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Reward for excellence in teaching and learning

A Northumbria University academic has been awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in recognition of excellent learning and teaching.

Dr John Unsworth, a Principal Lecturer in Nursing, has received the accolade from the Higher Education Academy.

Influenced by his long and varied career in nursing, Dr Unsworth has led on developing new approaches to teaching and assessment. In particular, he uses simulation to develop his students' skills and he has researched and

written widely on this topic.

“Simulation is hugely effective in preparing students for rare but catastrophic events. Without it, students and their future patients could be at risk so that’s why at Northumbria we invest in computer-generated simulated models so that students can practice those skills effectively,” he said.

The simulators look and behave like human beings, displaying symptoms as diverse as a stroke, a heart attack or asphyxiation. The models are able to be interactive through the use of microphone, allowing students to practice all the nursing techniques they may face in real life.

Alongside his work to develop the competence and confidence of his students Dr Unsworth has also pioneered new approaches to student assessment in the workplace. He has developed new tools to assess students while they are practising to analyse their overall competence rather than looking at individual skills in isolation. The new system of practice assessment aims to improve feedback to students and develop greater assessment utility particularly related to validity, reliability and educational impact.

John has a range of research interests and is keen to develop colleagues and promote research-informed teaching through working with novice researchers to undertake pedagogical inquiry and educational action research.

He continues to take an active role in healthcare provision through his work as a non-executive member of clinical commissioning groups and his work with the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the UK’s Nursing and Midwifery Regulator.

As a result of his success, Dr Unsworth will receive £10,000 to spend on professional development in teaching and learning.

Dr Unsworth added: “The National Teaching Fellowship is a wonderful recognition of the contribution that I and my many colleagues make to learning and teaching for undergraduate nurses. Although an individual award, the excellent student experience we offer is only possible thanks to the dedication and support of colleagues.”

Professor Craig Mahoney, Chief Executive of the HEA, said: “Becoming a National Teaching Fellow is a great honour and will undoubtedly lead to many new and exciting challenges, but I believe that it is students who will benefit most from these awards. Our students deserve the best possible learning experience and it is colleagues like those we celebrate today who can make a real difference to their futures. I congratulate all the successful Fellows and wish them every success in their own learning and teaching experiences.”

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
Business and Law
rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk
07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences
andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk
07708 509436



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Coordinator

Arts Design and Social Sciences / Engineering and Environment

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Coordinator

Health and Life Sciences / Sport

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



Ruth Lognonne

Press Contact

PR and Media Coordinator

Health and Life Sciences / Sport

ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk



Emily Morris

Press Contact

Corporate Communications Coordinator

emily.l.morris@northumbria.ac.uk