



North East CTEC Educator Conference 2026

Northumbria University – Harvard Lecture
Theatre 403, Business & Law School

Wednesday 1st April 2026, 12:00pm-16:00pm

Welcome

Welcome to the first North East CTEC Construction Teaching Conference, where we bring together educators, to explore the future of teaching in construction education. As the demands of the construction industry continue to evolve, so too must the ways we prepare our students—ensuring they develop the technical expertise, digital confidence, and professional behaviours that modern employers expect.

This conference provides a space to share innovative practice, strengthen partnerships, and deepen our collective understanding of what high-quality construction education looks like. Through online sessions available from 23rd March and culminating in a face to face event hosted at Northumbria University we aim to build a stronger, more connected community of practitioners committed to excellence.



**Allan Cook - Industry Chair,
North East Construction
Technical Excellence College**



**Rebecca Storey - Regional
Construction Skills Director,
North East Construction
Technical Excellence College**



**Iain Nixon - Vice Principal,
Partnerships & Business
Solutions at Education
Partnership North East**



**Jo Cooper - Associate Principal
for Teaching, Learning
and Quality at Education
Partnership North East**



**Dr Susan Dawson - Associate
Professor & Educational
Partnerships Lead, School
of Architecture and Built
Environment at Northumbria
University**



**Stuart Miller - Director, Civil
Engineering Contractors
Association**

Conference Schedule

Wednesday 1st April 2026, 12:00pm-16:00pm

Time	Session
12.00 - 1:00	Guided Tour of the NESST Building (optional, if delegates can attend earlier)
1.00 - 1.30	Networking Lunch & Welcome Refreshments (Pizza)
1.30 - 2.00	Opening Keynote: Teaching Beyond Your Trade: Connecting the Construction Team (Dr Susan Dawson)
2.00 - 3.00	Collaborative Roundtables: Advancing Practice in Construction Education
3.00 - 3.30	Networking Break (Tea/Coffee/Cakes)
3.30 - 4.00	Building What's Next: Regional Infrastructure Projects, Innovation and Future Skills in Construction - Stuart Miller, Director at the Civil Engineering Contractors Association

Keynote

Teaching beyond your trade: Connecting education and industry - Hosted by Dr Susan Dawson

Keynote Details: Construction projects can fail when skills are lacking – but more often they struggle when the gaps between trades and professions aren't fully understood. This keynote explores how construction education can bridge those gaps and better prepare learners for the realities of a greener, smarter and safer industry.

Keynote Bio: Dr Susan Dawson is an Educational Partnerships Lead and Associate Professor in Architecture and the Built Environment at Northumbria University. With over 30 years of experience across industry and higher education, she brings an understanding of how academic learning and professional practice can be effectively integrated.

She has led the design and development of innovative degree apprenticeship programmes, working closely with industry partners to create high-quality, practice-based education that supports both learners and employers. She is passionate about delivering education that mirrors real-world practice and maximises the value of both workplace and academic learning.

Susan's current role focuses on building and sustaining strategic partnerships that enhance opportunities for students and strengthen links between the university and the Built Environment. She also contributes nationally through apprenticeship standards and professional body advisory roles, supporting the continued development of vocational education.

Closing thoughts

Building What's Next: Regional Infrastructure Projects, Innovation and Future Skills in Construction - Hosted by Stuart Miller, Director at the Civil Engineering Contractors Association

Closing Thoughts Session Overview: I will provide an overview of construction investment across the North East region, highlighting key recent and current infrastructure projects as well as those projects that could be game changers for the future of the regional economy. I will also discuss the investment landscape in a regional and national context and how they impact innovation in construction and the effect on the skills requirements in the industry.

Closing Thoughts Bio: Stuart is the Regional Director for CECA North East and represents the interests of around 80% of civil engineering contractors in the North East region, ranging from local SME Subcontractors to large national Main Contractors who together, build, upgrade and maintain our infrastructure in the key sectors of transport, energy, communications, waste and water.

Staff Sessions

New to Teaching – Hosted by Carl Jones, EPNE and Rob Maclellan, New College Durham

Session details: Explore through discussion the transition from the ‘Toolbox’ to ‘Education’ for Construction practitioners. This session will be task-focused on the challenges and solutions, drawing upon staff experiences, and will feed into the proposal of the ‘SITE’ Supporting Industry Transition into Education Construction teacher training pathway, supporting new starting and early career construction teachers.

Bio: Carl Jones, Faculty Director Education and Professional Practice, Education Partnership North East. Carl’s focus is to ensure the education curriculum and professional development standards are embedded within the college group’s programmes, with clear focus on improving and evaluating student outcomes. Carl leads on the teacher education curriculum, and the designing, conveying and delivery of high-quality professional learning opportunities for the college group, reflecting the College’s Approach and Pillars of Professional Development.

Rob MacLellan – Lecturer of Carpentry & Joinery – New College Durham. Rob is a Lecturer in Carpentry & Joinery, focused on teaching the 1st Year Full-Time programme. He transitioned into FE at the start of this academic year. After retraining and working as a multi-skills woodworker for a few years, he spent the past decade developing and running a large wood workshop for a local charity. There, he worked with a wide range of people, including those from challenging backgrounds, experiencing social isolation, managing mental health issues, or with learning difficulties—helping them develop skills, build confidence, and find a place of belonging. He is now learning how to transfer this experience into the FE sector to provide strong support and relevant training for students just beginning their professional journeys.

Postcards from the Edge: Constructing a Professional Educator Identity – Hosted by Dr Susan Dawson and Chris Warlock, Northumbria University

Session details: Working in a specific profession and occupying a field where we are considered an expert in our respective field, offers us a sense of belonging, of purpose, of structure and a secure identity. Moving from this field encourages us to take a reflective journey, using our respective skills differently and taking us away from our sense of being towards becoming something else. Subsequently, our existing professional identity is challenged, as we shift our expertise and reconstruct our evolving identity as an educator. This breakout workshop offers an initial consideration of this opportunity, a primer that creates a space to challenge colleagues to slow down, step back and reflect upon how they are beginning to work within their own evolving professional identity.

Bio: Dr Susan Dawson (see ‘Keynote Bio’ on page 4).

Chris Warnock is an Assistant Professor of Education at Northumbria University. He has 15 years of experience leading and working across Teacher Education programmes in Higher Education in the North-East. In his current role he takes responsibility for teaching and learning professional development and induction for colleagues new to Northumbria University and/or Higher Education, through the Post Graduate Certificate of Academic Practice (PGCAP) and Academic Professional Higher Apprenticeship (APHA) programmes. Chris also acts as an internal Lead for the Northumbria University Professional Recognition System (NUPRS) supporting colleagues through an experiential route to achieving HEA Fellowship. Prior to working in HE, he was a National Strategy Primary Literacy Consultant and Primary School Teacher with 10+ years of experience teaching and supporting teaching and learning across the primary age phase in the North-East. Alongside this, he is a Northumbria University Distinguished Teaching Fellow and is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He holds a PGCE with QTS and MA in Education, he is now in the final stages of studying for a PhD, exploring the perceived tensions and dilemmas experienced in the transition from being a professional working in practice, to becoming an academic in an HEI.

Making Use of AI in Education - Hosted by Joella Lynch, Northumbria University

Session details: Artificial intelligence is rapidly entering education, but teachers are often left to decide for themselves how and when it should be used. This discussion session invites construction teachers to share their experiences of using AI in their teaching practice – from planning and resource creation to supporting student learning.

Together we will explore where AI might be useful, where caution is needed, and what factors teachers consider when deciding whether to use it. The session will be informal and conversation-led, giving teachers a chance to reflect on their own practice and learn from others.

Bio: Joella Lynch is a former secondary school science teacher and a PhD researcher at Northumbria University studying AI in education. Her research explores how teachers make professional decisions about whether, when, and how to use artificial intelligence in their teaching practice. Through collaborative workshops with educators, she investigates how AI is shaping teaching, learning, and professional judgement in schools and colleges.

Mentoring - Hosted by Tony Wray, Middlesbrough College

Session details: This breakout session explores how Middlesbrough College has built a sustainable mentoring culture to support ITE trainees, new staff, and experienced practitioners. Tony will share practical strategies, lessons learned, and tools that colleges can adopt to strengthen mentoring practices and improve staff development. Attendees will leave with adaptable approaches they can implement in their own settings.

Bio: Tony Wray is the Mentoring Lead and an ITE Lecturer at Middlesbrough College, with over 14 years' experience in further education. He has developed and led whole-college mentoring strategies, supported new and experienced teachers, and is currently undertaking a Doctor of Education with research focusing on supporting new vocational teachers as they transition from industry into education. Tony is passionate about developing effective mentoring cultures that empower both trainees and staff to thrive.

World Skills Pressure Testing – Hosted by Fiona Lawrence and Lindsay Gaskall, Newcastle College

Session details: This session explores how WorldSkills aligned pressure tests can be used to assess and develop highperformance technical skills. Fiona and Lindsay will introduce the WorldSkills marking framework and show how structured, standardised assessments help benchmark learner competence, build resilience, and raise training standards within vocational programmes. Attendees will gain practical insight into how pressure tests can be designed and embedded to strengthen curriculum delivery and support learners in demonstrating industryready skills.

Bio: Fiona Lawrence is a Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Coach at Newcastle College, where she plays a key role in supporting educators to deliver engaging, effective and high quality learning experiences. She works collaboratively with teaching teams to enhance pedagogical practice, strengthen assessment strategies, and champion continuous improvement across the college. Fiona’s coaching approach focuses on empowering staff through evidence informed methods, reflective practice and innovative teaching approaches that enrich the learner experience and promote excellence across the FE sector.

Lindsay Gaskill is an established Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Coach and Centre of Excellence Quality Lead at Newcastle College, with over two decades of experience in further education and specialist skills development. Her work is closely aligned to the WorldSkills UK mission of raising training standards, sharing best practice, and supporting high-performance skills development across the FE sector.

Apprenticeships – Hosted by Andrea Davis, Newcastle College

Session details: This session provides an overview of effective apprenticeship programme management, highlighting the systems and practices that support strong learner progress and highquality outcomes. Andrea will share approaches used at Newcastle College to ensure apprenticeship provision is compliant, wellstructured and responsive to both employer and industry needs, helping learners achieve their qualifications efficiently and to a consistently high standard.

Bio: Andrea’s role as Standards Manager for the Construction trades, centres on quality, compliance, and performance management within apprenticeship provision at Newcastle College. She helps make sure apprenticeship programmes are well-run, learner-focused, and aligned to regulatory and industry standards.

Using AI in Construction Teaching, Hosted by Mark Stewart, Newcastle College and Amanda MacDonald, Gateshead College

Session details: This session introduces practical ways AI tools can support teachers and learners across Construction programmes. Mark and Amanda will demonstrate how AI can streamline planning, assessment and resource creation, reducing workload while improving the quality and consistency of teaching. The session will share accessible examples of AI in action and offer guidance on using these tools safely and effectively to enhance learner engagement and outcomes. If you have a laptop with you – definitely bring it along here!

Bio: Mark Stewart is a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Coach at Newcastle College, working closely with the Transport and Construction teams to support a high-quality learner experience. Mark has nearly twenty years of experience teaching and leading maths in the Further Education sector. His role focuses on helping staff develop practical, evidence-informed approaches that improve classroom and workshop practice, learner engagement and outcomes. He is particularly interested in adaptive teaching, assessment and feedback, and the effective use of AI to enhance teaching quality and reduce workload.

Amanda Macdonald is the Curriculum Leader for Teaching and Learning at Gateshead College, bringing over 16 years of experience in further education and professional skills development. With a strong background as a specialist teacher in hardware and networking, Amanda combines deep technical expertise with a passion for high-quality pedagogy. She leads on advancing teaching excellence across the college, championing innovative practice, effective coaching, and continuous improvement. Amanda's work supports the sector-wide mission to raise standards, enhance learner experience, and build high-performance teaching cultures within FE.

Thank you to everyone involved in the Sprint for Exceptional Pedagogy: CPD for Construction and Housing Educators

Rebecca Storey

Jo Cooper

Jane Thompson

Carl Jones

Mark Nicholson

Fiona Lawrence

Amanda Macdonald

Susan Dawson

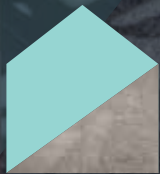
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