An academic who used a game to boost learning is the winner of this year's title of Most Innovative Teacher of the Year. Russell Crawford has a dual role at Keele University, serving as both senior teaching fellow in the School of Medicine and as an academic staff developer in the Learning and Professional Development Centre. He is the creator of Braincept, an educational game that focuses on boosting learning in pharmacology, which was developed in response to students saying that they lacked confidence in this area.

As well as improving knowledge, Braincept encourages teamwork and communication skills through play. Dr Crawford's assessments of Braincept revealed that playing the game led to knowledge gain and an increase in confidence among medical students. Other disciplines, including law, mathematics and physiotherapy, are now looking at whether the game can be used to aid student learning in these fields.

Dr Crawford is also responsible for Keele Basic Bites, a series of online videos designed to help self-directed study that average 20,000 views a year from around the world. In addition, he has undertaken a research collaboration with academics in the School of Psychology to explore how the feedback given to students in the first six weeks of university affects them.

The judges said that Dr Crawford was a clear leader in a strong field of exceptionally inspiring teachers. "Russell Crawford stood out for his innovation across a range of teaching styles, his strategies for self-directed learning and his work on the gamification of learning, which provided tangible evidence of knowledge gain," the panel said.