Traditional constructions of academic subjectivity were (and still are) dominated by an individualistic conception of care-free academics. Although higher education institutions have in some ways adapted to counter this limited notion of what it is to be an academic, certain defining practices of the academic profession are resistant to change.

Conferences are an example of one of these practices, because the expectation of sporadic, short-term travel to different locations implicitly suggests a lack of ongoing responsibilities. While it is commonly asserted that attending conferences is not essential to progressing in an academic career, parallel discourses exist about the benefits that conferences bring, such as accessing developments in the discipline, making international contacts and disseminating research. Conferences are an under-researched area in which inequalities of access remain largely unaddressed.

The ‘In Two Places at Once’ research project explored issues of access to and participation in national and international conferences; in addition to exploring obstacles and facilitating factors affecting access to conferences, the project investigated academics’ practices of managing the often conflicting roles of carer and conference delegate while at conferences. This seminar focuses on the theorisation of time, subjectivity and academia that underpins the project, and presents findings and analysis.