

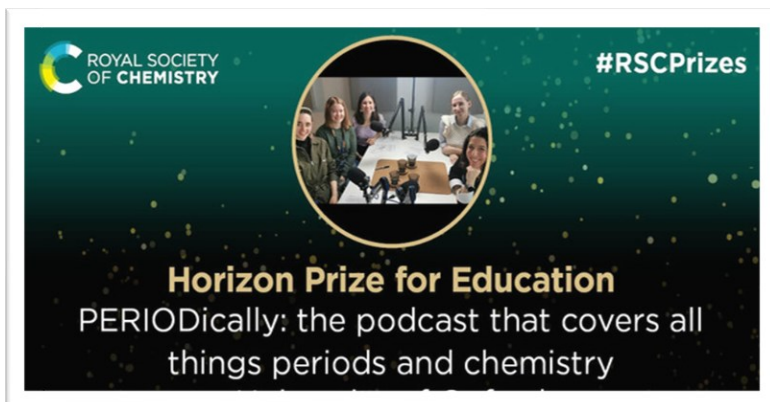
PERIODically

A case study in how podcasting can create a sense of belonging through student voice

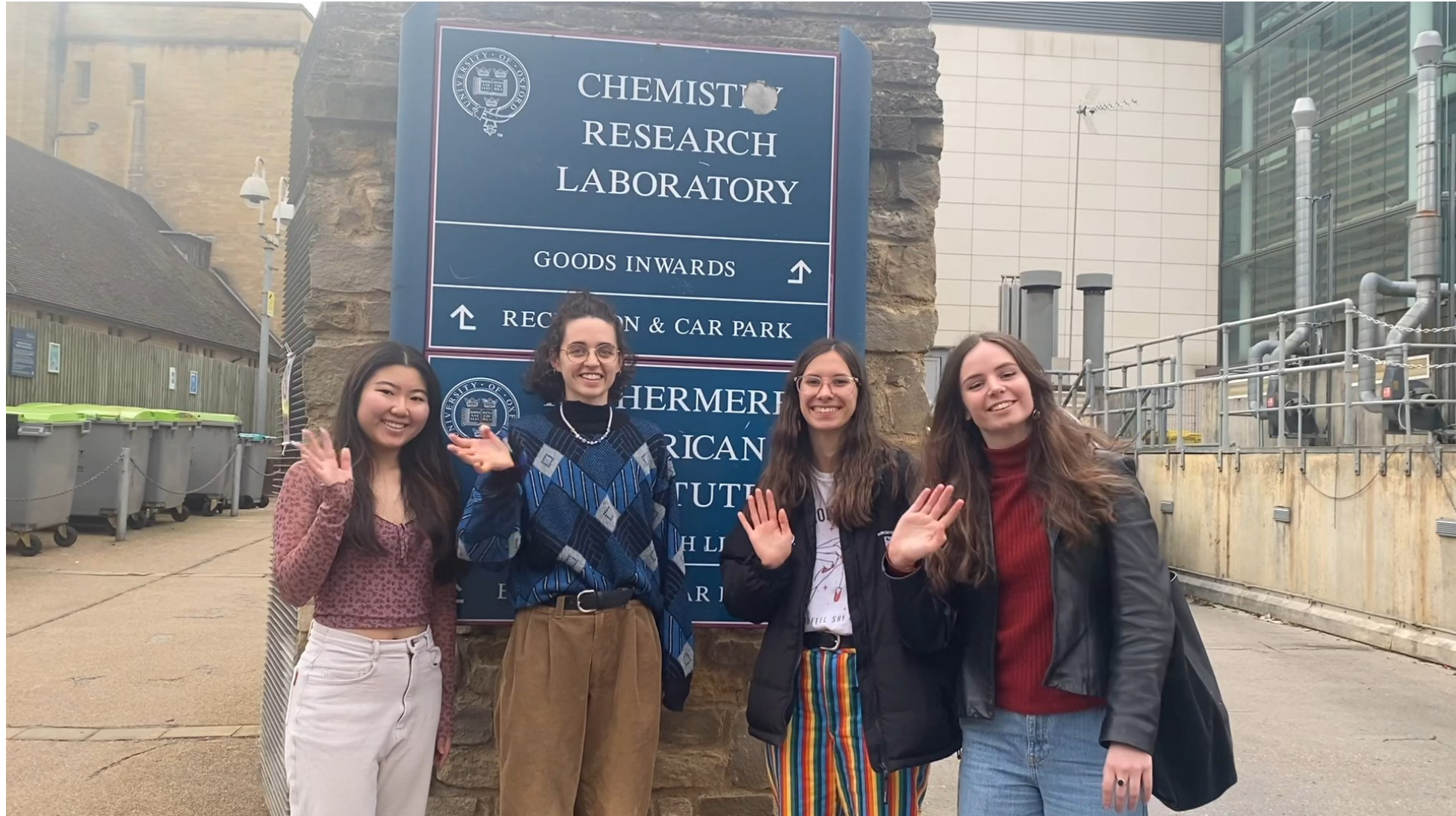
Presented by: Dr Charlie Simms and Sofia Olendraru

Work by: Elba Feo, Josie Sams, Felicity Smith, Charlotte Oliver, Manami Imada and Amy-Grace Berger

Teaching and Learning Conference
University of Edinburgh
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PERIODically: The Period Podcast



The Co-creation of PERIODically

*“Participants noted how **menstruation affected their tutorial experiences** and wider learning of chemistry. For example, one participant described sitting through a tutorial while experiencing considerable pain as they did not want to miss the session, but not wanting to raise this with a male tutor because of the **stigmatisation surrounding periods**. Menstruation systematically affects a large proportion of the chemistry cohort and further research should be done to review how it impacts their chemistry education.”* – Hannah Bruce, 2022

Student voice at the heart of PERIODically:

- 7 undergraduate chemistry students and 1 PhD student
- Share their own experiences
- Interviewed non chemistry students and more PhDs in second series
- **The entire podcast was designed and led solely by students**

“I think initially we were all motivated by our own personal experiences and struggles relating to periods. We all felt frustrated or angry and wanted to share what we’d been through. However, once we started it became clear that it was so much bigger than just us. We saw the potential that PERIODically had to really break down barriers in science and we want to use this platform to raise awareness and keep pushing for change”- Elba Feo (co-founder)



Bruce, Hannah. “Investigating Gender Bias in Oxford MChem Chemistry Tutorials.” N.p., 2022. Print.
<https://open.spotify.com/show/6tLm9VN7EvHlneodPO0Tnv?si=12b3dd78c18b40fb>

Platforming Lived Experiences

Lived experience storytelling is a qualitative, participatory research method that captures authentic, first-person narratives to explore human phenomena. It translates subjective realities into actionable data that promotes empathy, influences policy, and dismantles hierarchies between researchers and participants.

Why focus on lived experiences?

- Captures nuance and complexity, revealing the how and why behind human experiences, rich in context
- Empowers marginalised voices and allows stories to be told by those who are traditionally excluded from academic literature
- Highly reflective of real-world experiences – the data is not coming from artificial models or environments
- Fosters empathy and engagement – Stories are highly relatable and translate well as evidence for advocacy and policy changes

Current areas where research depends on lived experiences and storytelling:

- Mental health
- Healthcare
- Disability studies
- Social work...



Platforming Lived Experiences

"Being able to talk to other members of PERIODically helped me so much. I spoke about issues with them that I've never spoken to other people about, because suddenly it felt like people understood and wanted to listen and cared. I think that makes such a difference." – Elba Feo



"It's not every day you get the opportunity to talk about these things, sometimes it can be seen as a bit of a taboo subject, or something you don't really talk about with your colleagues or share." – Manami Imada



Why Podcasting?

1. **Accessibility:** The audience can listen whilst multi-tasking, anywhere and at any time that works for them across the world!
2. **Conversational tone:** Makes topics sound more approachable and relatable, creating connection between the storyteller and the audience
3. **Perfect platform for showcasing lived experiences:** allows for intimacy and vulnerability, where people find it easier to share stories. The audience feels like a one-on-one conversation with the storytellers.
4. **Non-linear storytelling:** Different narrative threads can be easily woven together to make the storytelling more engaging and immersive.
5. **Emotional resonance:** Audio is a powerful medium for evoking emotions. The sound of a person's voice, the tone, and the pace can all contribute to a sense of emotional resonance, making the story more impactful and memorable.



Connecting with Community

"I know too many friends who struggle when they have periods (even without doing long days of lab work), this is honestly such an important issue which is easily overlooked. Thanks so much for bringing this to the spotlight!"

(Anonymous PERIODically listener)

"Some of my current colleagues [...] saw your talk at York University and we've talked about experiences and the podcast together since then. It's even been a conversation starter at conferences and networking events where [people] I don't work with have listened to [PERIODically] and want to chat about it!"

(Tiffany Walmsley, PERIODically Series 2 guest)

"After the first series was released, we received messages on social media from people telling us that having heard us share our stories and struggles had made them feel seen. Often the struggles surrounding periods are something we bear on our own and can make us feel isolated, but this podcast is helping to start those conversations and showing people they are not alone." (Elba Feo)



The Impact on Education

- Free period products implemented in some university departments in England
- Podcast used as a resource for training laboratory demonstrators
- Development of a guide for departments to implement their own period product scheme – published in Trends in Chemistry
- Invited to lecture at six universities across the UK – improve education across the UK
- Presented at both non education and education focussed conferences – to share our learnings and catalyse change in other institutions

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Periods and practicals: how to help your students

[Elba Feo](#)^{1,4} · [Sofia Olendraru](#)² · [Michael O'Neill](#)³ · [Charlie H. Simms](#)¹  

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The Impact on Education



"The first season of the podcast has already inspired my Master's research project which looked at laboratory spaces, especially with regards to neurodivergent and disabled students and students with periods. This research has huge scope to be developed: looking into different experiences of trans students, at students not having regular periods due to contraception, as well as staff experiences and wider experiences of menstrual health in the laboratory environment." (Lottie Oliver)

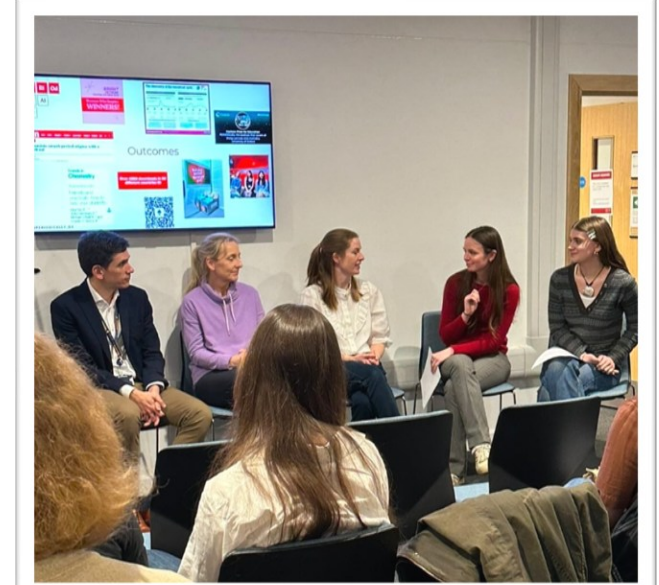
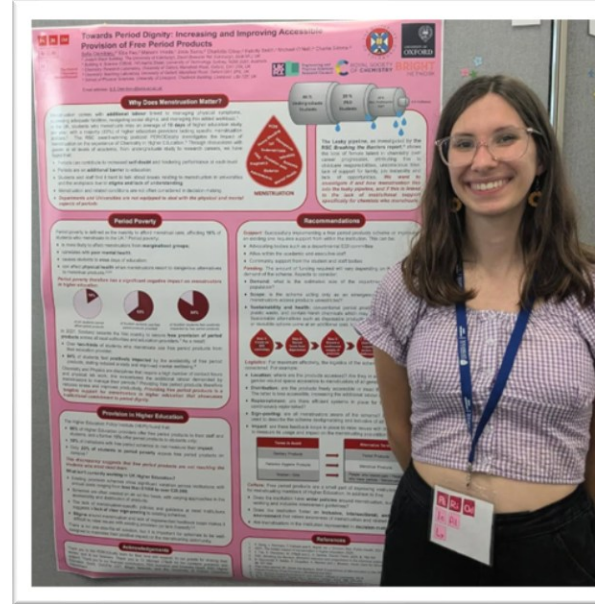
"Though our initial focus was on the impacts of periods on studying chemistry, the issues we discuss apply to all aspects of academia, regardless of subject or position (undergraduate, postgraduate, professor, etc.). Hopefully people will listen to this podcast and begin to understand just how significant the barrier posed by periods can be. Only when the people making decisions within educational institutions take periods into consideration will substantial change be possible." (Elba Feo)

"Perhaps I can say the thing which only a cis male academic could say: I think a lot of what I heard in season 1 was stuff which should have been obvious to me, but wasn't. Of course periods affect lab practicals. Of course they affect exams. Of course they affect lectures if you have 25 contact hours a week. So of course I should start thinking about how to make my teaching more accessible." (Michael O'Neill)

Student Development

Student development and upskilling:

- Communication
- Storytelling
- Interview
- Audio production
- Presentation
- Fundraising
- Time management
- Creativity
- Marketing
- Emotional intelligence
- Project management
- Confidence
- Writing
- Networking
- Continuing professional development opportunities



Take Home Messages

- Podcast is a fantastic format to talk about lived experiences and promote student voice
- Chatty demeanour and relatable stories, maximised engagement
- Student-led project led to the changes students wanted, creating more inclusive educational spaces
- The project created further opportunities for invaluable student development



Thank you for Listening

PERIODically Team:

- ◆ Dr Charlie Simms
- ◆ Sofia Olendraru
- ◆ Felicity Smith
- ◆ Josie Sams
- ◆ Elba Feo
- ◆ Manami Imada
- ◆ Charlotte Oliver
- ◆ Amy Berger
- ◆ Dr Michael O'Neill

Season 2 Guests:

- ◆ Dr Tiffany Walmsley
- ◆ Liv and Lauren (SASHA)
- ◆ Dr Jenny Burnham
- ◆ Dr Chiara Cocco
- ◆ Dr Sarah Rawe
- ◆ Kelly Britton
- ◆ Dr Jenny Maunder

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(StoryNinetyFour)

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- ◆ Hannah Bruce
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- ◆ Prof. Caroline Dessent
- ◆ Dr Emily Draper
- ◆ Prof. Kylie Vincent
- ◆ Prof. Matt Jarvis
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- ◆ Prof. Matt Langton
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- ◆ Andy Brunning

