as a tool for fostering political engagement, activism, and societal transformation.

2. Interdisciplinary Practices: Bridging the Gap Between Arts, Education, and Community

- Examining the synergies that arise when arts practices intersect with disciplines like education, social science, and cultural studies.
- Focusing on collaborative models between artists, educators, and community leaders to build sustainable cultural ecosystems.

3. Art as a Tool for Social Cohesion and Well-Being

- Exploring the therapeutic and community-building potential of participatory art practices.
- Understanding how art-making fosters inclusion, well-being, and mental health in diverse communities.

4. The Power of Collaborative Pedagogy: Rethinking Arts Education

- Investigating how arts education can move beyond traditional classroom boundaries to become a shared, collaborative experience.
- Case studies of co-created educational environments that prioritize equity, voice, and engagement.

5. Shared Authorship and Collective Leadership in Artistic Practices

- Delving into the concept of shared authorship and its implications for artistic creation and leadership.
- Examining how collective decision-making processes impact the artistic and cultural products that emerge from collaboration.

6. Community Engagement Through the Arts: Models of Partnership Across Sectors

- Case studies and best practices of successful partnerships between artists, schools, universities, arts organisations, and local communities.

- Understanding the structural, logistical, and ethical considerations of cross-sector collaborations in arts projects.

7. Artistic Practices in Public Spaces: Reimagining the Role of the Artist in Society

- Investigating how public art, performance, and cultural interventions can reshape public spaces and communities.
- Exploring the role of the artist as both creator and community organiser within public art projects.

8. Inclusivity and Accessibility in Collaborative Art Making

- Examining how collaboration can ensure inclusivity across diverse groups, including marginalized communities, people with disabilities, and underrepresented artists.
- Reflecting on how arts practices can overcome barriers to participation and ensure accessibility for all.

9. New Collaborative Methodologies: Rethinking Artistic Practice and Process

- Investigating new methodologies for collaboration in arts practices, focusing on non-hierarchical structures and community-driven processes.
- Exploring digital and hybrid collaboration models that are reshaping artistic production in a post-pandemic world.

10. Well-Being, Resilience, and Recovery Through the Arts

- Exploring how artistic collaboration can promote personal and collective resilience, particularly in post-crisis or post-trauma contexts.
- Focusing on the role of arts in healing, recovery, and building emotional and social resilience in individuals and communities.

11. The Ethics of Collaboration: Navigating Power Dynamics and Conflict

- Delving into the ethical challenges of collaboration, such as power imbalances, cultural appropriation, and conflict resolution.
- Discussing frameworks for ensuring ethical collaboration in arts practices and educational settings.

12. Art and Technology: New Frontiers in Collaborative Practice

- Exploring how emerging technologies (e.g., VR, AR, digital media) are facilitating new forms of collaboration in art-making and education.
- Reflecting on how technology can bridge geographical and cultural gaps to enable global collaborations.

13. Celebrating Diversity: Intersectionality and Representation in Collaborative Arts

- Investigating how collaboration in the arts can celebrate diversity, address issues of representation, and foster intersectional dialogue.
- Exploring how collaborations can create more inclusive, multifaceted artistic expressions that reflect a diversity of voices and experiences.

14. Sustainability and Cultural Regeneration Through Collaborative Arts

- Focusing on the role of the arts in fostering sustainable cultural practices and community regeneration.
- Examining how art and collaboration can contribute to environmental and social sustainability.

15. Global and Local Perspectives: Collaborative Practices Across Cultures

- Comparing and contrasting collaborative art-making practices across different cultures and

global contexts.

- Discussing the challenges and opportunities that arise when global and local artistic collaborations intersect.

Session types:

1. Interactive workshops sessions (60 mins max)

These will engage peers in activities and discussions in various formats. We will be looking for a range of inventive modes of delivery to engage participants in the most useful way to share, receive and respond to practice and dialogue. You should allow 5- 10 mins for formal or informal questions and answers where possible or make space for this in the more relaxed coffee and lunch breaks and networking sessions.

2. Lecture demonstration (60 mins including time for questions)

These will engage peers in observation and discussions around the themes. Like 1. We will be looking for a range of inventive modes of delivery to engage participants in the most useful way to share, receive and respond to practice and dialogue. You should allow 10 mins for formal questions and answers

3. Shorter provocation (max 10 minutes to be included as part of a roundtable discussion)

Proposals in these categories will be prepared to move from a structured style to an open style panel. Your proposal should identify the theme and the key points you wish to share in order that the short listers can best find a panel which will best suit your input.

4. Oral presentation (15-20 minutes + 10 minutes for questions)

Oral presentations allow the presenter to give summary and insight into a piece of practice or action-research or a project. Presentations may be completed or hitting a milestone of progress.

Presentations which are early on and presenting more of a pilot research project but need feedback should keep to the 15 mins option and continue dialogue outside of the presentation.

Please note that the facilitator will support presenters keeping to their agreed timeslot. A central theme will group 2 presentations in an allocated slot

5. Poster presentation (A1 or A0 size)

Posters offer an exciting and alternative dimension in their approach to presenting topics for discussion and research. We are looking for eye-catching, stimulating posters (which could include graphics, drawings, text, pictures and imagery). All posters will be available throughout the two days on display, with two allocated slots where poster presenters can be available for conference delegates to ask questions and talk to authors. For this reason we do not accept poster entries from non-delegates.

Posters should be professionally printed and sent or brought to NSCD ahead of the conference for display. We aim to be displaying the posters on Tuesday 6th **January**. Only the following orientation and sizes can be accepted:

- Landscape – A1.
- Portrait – either A1 or A0.
- We cannot accept posters smaller than A1 in size.

6. Low tech Performance (10-20 minutes with minimal lighting)

The art form says it all. We would welcome short performance pieces which appropriately align themselves to the themes and topics of the conference. If selected, our technical team will be in touch to discuss the minimum requirements needed for the piece to be seen. We would prefer that you are available on the afternoon of Tuesday 6th January to tech your work. Please note the max

10-20 minutes duration is fixed and we request that candidates ensure they have the running time precise. However, if you have much shorter work, we may be able to accommodate this during the programme.

7. Short film on a loop

A short film on a loop offers a dynamic, immersive experience that continuously engages viewers, fostering ongoing reflection on the themes of collaboration, community, and the power of artistic expression.

8. Roundtable discussion (max 5 people) 30 mins plus time for questions

A focused, interactive conversation between up to five participants exploring the theme from multiple perspectives in a 30-minute format.

9. Roundtable discussion 60 minutes

A collaborative, interactive forum bringing together diverse perspectives for an in-depth, 60-minute discussion on the chosen theme.

10. Interactive research symposium session (30 mins or 60 minutes) enabling presenter to gather data

An interactive symposium session designed to actively engage participants while collecting research data in real time.

Deadline for proposal submissions is **12 noon, Friday 14th November 2025.**

Submit your proposal [here](#)

Important dates

Monday 8th September 2025 – Call for submissions open. Submit your proposal [here](#)

Friday 14th November 2025 (12 noon) – Deadline for submissions

Thursday 27th November 2025 – Conference opens for delegate booking

Friday 28th November 2025 – Lead presenters informed of submission outcome

Thursday 4th December 2025 – Presenters to send in their picture and biography and amended abstract for publicity. Presenters will be emailed a registration code.

Thursday 11th December 2025 – Conference programme finalised and published and promoted.

Friday 12th December 2025 – Final pre-conference information sent and received with presenters.

Tuesday 6th January 2026 - Conference bookings close

For further information and an informal chat please contact: Darren Carr, Director of Higher Education at NSCD at Darren.Carr@nscd.ac.uk

When submitting your proposal you should have the following information ready to submit via the online form:

Title of your submission
Conference Theme
Lead contact name
Lead contact email
Presenter names (if different from lead contact)
Higher Education Institution name or independent artist or company name:
Proposal type: Interactive workshop session up to 45 mins Interactive workshops / Lecture demonstration up to 60 mins with time for questions Oral presentation 15 mins plus 5 mins Q&A Oral presentation 20 mins plus 10 mins Q&A Oral presentation on zoom (20 mins plus 10 mins Q&A) Poster presentation (A1 or A0 size) Lighting talks to be part of a panel discussion (5 mins) Performance (10- 20 mins with minimal lighting requirement)
Abstract: No more than 150 – 250 words <i>This will be used for publicity purposes</i>
Presenter Biography / Biographies (max 150 words each)
Maximum capacity requirements: e.g. studio workshop up to 30 participants or up to 6 people in small space or unlimited NSCD to decide on capacity
Layout request of space: Small space theatre style layout Large space theatre style layout Small space with opportunity to situate a small number of people Unknown NSCD can decide
What equipment and resource needs will you have: e.g. computer and projector, flip chart, mats, post-it notes etc.
Additional requirements: These may include accessibility, access, or other additional requirements that will enable you to attend and present your session.
Any other information

Conference Terms and Conditions

Any presenter or delegate will be asked to sign up to our terms and conditions as part of the conference proceeding. As forward notice of this please be aware that the following terms and conditions apply.

Delegates are required to:

- I. agree to the collection and storage of personal data, as outlined in NSCD's Privacy notices;
- II. attend the in-person conference for a minimum of one full day to present their session should it be accepted into the conference programme. Please note, presenter places are not free of charge, as registration is already good value for money, offered at a discounted rate.
- III. agree to information about themselves, their co-presenters, their institution and their session details being promoted externally on the web-based conference programme.
- IV. permit their slides and relevant resources from the session to be posted after the conference on NSCD's website and in any conference proceedings.
- V. allow their session to be photographed or filmed during the conference at NSCD's discretion.
- VI. allow their and their co-presenters' details (name, email address, institution, Biography – no longer than 100 words) to be shared with delegates during the conference on NSCD's conference web page.
- VII. permit the recording of their session for potential hybrid or virtual delivery of the conference, to be either live-streamed or circulated as a resource to conference delegates.
- VIII. If you are uncomfortable agreeing to these conditions, you should select no. If you would like us to contact you to discuss your concerns, please note this on the proposal form.

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