



L-R Awards host, broadcaster and comedian Sandi Toksvig; Barbara Davies, Barry Hill and Dianne Ford from Northumbria University and Isabelle Bristow of award sponsor Studiosity

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Outstanding support for nursing students wins national award

Northumbria University has been nationally recognised for the exceptional support it provides for nursing students after winning a coveted [Times Higher Education](#) award.

The University received the [Outstanding Support for Students](#) title in recognition of the success of a project specially designed to help student nurses who had paused their studies to complete their programmes.

The challenge of one in eight student nurses not completing their degrees is significant, affecting universities, healthcare settings and the quality of patient care. With the government's ambitious target to address nursing shortages by increasing the nursing workforce by a further 50,000 nurses by 2024, it is vital to ensure that nursing students are supported to complete their studies.

In a bid to help nursing students who had taken a break from their studies, a team from the University's Department for [Nursing, Midwifery and Health](#) created a six-week summer programme specially designed to support them with the variety of complex challenges they had faced whilst studying.

While health-related issues, particularly mental health, were the most common causes, other reasons included financial difficulties, family responsibilities, academic struggles and in some students, the realisation that they had chosen the wrong course.

The programme was so successful that more than half of the 130 students who took part felt able to return to their studies as a result, helping to ensure that they could complete their training and begin their nursing careers.

The initiative was led by Associate Professors Barry Hill, pictured receiving the award, and Annessa Rebar and was funded by NHS England RePAIR programme which is designed to reduce pre-registration attrition and improve retention.

The judging panel praised the University's work saying: "Northumbria University's efforts to help student nurses resume their studies after an interruption to their degrees are an important intervention in this area, and they are showing highly encouraging results."

They added: "With staffing shortages across the NHS, the role of universities in producing the next generation of health practitioners has never been more important. This project is an innovative intervention for helping as many students as possible succeed in their ambition to enter nursing."

[Professor Debbie Porteous](#), Head of the Department of Nursing, Midwifery and Health, praised the team who led this innovative project.

“Nursing is a hugely rewarding career, but some students can struggle to complete their training for a variety of reasons, such as how to juggle their home life and studies, the emotional toll of the job or finding it hard returning to learning after an extended break if they join as mature students. It is so important to ensure we provide the best possible support to help our students when they need it most,” she said.

“This innovative scheme was specially designed to help them to overcome obstacles they faced and enable them to reach their full potential, as well as helping to play a part in supporting ambitions to bring more nurses to the frontline.

“Students are at the heart of everything we do here at Northumbria, and we are absolutely delighted that our work has been recognised as the best example of support for students in the UK at the Times Higher Education awards.”

Times Higher Education’s editor, John Gill, said: “The sheer depth of innovation, talent and dedication that exists at every level of universities across the UK and Ireland never fails to impress.

“Our winners exemplify the broad spectrum of ways in which universities are excelling and making a difference.”

The University was also shortlisted for an award for its role with [Northern Accelerator](#), a collaboration with Durham, Newcastle, York, Sunderland and Teesside Universities, to transform the commercialisation of research in the North East. To date, Northern Accelerator has created almost 50 businesses which employ more than 650 people.

Northumbria University is one of the largest centres for healthcare professional education in the North of England, offering a range of [specialist degree and CPD programmes](#) across many areas of nursing, midwifery, operating department practice, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. The University’s Children’s Nursing programme is [ranked third in the UK](#) in the latest Guardian University Guide.

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally. Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk

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